

ST. JOHN'S EV. LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND SCHOOL
OKABENA, MINNESOTA
DECEMBER 24, 2020



WHO GETS
TO HOLD THE BABY?

Written by Pastor David Schaller

Processional: “Come Thou Precious Ransom Come”

Come Thou precious Ransom come, Only hope for sinful mortals!
Come, O Savior, of the world, Open are to Thee all portals.
Come, Thy beauty let us see, Anxiously we wait for Thee.

Enter now my waiting heart, Glorious King and Lord most holy.
Dwell in me and ne'er depart, Tho' I am but poor and lowly.
Ah, what riches will be mine When Thou art my Guest Divine.

My hosannas and my palms Graciously receive I pray Thee.
Evermore as best I can, Savior I will homage pay Thee.
And in faith I will embrace, Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.

Daniel: The birth of a child – there are few things as exciting in all the world as that. On the day the baby arrives, grandparents and friends and relatives sit by their telephones waiting for the happy news. When the baby comes, visitors always come to see. They want to see the precious gift of life given as only God can give it. Of course there is one special thing they all want to do: They want to hold the baby!

Lydia: From the youngest to the oldest, everyone wants a chance to cradle such a treasure in their arms. Today a Baby is born in Bethlehem, in the city of David. He is born to Mary and Joseph, a couple who has come to be registered for taxation. They came up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea. Can you feel the excitement at the arrival of this newborn child? As we rush in to get a better look, we wonder...Who gets to hold the Baby? Do I get to hold the Baby?

God the Father

Jacob: Who gets to hold the Baby? God the Father was the first. In fact, God held Him from all eternity. Jesus was One with the very essence of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit. Together they have always been one God, since forever and ever.

Caleb: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the

only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-4, 14). Dwelling together, One together, as three in one and one in three, there was Jesus.

Mary’s Womb

Lydia: Who gets to hold the Baby? God the Father was first, but then an amazing miracle happened! Something so astounding that we cannot explain or understand it. We know only what the Scripture says, that the next to hold the Baby was Mary’s womb. God sent the angel Gabriel to make this clear to Mary and to us, as it is recorded in Luke 1:26-35:

Rachel: “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.’

Lilly: ‘He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’”

Lydia: The angel announced that Mary would be with child, not in a natural way, but by a miracle. God Himself would plant this Baby in her womb – it was, after all, His Son from everlasting ages, but now He would be *more*. He would be a *Son of Man*.

Caleb: Jesus was true God, of the substance of His Father; and true Man, of the substance of His mother. He was perfect God and perfect Man. Together. At the same time. This is what Mary’s womb tells us as it holds the Baby. What a great mystery she held! *Do I* get to hold the Baby?

Grades 6-8: “A Great and Mighty Wonder”

A great and mighty wonder, A full and holy cure;
The Virgin bears the infant With virgin honor pure!
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men."

The Word becomes incarnate And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems to shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men."

Since all He comes to ransom, By all be He adored,
The infant born in Bethlehem, The Savior and the Lord.
Repeat the hymn again: "To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men."

Congregation: "Now Are the Days Fulfilled"

Now are the days fulfilled, God's Son is manifested.
Now His great majesty In human flesh is vested.
Behold the mighty God, by whom all wrath is stilled,
The woman's promised Seed- now are the days fulfilled.

Now are the days fulfilled, Lo' Jacob's Star is shining;
The gloomy night has fled Wherein the world lay pining.
Now, Israel look on Him Who long thy heart hath thrilled;
Hear Zion's watchmen cry; Now are the days fulfilled.

Now are the days fulfilled, The child of God rejoices;
No bondage of the Law, No curses that it voices,
Can fill our hearts with fear; On Christ our hope we build.
Behold the Prince of Peace – Now are the days fulfilled.

Joseph

Preschool-Kindergarten: Who gets to hold the Baby? When the time came for Jesus to be born, God chose special people to hold him.

Isaac: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be

taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.” Luke 2:1-5.

Dylan: Of course, Joseph gets to hold the Baby too! What a privilege it must have been to hold this Baby; to be His step-father. What an honor, later on, to teach Him how to use a few tools as He grew from an infant into a young man.

