

## Sermon followed by Service - Dec 29, 2024 Hebrews 2:10-18

Brothers don't normally have a choice in brothers. Sisters don't have a choice in sisters. My sister couldn't choose me as her brother. I couldn't pick her as my sister. There's a saying - "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family." But Jesus did. Jesus chose us to be his brothers and sisters. And Jesus chose himself to be our brother. And not just any kind of brother - not the bully brother, not the leaching brother, not the absent brother, but Jesus came to be our sharing brother!

Why would Jesus want to be my brother? I'm a lousy brother. I don't write; I don't call like I should. The same could be said about me as a brother of Jesus. I'm a lousy brother. I don't call or pray nearly enough; I don't pay attention like I should. I'm no pick of brothers.

And that goes for all of us brothers and sisters. From our parents we share some family traits. Some are cute, like smiles. Other family traits, like the family grudging and fighting, the family grumbling and gossiping, the family conspiracies where we excuse and enable each other's sin, the family secrets that we don't want to come out ... With those family traits, what should we expect from Jesus? That he'd run the other way, or disown us, or strike us down and lock us up for crimes against God and family.

And yet, what did Jesus do? Instead of running from us, he came to be our brother. This beats all the family Christmas movies out there. In Jesus, we have the almighty, the eternal Son

of God worshiped by thousands of angels in the glory of heaven. And what does he do? He lets go of heaven. He lets go of the comfort of heaven to sleep in a feeding trough. The holy Son of God lets go of the pure glory of heaven and becomes a dirty-diapered baby. The all-powerful ruler of the universe sets aside his power and becomes a helpless flesh and blood baby needing to be fed and burped by a mom named Mary.

Why? To share our flesh and blood. To share our parents, Adam and Eve. To share our humanity and to share our life. Not because our lives in this world are so great he didn't want to miss out. Not because life in our flesh and blood is so wonderful he just had to experience it for himself. And not because he just had to get in on our "fun." No, Jesus didn't become our brother to share in our "fun." Jesus came as our brother to share his help.

Not just to give us a hand. Not just to give us a boost. But to give his whole life for us. Jesus became our brother to die for us. Why? You know the usual answer, but we're not there yet. Our lesson has a different take on this. Jesus died for us to destroy the devil and free us from our slavery to the fear of death. Interesting, isn't it? Jesus died to destroy the devil. Not to wipe out the devil. Not to blow away the devil - gone without a trace. The devil's still around. He's still busy. But with Jesus, the devil's power is done. How so? The devil wants to do more than tempt us. The devil wants to do more than make us miserable. The devil wants to accuse us before God - "You, you, you, you are sinners. The wages of sin is death. And so you must die. You must die and be damned." The devil's goal isn't just to have us sin; the devil's goal is to have us dead and damned. The devil

must have thought he had won when he had Jesus dead. But Jesus raised himself back to life! Death and the devil - the devil's death power - couldn't hold on to Jesus. Jesus took the devil's best shot and got up again. Not just as God, but as your brother. With flesh and blood like yours, Jesus got back up! The devil's death weapon is broken, rendered ineffective. When it comes to death, all the devil can do is shoot blanks and make noise. When it comes to death, the devil doesn't call the shots.

What does that mean for us? With Jesus, we don't need to be afraid of death. I don't know if you noticed. This past week as we were celebrating Christmas, the church calendar was marking danger and death. December 26, the Festival of St. Stephen, Martyr, killed for the faith. December 27, the Festival of St. John, exiled for the faith. December 28, the Festival of the Holy Innocents, the babies killed by Herod the Great's war against Christ. Danger and death because of Christ might seem far off. In parts of our world, it's not far off. It's good to remember - with Jesus, we don't need to be afraid of death.

Closer to home, some of us had a chance to catch up with family and friends. We've read Christmas letters from family and friends. And what's the talk? After news, weather, and sports - we talk the health report, or for some people, the sick and dying report. With Jesus, we don't need to be afraid of death.

