

# Sunday Gathering Liturgy

From Virtual—Into Reality,  
Luke 2:22-35 - Bradley Bell

December 19, 2021

Advent: From Darkness—Into  
Light

## Call to Worship - Isaiah 25:9

As you can see this morning, our church has a tradition of lighting Advent candles as a way of tangibly picturing the light of Jesus Christ coming into the darkness of our world. We are going to light them a bit differently this year in order to flow with our sermon series titled "From Darkness—Into Light". The candle that is lit today actually represents the theme of joy, because the subject of today's sermon is "From Virtual—Into Reality". In other words, as Psalm 16:11 gives voice, in the reality of Jesus' presence there is fullness of joy.

But you may be here this morning, and let's be honest, the joy ain't flowing. After the past two years there may be lingering distractions that keep you settling for cheap imitations of it. You know what—we're glad you're here, and we invite you to enter the real joy of God's presence.

So let's begin with the words of the prophet Isaiah:

It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

Congregation: This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9

## Joy To The World (Our God Reigns)

### Confession - Isaiah 65:17-19

When we say "From Virtual—Into Reality," what does that mean? What does that look like? How does it apply to us? If we are to move from darkness into light, then we need to confess our escape into a virtual world, in order to welcome the arrival of God's kingdom reality. One of our members is now going to share what that has looked like for him:

Coffee is great, that first sip of the day, when you have no caffeine in your body, the first drop rejuvenates your entire body. I remember clearly my first sip of spiritual coffee after the lockdowns. The first time I was back in this room, after being stuck in virtual worship for so long. It hit me, like that first cup of the day. Like coming from that pre-coffee coma to a coffee-infused wakefulness, walking into a physical place of worship is energizing.

Any of you who I've talked to know my love of the virtual. Virtual games, virtual money, in the form of crypto currency, and virtual places made by man and computer code. In fact my best friend, Tom, and I have been online daily, or weekly hanging out together for hours at a time for over 6 years. We have never met in person. I hope that one day soon we will be able to meet. It will be with great joy and excitement for the first time our virtual will become reality. I anticipate that meeting. In the same way we need to not be stuck in a virtual relationship with God. Have you ever thought about when Jesus returns and the new heavens and new earth? When He comes you will be able to physically touch Jesus? How much greater will that be than this? So as sum1 who loves the virtual, let me testify in front of all of you. There is something special about being in fellowship in reality.

Now, let's respond by proclaiming God's promise of a coming reality for those who hope in Jesus:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Congregation: But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. Isaiah 65:17-19

Amen—come Lord Jesus!

## What Child Is This

### Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me

## Sermon - Luke 2:22-35

## Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

## Give Me Jesus

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## ***I Will Wait For You (Psalm 130)***

### **Announcements & Benediction - Hebrews 12:2**

You may be seated. Thank you for joining us in today's gathering! We hope that you have experienced the welcome of Jesus.

#### 1) Giving & Visitors

This year we have a goal of raising \$5,000 for global missions, which will be divided among all our distributed members.

Another goal is to sell out our MCT prayer calendars. They are \$10 each. This is great opportunity to help us fulfill our commitment to pray for the members we have distributed among the nations.

2) MCT Anniversary Celebration - Speaking of MCT, on January 9th we will be having a Sending Sunday to celebrate 10 years of MCT! This will include a Sunday evening all-FG event from 4-6 PM that will involve snacks, kids activities, and commemoration of all our distributed members and their nations of service over the years. More information to come.

3) Christmas Eve Gathering - Our Christmas Eve gathering is this Friday from 5-6 PM (so you can get back to your family activities). In the same spirit of Jesus' birth, we seek to keep it simple with Scripture, candlelight, and song. We have made some invitations available for you to share.

We begin each gathering with a call to worship and we end with a benediction which simply is a reminder that we are blessed to be a blessing. I invite you to hold out your hands as a posture of receiving this blessing:

Church, for the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Therefore this week—for the joy that is set before you—may you endure the cheaper imitations of Christmas, and be present to the reality that Jesus has come and is coming again.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's say this together: We are sent.

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