Caleb L.: Jesus had a childhood, growing and learning. Growing into the man His Heavenly Father wanted Him to be – the Man who would save His people from their sins.

Swaddling Cloths and a Manger

Amy: “And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:6-7). Who gets to hold the Baby? Strips of humble cloth hold him – almost right away. His mother Mary wraps the Child tightly in bands of linen.

Ava: What a high purpose for these few scraps of material! They warm and comfort the Lord of heaven and earth. How amazing, for it is He who warms and comforts us all.

Verrick: Then a manger holds the Baby. Mary laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. It was only a few boards cobbled together to hold the feed for lowly animals.

Dylan: Couldn’t something better have been found? Why give a cow trough the honor of holding the Christ child for even a minute? Yet, it was God’s will for His Son to have just such a humble birth.

Grant: It was not the high and mighty; it was not the powerful and glorious things of the world that had a chance to hold the Baby.

Verrick: No, God chose the weak things, the despised things, the things that **are not** to bring to nothing the things that **are**.

Amy: Yes, swaddling cloths and manger held the glory of God. All along, God would choose the weak things of the world to carry the good news of His Son. Do I get to hold the Baby?

Preschool-Grade 5: “Away in a Manger”

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed.
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay.
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing the baby awakes.
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee Lord Jesus, look down from the sky.
And stay by my side till morning is nigh.

Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay.
Close by me forever and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care.
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

Quartet “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing”

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring;
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

When sin departs before Your grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before Your grace,
Then life and health come in its place.
Angels and saints with joy may sing
All for to see the newborn King.

From out of darkness we have light
Which made the angels sing that night.
From out of darkness we have light
Which made the angels sing that night.

"Glory to God and peace to men
Now and forevermore. Amen."

Congregation: "Silent Night! Holy Night!"

Silent Night! Holy Night! All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and Child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent Night! Holy Night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing, alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

Silent Night! Holy Night! Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth, Jesus Lord at Thy birth.

Some Shepherds

Jacob: Who gets to hold the baby next? It was not the emperor. It was not the governor. It was not the rich or the wise people of this world. In Luke chapter 2 the scene shifts from the manger to the fields around Bethlehem:

Daniel: "Now there were in the same country, shepherds, living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'

Rachel: "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find the Babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of a heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" (Luke 2:8-14).

Lilly: It was to simple shepherds that the angels made their joyful announcement. The birth of this Baby, Christ the Lord, was the fulfillment of God's promise to comfort His people. Here in this Child is the proof of His greatest love for us. The shepherds came rushing in, as quickly as their feet would carry them. How excited they must have been to hold the Baby; poor and simple as they were. What a joy to sing their Creator to sleep!

Congregation: "Hark! the Herald, Angels Sing"

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born the King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell; Jesus our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!"

Hail, the heavenly Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He leaves His throne on high, Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth; Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!"

Lydia: The rough wood of the manger was the first resting place for the newborn Savior Jesus. It pointed ahead to Jesus the Man, who would be offered on the rough wood of the cross to pay for the sins of all.

Caleb: "Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and to crucify.'" (Matthew 20:17-19a)

Daniel: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

Jacob: How sad that the cross, with its wood so rough and cruel, would have its turn to hold the Baby! But it is here that the blood flows and, when the payment for sin is complete, the cross holds the dead.

Rachel: The Savior is wrapped now, not in the swaddling clothes of the manger, but the gloomy linens of the grave. It too gets its chance to hold the Baby. Joseph of Arimathea carries the Child of God to his own tomb, lays Him on the stone slab reserved for such a purpose, and a stone grumbles across the opening.

Caleb: “Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.” (Matthew 27:59-60).

Lilly: Oh, grave! Of all those who hold the Baby, we wish that you would not get a chance. Yet the grave must have its turn, for our debt must be paid. We must be buried with Christ. Our sins could not be overlooked; they could not go unpunished.

Lydia: For God to release the burden from us and give us the joy of everlasting life, all of our sins had to be paid for by God’s Son. The grave and hell must hold the Baby, so that they can **never** hold us.