We don't have to chase doctors out of fear. We don't have to avoid doctors out of fear. We don't have to avoid funerals and funeral talk out of fear. We don't have to obsess over dying and death. We don't have to gorge and obsess on life. We don't have to play God or fight God for an extra day. We don't have to blow

off God's gift of medicine hoping for an earlier day. With Jesus, we don't need to act out of fear.

Why? Your enemy doesn't call the shots. Your God calls the shots. Some days when we look back over our life, having God calling the shots might not make death any less fearful. Why? The wages of sin is death. So back to our lesson. Why did Jesus become our brother? To die for us. Why did he die for us? Not just to break the devil's power of death, but to satisfy God's judgment of death, to pay the price to set you at one, right with God. With Jesus, you don't have a God judging: "You owe me." With Jesus, you have your Brother, the Son of God, declaring you right by God. With Jesus, you have the Father in heaven calling you family. With Jesus, you have the Spirit of God as God's guarantee to you, God's down-payment to you of a place with God's family in heaven.

So now what? We live like our brother is Jesus. We live like we're in the same family as Jesus. We live like we're going the same place as Jesus. We don't need to live the life of this world, afraid of death, afraid of missing out. We get to face death without fear; we get to face life without fear; we get to live life like our brother is Jesus! Amen.

## THE SERVICE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** so many are picking up after celebrating Christmas, putting Christmas away until next year, leaving Christmas behind without ever thinking much of Jesus.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we follow-up Christmas by following the Jesus who was born on Christmas. In Jesus, God gives us our perfect substitute to fill in for us and set us right by God.

### OPENING HYMN

*"Now Sing We, Now Rejoice"*

**Hymn 363**

Now sing we, now rejoice, now raise to heav'n our voice;  
he from whom joy streameth poor in a manger lies;  
not so brightly beameth the sun in yonder skies.  
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!

Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to thee.  
Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child;  
thro' thy grace and merit, blest Jesus, Lord most mild,  
draw me unto thee! Draw me unto thee!

Now through his Son doth shine the Father's grace divine.  
Death was reigning o'er us through sin and vanity  
till he opened for us a bright eternity.  
May we praise him there! May we praise him there!

Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground,  
where the angels singing with all his saints unite,  
sweetest praises bringing in heav'nly joy and light.  
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

### INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

- M: We confess our sins and ask for forgiveness.  
Almighty Lord God, we have gathered today to thank you for the gift of your Son, our Savior. We need a Savior, for we have sinned greatly against you. But your mercies never end; they are new to us every day. So at your command and promise, we ask you to forgive us.
- C: **O holy and most merciful Father, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: God, have mercy on me a sinner!**
- M: I bring you good news of great joy! A Savior has been born for you! Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil; he has set you free to live with God. He has done what we couldn't do - he has made us right with God! Through Jesus you are forgiven and saved to be God's child. Glory to God in the highest!
- C: **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

- M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

HYMN

*"Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising"*

Hymn 362 vs. 1-4, 6

Come, your hearts and voices raising,  
Christ the Lord with gladness praising;  
loudly sing his love amazing, worthy folk of Christendom.

Christ, from heav'n to us descending and in love our race befriending,  
in our need his help extending, saved us from the wily foe.

Jacob's Star in all its splendor beams with comfort sweet and tender,  
forcing Satan to surrender, breaking all the pow'rs of hell.

From the bondage that oppressed us, from sin's fetters that possessed us, from the grief that sore distressed us, we, the captives, now are free.

Gracious Child, in mercy hear us, from your lowly manger cheer us, gently lead us and be near us till we join th' angelic choir.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming, deliver us from the corruption of our sin, and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### FIRST READING

*Hebrews 2:10–18*

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says,

“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the assembly I will sing your praises.”

