

Sunday, December 14th 2025

Third Sunday in Advent



Mailing Address:

**Epiphany Lutheran Church
489 Agnes
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Bastrop, TX 78602**

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(on the SDA campus)
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WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!”
(Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.



OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

Because those who eat and drink our Lord’s body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor.

For further study, see Matthew 5:23; 10:32; 18:15-35; 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh
Musician – Mark McClain
Lay Reader – Alison Parker
Assisting Elder – Alex Monroe
Usher – Jeremy Clifton
Acolyte – E.J. Clontz

AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Brings True Rejoicing, Even Under the Cross

Sometimes life requires the astonishing patience of Job. Like him, we are to rejoice in the midst of affliction, be grounded in repentance under the cross of Christ, and hope relentlessly in His resurrection, that we might see “*the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful*” (James 5:11). In the promise of the Gospel, therefore, “*be patient*” and “*establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*” (James 5:7, 8). Like St. John the Baptist, whatever your own kind of prison or suffering may be, call upon Jesus and receive the strength of His Word from those He sends to you. For as “*the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,*” so is the Good News of Jesus preached to you also (Matt. 11:5). He comes and restores the fortunes of Zion, His Holy Church, so that “*sorrow and sighing shall flee away*” (Is. 35:10).

DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR

Prelude		Selected Music
Welcome and Greeting		Pastor
Announcements		
Opening Hymn	<i>“Hark the Glad Sound”</i>	LSB 349
<i>(stand)</i>		

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 124:8

P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. *Ps. 130:3-4*

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. *[Luke 18:13]*

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

[John 20:19-23]

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Introit

Psalm 71:14-18

P I will hope continually
and will praise you yet more and more.

C My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

P With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come;
I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

**C O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.**

P So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

**C *Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.***



C Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

(sit)

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;

²it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
7the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
8And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.
9No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
10And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Reading

James 5:7-11

7Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

(stand)

Alleluia and Verse



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



C These things are writ - ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:31



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Holy Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:2-15

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the eleventh chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

(sit)

Hymn of the Day *“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”* LSB 338

Sermon *“Shall we look for another?”* *Matthew 11:2-15*

(stand)

Nicene Creed

C **I believe in one God,
 the Father Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth
 and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of His Father before all worlds,
 God of God, Light of Light,
 very God of very God,
 begotten, not made,**

**being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and
the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and
glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace

(sit)

Prayer of the Church

⒫ Lord, in Your mercy
Ⓒ hear our prayer.

Offering

Usher

(stand)

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

Preface

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

[Colossians 3:1

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

[Psalm 136]

P It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the promised Messiah, the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san - na in the high-est, sing ho - san - na to the Lord;



Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

P Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

C **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 Words of Our Lord

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

P Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My **✠** body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

P In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My **✝** blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Pax Domini

John 20:19

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C Amen.

Agnus Dei

John 1:29



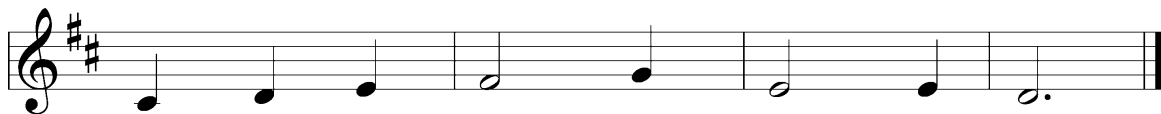
C 1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



You take the sin of the world a - way;
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,



Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

(sit)

Distribution Hymn

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

LSB 357

(stand)

Nunc Dimittis

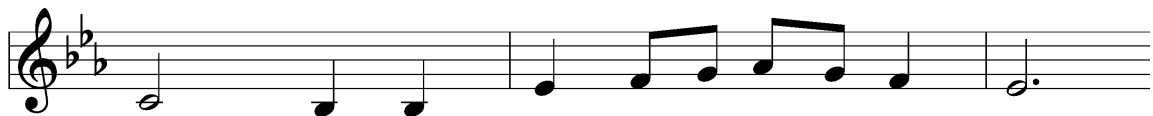
Luke 2:29-32



1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All



part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the



glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;



A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is



to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -



peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Post-Communion Collect

P Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus and Benediction

P Let us bless the Lord.

