

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST NEED?

The Reality

Our world and our own hearts are filled with discouragement, disappointment, frustration, confusion, and evil. We are constantly searching for meaning and significance, and we fill our lives with all kinds of things to give us the peace we are lacking. We deaden our pain with entertainment to escape. We project a certain image to the world and pretend we are OK.

Few people have any clue as to what the real problem is. Instead of thinking much about this, most people just go on with their lives, trying to find some meaning in their jobs, families, friends, or recreation. But people cannot escape the feeling of emptiness that haunts them day by day.

The Problem

We live in a world that defies explanation apart from God’s word, the Bible, and God tells us that our greatest problem is our sin. Sin has brought all kinds of consequences, including the aching emptiness we experience. But the most serious consequence is our separation and alienation from the God who has created us for Himself. We all experience guilt. That is actually a good thing because it is our God-given monitor called the conscience telling us we have violated God’s law.

The Remedy

The gospel, God’s good news, is His answer to our greatest need. The gospel is actually bad news before it is good news. God’s Word teaches that everyone is born a sinner. We don’t think we are so bad because we compare ourselves to others and come out feeling pretty good about ourselves. But this is a false standard. God will measure us by His perfect standard, His holy law, and on that basis we all fail. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Other Paths?

Many people believe that it doesn’t really matter what we believe as long as we follow our own hearts. “Be true to yourself” is today’s motto. But if we think we are good, then God and the gospel will be irrelevant to our lives.

The Only Life of Meaning

Dear friend, you are not safe outside of Christ. We all stand before God condemned for our sin. Ever since the first man, Adam, chose to find his meaning and purpose without God, every one of us seeks to do the same. Originally, we were created to have a relationship with Him. God alone is the source of meaning in life. He alone can fill the emptiness and right the injustices.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Every year, Proclamation collects a special Christmas Offering during the month of December to assist one domestic and one international ministry approved by our Missions Committee.

This year we look to support MNA Metanoia Prison Ministry. Their purpose: Partnering with the church for the discipleship, mentoring and reintegration of prisoners. We will also support the Harding Memorial Bible College in Yirgacheffe, Ethiopia. With their expanding attendance, the school is in need of a new building that would serve as a new dormitory, office, and large gathering space.

All donations given tonight will go to the Christmas Offering.

CHRISTMAS HYMN DEVOTIONAL

Christmas Eve: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Words by Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley’s *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* needs little introduction. It opens or closes most Christmas Eve services including the iconic Lessons and Carols service at Kings College, Oxford. It is no surprise that many rank it among their three favorite Christmas hymns. Wesley infuses his poetry with theology and does not waste a phrase. Though his original stanzas have been modified slightly over time, the three stanzas that are sung worldwide attest to their lasting quality.

Just as iconic is its traditional tune MENDELSSOHN. Its melodic and rhythmic contour lend to singers’ burgeoning emotion. It begins with a low pitch (which is revisited only once), and from there the tune soars, peaking twice; it’s the melody’s first apotheosis that impels singers’ most robust delivery, and it’s that first peak of stanza 3 that coincides with this remarkable line: “Born to raise the sons of earth.”

Why do assemblies sing this phrase with explosive power? In part, the word “raise” lends itself to raising one’s volume, and coinciding with the peak in the melody, it is very satisfying to sing. But it’s not just that; the words “sons of earth” make this line remarkable.

The word earth is mundane, sublunary, and carnal. It draws our attention to who we are. We are from dust, like clay from the ground. Not only did Christ come as a son of earth, he became a son of earth to raise us from the dust. It’s a wonderful moment in the song and one of the most helpful lines of the entire poem, because it puts all our thanksgiving into context. Paradoxically, it is a sentence clothed in humility, yet one we get to sing with our loudest voice. By singing, “born to raise the sons of the earth,” we proclaim, “This is who I am! Thank you for raising this piece of clay.”

When you start this hymn, as jubilant as you may begin, consider saving your last outpouring of emotion for the 3rd stanza that, akin to Mary’s nard pouring, you may put your last ounces of gratitude and praise into this line: “Born to raise the sons of earth.” What a great moment of worship. — *Ryan Kelly*



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PROCLAMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

278 S. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 | (610) 520-9500 | proclamation.org



PROCLAMATION
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America

Sunday, December 24th, 2023



EVENING WORSHIP
CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24th, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Rev. Ben Falconer, *preaching*
Rev. Jeremy Johnson, *assisting*

—
*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.*
— Matthew 1:21

PRELUDE
LadyBelles Handbell Trio
Asaki Nakagawa, *piano*

Two Carols for Christmas
arr. Larry Sue

CALL TO WORSHIP*
John 9:35, 37-38

INVOCATION*

HYMN N° 203*
Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

SPECIAL MUSIC
Praise Makers, Training Choir, and Covenant Choir
Sarah Whitehead, *flute*
Luke Falconer, *triangle*
Asaki Nakagawa, *piano*

Christ Was Born on Christmas Day
arr. Pat Messick

HYMN N° 207*
Good Christian Men, Rejoice

Stanza 1: Praise Makers, Training Choir, and Covenant Choir
Stanza 2-3: All stand and sing

*Parents, during the remainder of the hymn,
please pick up your child in the narthex and return their robe.*

SCRIPTURE READING*
Luke 2:1-16, *pg. 857*

* Please stand.

HYMN N° 208*
O Come, All Ye Faithful

PASTORAL PRAYER

*At this time we would encourage you to record your attendance with us in the blue attendance pads.
Visitors, please consider filling out our connect card on the church app.*

OFFERTORY
Chancel Choir and Orchestra

O Holy Night
arr. Carmen Dragon

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining; it is the night of the dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till he appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope-the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn! Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born! O night, O holy night, O night divine! — *John Sullivan Dwight*

*The offering collected tonight will go to support MNA Metanoia Prison Ministry
and the Harding Memorial Bible College*

SERMON
Rev. Ben Falconer, *senior pastor*

He Now Speaks to Us by His Son
Hebrews 1:1-2, *pg. 1001*

SCRIPTURE READING
John 1:1-14

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 was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

CANDLE LIGHTING

To receive the light from a lighted candle, tip your unlighted candle toward the flame. Hold your lighted candle upright as your neighbor lights their candle from yours.

HYMN N° 210
Silent Night
Gideon Whitehead, *classical guitar*

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, heav'nly 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.

Silent night! Holy night! Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing alleluia to our King;
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

BENEDICTION*

POSTLUDE
Dr. Ryan Kelly, *organ*



*After the service, take a moment to greet those around you; especially those you may not know.
We want to welcome everyone with the love of Christ and the grace of the Spirit, in the name of the Lord.*

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Join us next Sunday at 10:30 for worship
Living in the Light of Eternity
2 Corinthians 5:1-10