And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again he says,

“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN**

*“To Shepherds as They Watched by Night”*

**Hymn 335**

To shepherds as they watched by night appeared a host of angels bright;  
“Behold the tender babe,” they said, “in yonder lowly manger laid,

“At Bethlehem, in David’s town, as Micah did of old make known.  
It is the Christ, your Lord and King, who will to all salvation bring.”

O then rejoice that through his Son God is with sinners now at one;  
made like yourselves of flesh and blood, your brother is th’ eternal God.

What harm can sin and death then do? The true God now abides with you.  
Let hell and Satan storm and rave, Christ is your brother—you are safe.

Not one he will or can forsake; his promise he will never break.  
Let ev’ry scheme the tempter try, you may his utmost pow’rs defy.

You shall and must at last prevail; God’s own you are, you cannot fail.  
To God forever sing your praise with joy and patience all your days.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

*Luke 2:41–52*

Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.



After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

*"The Boyhood of Christ"*

Hymn 979

1 The grow - ing limbs of God the Son, the Fa - ther's  
 2 In wis - dom and in grace he grows, each step of  
 3 His Fa - ther's house he en - ters in, where rab - bis

sole - be - got - ten One, pre - pare him for his  
 hu - man life he knows; in all but sin like  
 teach their cure for sin, while in his heart he

work on earth, who for man - kind took hu - man birth.  
 us was made, to be a fall - en peo - ple's aid.  
 hears the call which through his cross won life for all.

4 And he who rules an - gel - ic bands, who high in  
 5 To him, the Fa - ther's on - ly Son, let praise and  
 heav'n - ly glo - ry stands, now yields him to his  
 hon - or now be done, who by the Ho - ly  
 moth - er's will, a boy's o - be - dience to ful - fill.  
 Spir - it's grace took flesh to save our hu - man race.

SERMON

*Hebrews 2:10-18*

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Excerpts from the Athanasian Creed

See *Christian Worship*, pp. 284-285, for the complete Athanasian Creed.

- P: It is necessary for eternal salvation truly to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ also took on human flesh.
- C: **Now this is the true Christian faith.**  
**We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man.**
- P: He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother,
- C: **fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh,**
- P: equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity; and though he is both God and man,
- C: **Christ is not two persons, but one,**
- P: one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God; one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person; for just as the rational soul and flesh are one human being,
- C: **so God and man are one Christ.**

**C: He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, and from there will come to judge the living and the dead. This is the true Christian faith.**

*The Athanasian Creed*

*Next to the mystery of the holy Trinity, the greatest mystery in heaven and on earth is the personal union, that God and man are a single person in our Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the history of the New Testament church, reason, logic, and paganism have fought to cloud the identity of God as Triune and Jesus Christ as both true God and true man. To clear the confusion and safeguard the Truth, the Athanasian Creed was written as the Church's confession of the identity of our God and Savior. In seeking to clear confusion and safeguard Truth, some might say, the Athanasian Creed brings its own confusion - is it necessary for salvation to know the Athanasian Creed and to understand all it declares? We rest on the promise of Jesus: "God so loved the world that he gave his One and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

*At the same time, we sound the warning of the Creed - those who reject what this creed teaches are rejecting the true identity of their God and Savior. Thank you, Lord, for teaching us who you are!*

**OFFERING**

*If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.*



**CHOIR SONG**

*"A Cradle in Bethlehem"*

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.*

Almighty God and Father, we thank you for all your mercies, especially for the gift of your Son, through whom you have revealed your gracious will. We praise you for the Holy Spirit and his working through the means of grace.

**Plant your Word in our hearts, and cause it to produce fruit in our lives.**

Strengthen and defend your Church, that by your Word and sacraments faith may grow and love toward all may increase.

**Support all who spread the light of your truth throughout the world.**

Keep our children in the grace of their baptisms. Enable their parents to train them in lives of faith.

**Raise up Christians to serve you in the ministry of the Word and in all godly walks of life.**

Preserve our nation in justice and honor. Guide and bless all who make, administer, and judge our laws.