[Psalm 103:1]

C Thanks be to God.

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

C Amen.

(sit)

Closing Hymn

“Comfort, Comfort Ye My People”

LSB 347

P Go in Peace!

C Serve the Lord!

Postlude

Selected Music

Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.



CATECHISM CORNER | *Bite-sized teachings from Luther's Small Catechism*

Written in 1529 in Q&A format, the Small Catechism explores the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

The Benefit of the Sacrament of the Altar

What benefit do we receive from such eating and drinking?

The benefit which we receive from such eating and drinking is shown us by these words: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins," namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

SERMON NOTES: Matthew 11:2-15

"Shall we look for another?"

1. The _____ was—and still is—widespread in Judaism that in the _____ of the _____ all diseases and distresses will disappear.
2. "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Like _____, we must respond to the _____ of who _____ is!
3. When we're imprisoned, either _____ or by _____, by anger, resentment, and fear, then our perspectives—and our _____—change.
4. The fact that John sends _____ Jesus for an answer proves his faith _____ Jesus.
5. John's question is not one of _____, but a question of _____, one we ask from our own prisons that confine us to a limited imagination about _____.
6. _____ puts _____ in charge. Expectation puts us in charge. _____ allows _____ to surprise us. Expectation does not.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless— it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

Epiphany Events Calendar: Our congregation calendar is on our website (epiphanybastrop.org); to add an event, please email secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Offering: Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home> or scan this QR code.



10am Adult Sunday School Series! Join us next Sunday for the study, *Drive Thru History: History of the Bible*, as we explore how the Scriptures have been preserved, translated, and passed down through generations.

Voter's Meeting TODAY: Our regular Voter's Meeting of the year will be held after the service. At this time, the two agenda items for this meeting are 1) electing officers and 2) approving our 2026 budget.

Advent Midweek Gatherings: Join us for the final Advent Wednesday evening gathering at our new property (124 Three Oaks Ln) at 6:30pm for light dinner fare and an Advent video study on Dec. 17.

Thursday 6pm Advent/Christmas Zoom video study: Join us for the final session of *Things They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School* on December 18! Register: bit.ly/ELC-ChristmasThings

Christmas Eve Worship Service: Join us for a candlelight service (no Communion) at 7pm at our new property!

Epiphany Sisters of the Light: We are taking a break from meeting during Advent and the Christmas season. Join us at 6pm on Tuesday, January 13 for a discussion of *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver. We will share a light supper, fellowship, prayer, and key takeaways from the book. Plenty of time to start reading! Need a book? Contact Carole at (817) 614-3916.



Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at peacebewithyou.podbean.com (or just scan the QR code).



Lutheran Radio: Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to lhm.org for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBJ (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

KFUO Radio, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at kfu.org and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/KFUOradio), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/KFUOradio), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/KFUOradio).

RightNow Media: Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—**RightNow Media** has a free app that's available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb or scan the QR code.



ChristianBook Giveback Program: Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit christianbook.com/apps/giveback and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we'll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

Sunday, December 14th

- 10:00am – Children’s Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion
- Immediately Following the Service – Voter’s Meeting

Tuesday, December 16th

- 6:00pm – Devotional at Argent Court

Wednesday, December 17th

- 6:30pm – Advent Midweek Gathering

Thursday, December 18th

- 6:00pm – Advent/Christmas Zoom Video Study

Sunday, December 21st

- 10:00am – Children’s Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion

The First Annual Epiphany Lutheran Church Spend the Year in Scripture Challenge reading schedule through next Sunday:

- Day 349 - Mon 12/15: 1 Timothy 1-6
- Day 350 - Tue 12/16: 2 Timothy 1-4
- Day 351 - Wed 12/17: Titus 1-3, Philemon 1
- Day 352 - Thu 12/18: Hebrews 1-6
- Day 353 - Fri 12/19: Hebrews 7-10
- Day 354 - Sat 12/20: Hebrews 11-13
- Day 355 - Sun 12/21: James 1-5



