

# **Sunday Gathering**

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**December 3, 2023 - Complete Joy, John  
3:22-30 - Brad Bell**

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## Call to Worship

The Christmas season is here! For some of you, celebrations began as soon as Thanksgiving meal was done, and others of you may not have even waited for it to begin. Regardless of when you began decorating your home, it's important to remember that this season is not about the trees or the lights, it's about the celebration of our Savior, who from the moment Adam and Eve fell, planned to intercede on our behalf.

So as we prepare our homes for the coming Christmas season, we should also prepare our hearts for the returning Christ.

Read the underlined portions with me:

You came once for your people,  
O Lord, and you will come for us again.

Though there was no room at the inn  
to receive you upon your first arrival,  
We would prepare you room  
here in our hearts  
and here in our home,  
Lord Christ.

As we decorate and celebrate, we do so to mark  
the memory of your redemptive movement into  
our broken world, O God.

Our glittering ornaments and Christmas trees,  
Our festive carols, our sumptuous feasts—  
By these small tokens we affirm  
that something amazing has happened  
in time and space—  
that God, on a particular night,  
in a particular place, so many years ago,  
was born to us, an infant King, our Prince of Peace.

Our wreaths and ribbons and colored lights,  
our giving of gifts, our parties with friends—  
these have never been ends in themselves.  
They are but small ways in which we repeat  
that sounding joy first proclaimed by angels  
in the skies near Bethlehem.

In view of such great tidings of love announced  
to us, and to all people, how can we not be moved  
to praise and celebration in this Christmas season?  
As we decorate our tree, and as we  
feast and laugh and sing together,  
we are rehearsing our coming joy!  
We are making ready to receive the one  
who has already, with open arms, received us!

We would prepare you room  
here in our hearts  
and here in our home,  
Lord Christ.

Now we celebrate your first coming, Immanuel,  
even as we long for your return.  
O Prince of Peace, our elder brother,  
return soon. We miss you so!

Amen.

Let's worship together.

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***Firm Foundation (He Won't)***

***Behold Our God***

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## **Confession**

It can be easy in the Christmas season to have a misplaced sense of joy. We can get caught up in the “Christmas spirit” which is often less about the birth of our Savior and more about getting gifts and our coveted peppermint mochas. At some point we have to ask ourselves: in perhaps one of the most widely celebrated holidays with abundant opportunities to share the gospel, can people recognize something different in my “Christmas spirit”?

When speaking to the Corinthians Paul says, “For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”

So take a moment and consider: how can you find daily opportunities this Christmas, to display a joyful spirit that is based in a love and thankfulness for your Savior?

Let us continue singing with a joy that can only be found in the praising of our Savior.

## **Reading and Singing of Psalm 80**

(Restore Us)

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## ***Is He Worthy?***

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## **Sermon - John 3:22-30**

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## ***All I Have Is Yours***

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## ***All Glory Be To Christ***

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## **Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:23-28**

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## **Benediction**

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

Family Groups - We invite you to visit one of our Family Groups, which meet in homes throughout the week. We describe them as "intentional environments to be transformed by the gospel through relationships. If you would like to join one of them, there is info in the hallway, or talk with one of us, and we'll make a direct connection for you.

Giving & Visitors - Also, now is our time for giving—ushers, please come forward. If you are a visitor with us this morning, please grab a visitor card from the basket so we can get to know you more. You can give it to someone with a lanyard or leave it in your seat.

Antioch members, remember that giving is part of how we participate in God's mission. If you prefer to give digitally, visit our website or find us on GivApp.

## **Announcements**

For everyone, here are a few ways to take the following steps:

- 1) The send-off lunch for the Bells is today, right after church. We invite you to stay and eat and wish the Bells well.
- 2) Antioch Kids and Young Disciples will be leading a Christmas song with the worship team on December 17th! There will be a few short practices on Sunday mornings beforehand. Please see Kathleen Williams, Sabrina Robertson or Sarah O'Malley for more info.
- 3) Our Annual Women's Christmas Brunch will take place here at the church on December 9th at 10:00 AM. Please check the Antioch Women's Facebook page for more details. If you are not on that Facebook group, please check with Katie Harrod.
- 4) Security meeting Dec 10th right after church, if you are interested in serving to help keep our church safe please see Andy Oliveras

We begin each gathering with a call to worship and end with a benediction, which is simply a reminder that we are blessed to be a blessing.

Church, may you leave here today, pointing to Jesus with everything that you do. The most loving thing you can do for those around you, is to share about the Prince of Peace who came, died, and rose again to save you from the punishment you deserved. That is where true joy is found. Don't keep it to yourself.

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

You are sent.

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