**Give them wisdom that they may promote justice and hinder evil.**

Let your blessing rest on planting and harvest, commerce and industry, medicine and science, the arts and culture. Protect all who travel, and care for those whose work is difficult or dangerous.

**Be with all who devote themselves to any useful task.**

Comfort all who are in sorrow or need, sickness or adversity, *[especially . . . here name the person and the cause of the petition]*. Remember those who suffer persecution for the faith. Have mercy on those for whom death draws near.

**Grant them your love, and take them into your tender care.**

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

We remember with thanksgiving those who have loved and served you, who now rest from their labors, [*especially . . . here name the person*]. Console those who are mourning or living with sadness.

**Keep us in the true faith, and bring us at last to the joys of heaven.**

Grant us these things, Father, for the sake of Jesus, who died and rose again. **Amen.**

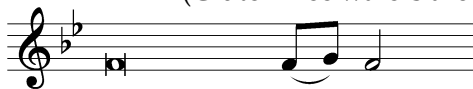
### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

### THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)



The Lord be with you.



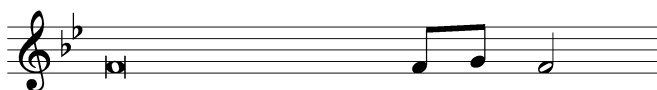
**And al - so with you.**



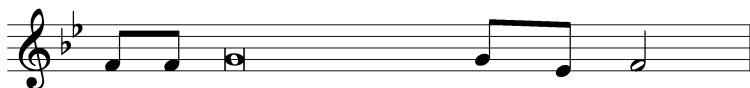
Lift up your hearts.



**We lift them up to the Lord.**



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whose wonderful and mysterious birth you have opened our eyes to the glory of your grace and renewed in our hearts the fervor of your love. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)**

**CW 184**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my  $\text{T}$  body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my  $\text{T}$  blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

### **JESUS, LAMB OF GOD (SUNG)**

**CW 186**

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

*"Let All Together Praise Our God"*

Hymn 355

Let all together praise our God before his highest throne;  
today he opens heav'n again and gives us his own Son,  
and gives us his own Son.

He leaves his heav'nly Father's throne, is born an infant small,  
and in a manger, poor and lone, lies in a humble stall, lies in a humble stall.  
He veils in flesh his pow'r divine a servant's form to take,  
in want and lowliness must pine who heav'n and earth did make,  
who heav'n and earth did make.

He undertakes a great exchange, puts on our human frame,  
and in return gives us his realm, his glory, and his name,  
his glory, and his name.

He serves that I a lord may be— a great exchange indeed!  
Could Jesus' love do more for me to help me in my need,  
to help me in my need?

For us he opens wide the door of paradise today.  
The angel guards the gate no more; to God our thanks we pay,  
to God our thanks we pay.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you  
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,  
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

## BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

*“O Rejoice, All Christians Loudly”*

**Hymn 366**

O rejoice, all Christians, loudly, for our joy has now begun;  
wondrous things our God has done. Tell abroad his goodness proudly,  
who our race has honored thus, that he has befriended us.

### *Refrain*

Joy, O joy, beyond all gladness! Christ has done away with sadness!  
Hence, all sorrow and repining, for the Sun of grace is shining!

See, my soul, your Savior chooses poverty and weakness, too;  
in such love he comes to you. Neither crib nor cross refuses,  
all he suffers for your good to redeem you by his blood. *Refrain*

Lord, how shall I thank you rightly? I am saved eternally  
by your life and death for me. Let me not forget it lightly,  
but with all my heart believe that from you I shall receive. *Refrain*

Jesus, guard and guide your members, fill them with your boundless grace,  
hear their prayers in ev’ry place. Fan to life faith’s glowing embers;  
grant all Christians far and near holy peace, a glad new year. *Refrain*

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