

Christmas Chapel -Scripture & Song

Enter silently - Strings prelude

Need rocking chair & a knitted item, ball of yarn...

PRELUDE: Strings

JK: We have finally made it! Welcome to our Christmas Chapel - our final chapel in 2024. This chapel will be mostly singing, scripture, and some reflections following a similar thread from our advent chapels. Each item will happen unannounced. I invite you to hear these words and let them weave into a thought, idea, or memory you can take with you from this place. Before we begin our story-telling and -listening, let's pray together.

Loving God,
Our prayer today is a stirring hum.
You find it in the silence of the sleeping forest,
down under the ice.
You find it with the wind sweeping in cold gusts,
rattling the windows.
Our prayer is the snow that's falling.
Inside, it's the table being set, the preparations,
it is every twinkling light and piece of greenery.
Our prayer floats like the fragrance of food in the oven as we pull this prayer along with us.

This prayer is profoundly personal,
it slides in drops down people's cheeks.
This prayer is lodged
in the tightness between shoulder blades,
it's written in the wrinkles on foreheads,
so many sighs express it.
This prayer is found in hospitals, hostels, temporary shelters, tents,
and refugee camps, in homes of every kind.

This prayer gathers above our beds at night,
in the morning as we open the curtains,
we see it growing in the sky.
You find our prayer in Bethlehem,
because we cast it there across the ages.
It is knit together with the song of angels
over the bed of a sleeping baby, hours old;
a tiny little blanket of hope.
Amen.

Reflection: Sure, I can teach you how to knit. Are you sure you want to try? You know, it can be difficult to get started. Oh, you're sure? Great, let's settle in.

A declaration from the Prophet Isaiah:

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reflection: Knitting begins with a ball of yarn. Or does it? Before I get my hands on this wool, sheep somewhere graze and grow a thick pelt. Sheep shearers do their work. Hands around the world sort, size, wash, comb, and spin the wool in order to make it usable. Another set of hands adds colour. Knitting is work I can do, but my work relies on the work of people and animals that came before me.

Song: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus VT218 (V1-3)

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."^[b] ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"^[c] ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[d] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection: Picking up a set of needles for the first time can be daunting. The yarn gets dropped, tangled, unraveled. Needles are difficult to hold, without guidance. I never thought I could do it. My mother could do it with her eyes closed. My grandfather? People knew him for the beautiful sweaters he would create. Me? I thought there was absolutely no way. Until... someone took the time to teach me. And then, maybe I could do it.

Song: The Angel Gabriel Called Mary Blessed VT221 (V1&2)

A story from the Gospel of Matthew:

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[☩] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;[☩] and he named him Jesus.

Reflection: I am prone to giving up on my hobbies. I have a vision for the masterpieces I will create, and when it becomes too hard to master on the first try, I stop. It takes a lot of patience to keep at something that is difficult. It is so much easier to just forget I ever started, to avoid that feeling of failure.

But, everyone who has mastered something has needed to practice. They don't just try once, but train. They have needed patience to push through the discomfort. And then, those stitches fall into place just so, and you are suddenly holding that scarf you were waiting for.

Song: What Child is This? VT267 (V1&3)

A story from the Gospel of Luke:

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Song: O Little Town of Bethlehem VT245 (V1,3,4)

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Song: Away in a Manger VT257 (V1&2) - Strings // transition to Silent Night

Song: Silent Night VT244

Reflection: Knitting is all about trusting the process. It's amazing that one string will tie enough knots to create a fabric, insulating, soft, and beautiful. I never get tired of this process, of the surprises, milestones, and results.

Once, I was trying to make a wide scarf, and I ended up with a small blanket. I wondered what I would do with this unexpected result. I realized it would make the perfect gift, and it ended up being a joy for my niece, who got to be wrapped up in it during her first winter.

How surprisingly blessed we were, to get to see her little face, all snuggled in, peacefully sleeping in that blanket.

Luke 2 8-14 (Grade 6 Class):

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,^[a] the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,^[b] praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”^[c]

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Song: Hark the Herald Angels Sing VT247 (V1-3)

Reflection: What has surprised me the most about knitting are the people I have met. I was looking for a calming, peaceful, and independent hobby making crafts, but I actually made connections! Now, my mom and I share an ongoing project of donating most of our knitting to local shelters like Main Street Project, or to the collection bins in our church. I was invited to join a knitting group, and while I’ve learned a lot about this craft, I’ve learned more about what it means to create with others in a community. When we come together once a week to practice our stitches and create together, we share in our knowledge - we help each other! Not only that, but we get to share stories from our lives, building friendships, while we create things for ourselves, but mostly others.

That is what I hope for you in this knitting journey, that you get to experience how it is not just a practice, but how people are woven into your story, too.

A story from the Gospel of Matthew:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men[a] from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising,[b] and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah[c] was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd[d] my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men[e] and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,[f] until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped,[g] they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Vocal Jazz: O Beautiful Star of Bethlehem VT275 (V1-3 - all join on chorus after 2 &3)
a capella

Reflection: Wow. You chose some great wool with natural springiness. I bet those sheep were well cared for. Could you show me your first few stitches? Very carefully done, but keep practicing holding that tension evenly. With some guidance, you'll get there!

I think that's probably enough for today, I wouldn't want you to burn through all of your excitement on the first try. Now just remember to pick it up again tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day - don't let it slip through your fingers.

Do you see how each stitch is bound to the next? There might be flaws, but it can still offer joy and warmth.

A poem from the Gospel of John:

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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Song: Go Tell It on the Mountain VT252 (V1-3)