Grades 6-8: “I Will Sing of My Redeemer”

I will sing of my Redeemer and His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered from the curse to set me free.
Sing, O sing of my Redeemer, with His blood He purchased me.
On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt and made me free.

I will tell the wondrous story how, my lost estate to save,
In His boundless love and mercy He the ransom freely gave.
Sing, O sing of my Redeemer, with His blood He purchased me.
On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt and made me free.

I will praise my dear Redeemer; His triumphant power I’ll tell,

How the victory He giveth over sin and death and hell.
Sing, O sing of my Redeemer, with His blood He purchased me.
On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt and made me free.

Congregation: “To Thee My Heart I Offer”

To Thee my heart I offer, O Christ-child sweet and dear,
Upon Thy love relying, Oh, be Thou ever near!
Take Thou my heart and give me Thine And let it be forever mine,
O Jesus, holy, undefiled, My Savior meek and mild.

What bro’t Thee to the manger, O Christ-child sweet and dear?
Thy love for me a stranger, Oh be Thou ever near!
O Lord, how great is this Thy love That reaches down from heaven above,
Thy love for us, by sin defiled, That made Thee, God a child!

Let me be Thine forever, O Christ-child sweet and dear,
Uphold me with Thy mercy, and be Thou ever near.
From Thee I gladly all receive, and What is mine to Thee I give,
My heart, my soul, and all I own, Let these be Thine alone.

The Heavens

Grant: Thanks be to God, that though the grave greedily grasped at the Savior, it could not hold Him for any length of time.

Ava: After three short days, He rose! And after 40 days He ascended, to be held in another place. A wonderful place!

Caleb L.: Who is it that gets to hold the Baby now? The heavens! The heavens laugh and the earth rejoices.

Isaac: “Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.” (Colossians 3:1)

Dylan: There the right hand of God holds the Baby, and all the living creatures fall before Him, saying, in Revelation 7:12:

Amy: “Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever!”

Preschool Grade 5: “Let Us All With Gladsome Voice”

Let us all with gladsome voice, praise the God of heaven,
Who to bid our hearts rejoice, His own Son hath given.

To this vale of tears He comes, Here to serve in sadness,
That with Him in heaven’s fair homes We may reign in gladness.

We are rich for He was poor; Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore Here on earth and yonder.

The Believer’s Heart

Dylan: Do *I* get to hold the Baby? Maybe you are wondering when YOU get to hold the Baby.

Grant: Since He is your God, Since He is your human brother,

Caleb L.: Since He is your keeper of the law, Since He died to save you from your sins,

Isaac: Since the manger and the shepherds got to hold Him – the poor lowly things and the poor people;

Preschool-Kindergarten: Since they can hold Him, So Can You!

Ava: Now dear Christian, you may hold Him too. For all is accomplished, and the heavens share Him with you.

Amy: God has placed Him into your lives to forgive all your sins and prepare you for eternal life. God has placed Him into your hearts so that you might find joy and comfort beyond expressing. The Baby is yours this day.

Verrick: *I* get to hold the Baby. We **ALL** get to hold the Baby! He was held by many, so that you could hold onto Him, and He could hold you forever.

The Christmas Gospel:

The Christmas Gospel we have told you, once sung by angels long ago, is full of comfort and of gladness to all who feel their sin and woe.

It is the gospel of salvation, how God the Father freely gave, His only Son to every nation, that He might come to seek and save.

No other child, no other Savior, can ever help this sinful earth. Then take the gift the Father sent us, and spread the message of His birth.

Congregation: “Joy to the World”

Joy to the World! The Lord is come! Let earth, receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room and heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing!

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrows grow Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow, Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.

Organist Mrs. Kathy Lueck

Accompanist Mrs. Lana Strike

Directors Ruth Eigenberg and Phil Strike

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Kindergarten – Grant Baumann, Caleb Ling

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2nd – Isaac Eigenberg

3rd – Amy Ruthenbeck, Verrick Stowe

5th – Dylan Zuehlke

6th – Rachel Kazemba, Jacob Zuehlke

7th – Daniel Ruthenbeck

8th – Lilly Bass, Caleb Eigenberg, Lydia Strike