



GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
AT CASTLEWOODS

ORDER OF WORSHIP
December 24th, 2023

MORNING WORSHIP

Thomas Winn — Elder/Pastor

- The Prelude Prepare your heart for worship
- The Call to Worship Chris Kimbrell
- Hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"
- The Prayer of Confession and Praise Dirk de Waal
- Hymn "Once in Royal David's City"
- Hymn "The First Noel"
- The Reading of the Word — *Matthew 2:1-23*
- Hymn "Away in a Manger"
- The Interlude Instrumentalists
- The Sermon — *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah" (Micah 5:1-5)* Pastor Winn
- A Time of Reflection Upon the Word Preached
- Hymn "Angels We Have Heard on High"
- The Benediction Dirk de Waal
- The Postlude

EVENING WORSHIP

No Service



COMMENTARY

C.H. Spurgeon

The Incarnation and Birth of Christ

There is something in the name of the place. "Bethlehem Ephratah." The word Bethlehem has a double meaning. It signifies "the house of bread," and "the house of war." Ought not Jesus Christ to be born in "the house of bread?" He is the Bread of his people, on which they feed. As our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, so do we live on Jesus here below. Famished by the world, we cannot feed on its shadows. Its husks may gratify the swinish taste of worldlings, for they are swine; but we need something more substantial, and in that blest bread of heaven, made of the bruised body of our Lord Jesus, and baked in the furnace of his agonies, we find a blessed food. No food like Jesus to the desponding soul or to the strongest saint. The very meanest of the family of God goes to Bethlehem for his bread; and the strongest man, who eats strong meat, goes to Bethlehem for it. House of Bread! whence could come our nourishment but from thee? We have tried Sinai, but on her rugged steepes there grow no fruits, and her thorny heights yield no corn whereon we may feed. We have repaired even to Tabor itself, where Christ was transfigured, and yet there we have not been able to eat his flesh and drink his blood. But Bethlehem, thou house of bread, rightly wast thou called; for there the bread of life was first handed down for man to eat. And it is also called "the house of war;" because Christ is to a man "the house of bread," or else "the house of war." While he is food to the righteous he causeth war to the wicked, according to his own word—"Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Sinner! if thou dost not know Bethlehem

as "the house of bread," it shall be to thee a "house of war." If from the lips of Jesus thou dost never drink sweet honey—if thou art not like the bee, which sippeth sweet luscious liquor from the Rose of Sharon, then out of the selfsame mouth there shall go forth against thee a two-edged sword; and that mouth from which the righteous draw their bread, shall be to thee the mouth of destruction and the cause of thine ill. Jesus of Bethlehem, house of bread and house of war, we trust we know thee as our bread. Oh! that some who are now at war with thee might hear in their hearts, as well as in their ears the song: "Peace on earth, and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled." And now for that word Ephratah. That was the old name of the place which the Jews retained and loved. The meaning of it is, "fruitfulness," or "abundance." Ah! well was Jesus born in the house of fruitfulness; for whence cometh my fruitfulness and any fruitfulness, my brother, but from Bethlehem? Our poor barren hearts ne'er produced one fruit, or flower, till they were watered with the Saviour blood. It is his incarnation which fattens the soil of our hearts. There had been pricking thorns on all the ground, and mortal poisons, before he came; but our fruitfulness comes from him. "I am like a green fir-tree; from thee is my fruit found." "All my springs are in thee." If we be like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season, it is not because we were naturally fruitful, but because of the rivers of water by which we were planted. It is Jesus that makes us fruitful. "If a man abide in me," he says, "and my words abide him, he shall bring forth much fruit." Glorious Bethlehem Ephratah! Rightly named! Fruitful house of bread—the house of abundant provision for the people of God!



RESPONSIBILITIES

Today's Nursery Volunteers

December 24th
<i>Morning</i> Rayah Pogue, Terri Pogue, and Wendy Winn
<i>Evening/Afternoon</i> No Services
<i>Wednesday - December 27th</i> No Prayer Meeting

Today's Sound Operator - Seth Lirette



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NO SERVICES

There will be no evening service tonight, nor will there be a mid-week supper service or activities for the upcoming week.

CHRISTMAS MAILBOX/LOTTIE MOON OFFERING

We will once again be passing out your Christmas cards to the congregation. In lieu of purchasing stamps to mail these cards we ask for you to make a donation to Lottie Moon (please specify on your check memo or Venmo note). Please place your Christmas cards in the basket in the church office by December 20th.

ADVENT SERMON SERIES

On November 26th, a series of sermons will be on the incarnation of Christ. These sermons will continue through December 24th. May God use these sermons to encourage us to worship Him more faithfully, especially during this time of year when we are confronted with much worldliness. May we “by the mercies of God present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1-2.

NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE

On December 31st, our evening service will be a time of encouraging us to remember this past year and to look forward to a New Year, so that God might use us for His glory. Some of our men will give a brief devotional, with hymns sung between each one. Following the service, there will be a time of fellowship. Please sign up for the fellowship time and bring enough to feed your family.

