

**ORDER FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD**  
*A Service of Celebration and Covenantal Renewal*  
December 6, 2009

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME**

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

**CALL TO WORSHIP GOD**

*We gather to worship our God in spirit and in truth...*

**Isaiah 52:7-10** - How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

**WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH MUSIC**

**AFFIRMING THE GOSPEL WE BELIEVE—**

**The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He arose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand  
of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge  
the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit;  
the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

**ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR THE GOSPEL TODAY—  
THE PASTORAL PRAYER**

**PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

**MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 1—**

**THE PEACE HE CAME TO BRING**

**I. The Peace of Living in God's Favor**

**Luke 2:8** - And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."**

- The peace of God comes to us freely, by the plan and generosity of our Sovereign God. The primary seeker in God's story is God! On the night of Jesus' birth God sent a whole army of angels to announce a peace that he alone can give, through a means none of us could have imagined... the gift of his Son! (vs. 8-10)
- The peace of God is for you and me, and for **everyone**— for unsuspecting shepherds, philosophers and wise men like the Magi, unbelieving priests like Zechariah, aging faithful prophetesses like Anna, unnamed broken people, hurting people, longing people, sinful people that permeate Luke's narrative, and which fill our worship center today; this is good news of great joy for ALL people and ALL nations! (vs. 10).
- The peace of God addresses the deepest fears of our hearts. The first command given on the night of Jesus' birth is the first command given on the morning of his resurrection... "Do not be afraid." (vs. 10). What do **we** fear: Death... sorrow... betrayal... loss... loneliness... war... insignificance... the judgment of God... the absence of God? Because of Jesus we do not have to be afraid of anything!

- The peace of God is most fully experienced by those who know they are living in the full and permanent favor of God! (vs. 14). What an astounding truth! If you are a Christian, you don't have the weight of your sin and the weight of the world weighing you down; you have the favor and delight of God resting on you... to define you, heal you and free you!

**GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS**

**MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 2**

**II. The Price of Living in God's Favor**

**How dare we presume on God's favor and delight? How can we really "know and rely on the love that God has for us?" (1 Jn. 4:16)** There is only one way. Consider the lyric and the music of one of the very first Christmas carols—one written and sung long before the birth of Jesus would be announced by angles to shepherds. These words, written by Isaiah, are a part of the section in his book we call *The Servant Songs*—prophecies and promises God made about the coming of the Messiah and the work he would accomplish.

**Isaiah 53:1-6** - Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; **the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.** <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**What does this mean for us today as we own our sin and brokenness, and stand before this table of grace and mercy?**

- We receive a peace that passes understanding because Jesus took a judgment beyond our imagining.
- The favor of God rests on us freely because Jesus took the dis-favor of God fully.
- We get the fullness of his grace because Jesus took the fullness of our dis-grace.

**SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, THE FEAST OF REPENTANT FAITH—**

***Bringing our needs to the Father's good heart and Jesus' glorious riches.***

*Welcome to our celebration of the Lord's Supper. All who confess Jesus Christ as their Savior are invited to be served. If you do not profess saving faith in Jesus, we ask that you refrain from taking communion and encourage you to prayerfully consider speaking with a Pastor or Elder. To receive the bread and cup—the body and blood of Christ broken and shed for you— please come forward to the nearest table and an Elder will serve you. Elders and Deacons are available to help guide you. If you cannot come to the table, please let a Deacon or Elder know and you will be served at your seat. For your information—the outside ring of the service tray is filled with grape juice; the rest of the inside rings are filled with wine.*

**RESPONSE TO THE LORD THROUGH GIVING—**

**DEACONS OFFERING**

**BENEDICTION—**

**2 Corinthians 13:11-14** Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What had the most impact on you today from our time in God's worship and Word? What was encouraging, convicting, and/or calling for more clarification?
2. This whole Advent season we're going to be pondering the peace of God, the *shalom* of God—the putting right of all things through the person and work of Jesus. In our world, and in your life, where is the need for peace most pronounced?
3. Chat about the exquisite thought of living in the permanent favor of God? What difference would it make if you really believed that Jesus has not only won heaven for you, but also won the gift of standing in God's favor and delight? What "push backs" do you typically offer to such a notion? How does the gospel not only guarantee our acceptance by God, but also his favor? Though living in God's favor is a state and not a feeling, how can we cultivate a greater awareness of God's delight in us?
4. When God's favor "isn't enough", whose favor do you seek the most? That is, in what relationships have you possibly given someone too much power either to make or break you? What's unhealthy about this pattern? How can the gospel help you to be sad, but not destroyed, by people's disfavor, and how can the gospel help you enjoy, but not really need, to live in anyone's favor?
5. Close with a good season of prayer for one another, our upcoming Advent season... and especially thanking the Prince of Peace for paying the ultimate price that we might enjoy God's favor and delight.