Answers to Sermon Notes:
1. The *hope* was—and still is—widespread in Judaism that in the *time* of the *Messiah* all diseases and distresses will disappear.
2. “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” Like *Israel*, we must respond to the *question* of who *Jesus* is!
3. When we’re imprisoned, either *literally* or by *sin*, by anger, resentment, and fear, then our perspectives—and our *questions*—change.
4. The fact that John sends *to* Jesus for an answer proves his faith *in* Jesus.
5. John’s question is not one of *doubt* but a question of *trust* one we ask from our own prisons that confine us to a limited imagination about *God*.
6. *Faith* puts *God* in charge. Expectation puts us in charge. *Faith* allows *God* to surprise us. Expectation does not.

PRAYER REQUESTS: Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Please continue to pray for...

- Rev. Dr. Carl and Chenhsi Hanson and their daughters, Emma, Andrea, and Lydia – Missionaries in South Korea
 - Carl and Sandy Sneck
 - Gert Schriner
-



The Gospel Roots of Santa Claus

Few figures are more familiar during the Christmas season than Santa Claus. He appears in store windows, parades, movies, and children's imaginations—radiating joy, generosity, and the spirit of giving. Yet behind the red suit and sleigh bells stands a real Christian bishop whose life continues to bear witness to Christ: St. Nicholas of Myra. Recovering his story allows us to see that the roots of our cultural Santa Claus grow deeply in the soil of Christian faith.

Nicholas lived in the 4th century in what is now Turkey. Orphaned at a young age, he inherited a modest sum of money—resources he believed belonged not to him but to God's people in need. He became known for quiet, compassionate generosity. The most enduring story tells of a poor man with three daughters who lacked the dowries needed for marriage. Without help, these young women faced dire futures. Moved by mercy, Nicholas visited the family by night and secretly tossed bags of gold through their window, providing for them without seeking repayment or praise. This humble, joyful giving still shapes our imagination of Christmas generosity.

Nicholas was also a bold shepherd of the Church. As bishop of Myra, he lived during the time when the early Church confronted the teaching of Arius, who denied that Jesus is truly God. Tradition holds that Nicholas participated in the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, where he stood firmly with those who confessed the full divinity of Christ. His conviction was simple: if Jesus is not truly God, then He cannot truly save. Nicholas defended the faith not out of anger, but out of devotion to the truth of the Gospel and deep love for Christ's people.

Over the centuries, stories of Nicholas's faith and generosity spread throughout the Christian world. Followers commemorated his feast day, told of his kindness, and

imitated his concern for the poor. When Dutch settlers came to America, they brought the name *Sinterklaas*, which over time became *Santa Claus*. American culture added new details—chimneys, reindeer, elves, the North Pole—but the heart of the tradition remained rooted in a Christian leader whose life pointed to Jesus.

As Christians, we don't need to discard the warmth or joy associated with Santa Claus. Instead, we can redirect that joy toward its true foundation. At its best, the Santa tradition celebrates generosity, surprise, kindness, and delight—all reflections of the character of God. But when removed from its Christian roots, Santa becomes merely a seasonal mascot rather than a reminder of Christlike giving.

To reclaim the Christian connection, we follow Nicholas's own example: we point to Jesus. Nicholas gave because he had first received the gift of God's love. He lifted up the poor because he believed in a Savior who came to lift the lowly. He defended the truth because he knew salvation depends on who Christ truly is. Every act of giving shaped by his story becomes a small echo of the Gospel: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son" (John 3:16).

As we step into the Christmas season, Nicholas invites us to consider our own witness. Where might God call us to generosity? To quiet compassion? To a bold confession of Christ? The world may cherish Santa Claus for the magic of the season—but we cherish the story even more for the miracle it reflects: the generous love of God made flesh in Jesus Christ.