

Love the Lord  
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha  
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**First Lesson: Genesis 3:14-15**

<sup>14</sup>The Lord God said to the serpent,  
'Because you have done this,  
cursed are you among all animals  
and among all wild creatures;  
upon your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.'

**Second Lesson: Isaiah 45:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> For thus says the Lord,  
who created the heavens  
(he is God!),  
who formed the earth and made it  
(he established it;  
he did not create it a chaos,  
he formed it to be inhabited!):  
I am the Lord, and there is no other.

<sup>19</sup> I did not speak in secret,  
in a land of darkness;  
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,  
'Seek me in chaos.'

I the Lord speak the truth,  
I declare what is right.

<sup>20</sup> Assemble yourselves and come together,  
draw near, you survivors of the nations!  
They have no knowledge—  
those who carry about their wooden idols,  
and keep on praying to a god  
that cannot save.

<sup>21</sup> Declare and present your case;  
let them take counsel together!

Who told this long ago?  
Who declared it of old?

Was it not I, the Lord?  
There is no other god besides me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is no one besides me.

<sup>22</sup> Turn to me and be saved,  
all the ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is no other.  
<sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn,  
from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness  
a word that shall not return:  
'To me every knee shall bow,  
every tongue shall swear.'  
<sup>24</sup> Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me,  
are righteousness and strength;  
all who were incensed against him  
shall come to him and be ashamed.  
<sup>25</sup> In the Lord all the offspring of Israel  
shall triumph and glory.

### **Third Lesson: Luke 1:57, 67-69**

<sup>57</sup> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.  
<sup>67</sup> Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:  
<sup>68</sup> 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.  
<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty savior for us  
in the house of his servant David.

### **Fourth Lesson: Luke 1:26-38**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.  
<sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He 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. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' <sup>35</sup>The 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 will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And 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. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God.' <sup>38</sup>Then 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.

### **Fifth Lesson: Matthew 1:18-24**

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:  
<sup>23</sup> 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, ‘God is with us.’<sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

### **Sixth Lesson: Luke 2:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

### **Seventh Lesson: Luke 2:8-20**

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

<sup>14</sup>‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

<sup>15</sup>When 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.’ <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### **Eighth Lesson: Revelation 21:1-4, 22:12-14, 16-17, 20**

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
<sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.’

<sup>12</sup> ‘See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. <sup>13</sup>I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.’

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

<sup>16</sup> ‘It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’

And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'  
And let everyone who is thirsty come.  
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.  
<sup>20</sup> The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

“Come, Lord Jesus!” I will admit I have always been challenged by the word “Lord.” I think of fiefs and feudal lands. Apparently my grade school education on medieval times was remarkably effective. Lords were those who held power, through property, over those beneath them, often cruelly and with greed, in my recollection. A reminder from the most-esteemed of sources, Wikipedia, says: “In exchange for the use of the fief and the protection of the lord, the vassal would provide some sort of service to the lord.”<sup>1</sup> It doesn’t make sense to me to think of Jesus as Lord in that way.

Yet, there is more than a ring of truth in such a description. We sang tonight that “Love the Lord is on the way;” that is what is different. Jesus, *our* Lord, does not operate through cruelty and greed but through love, unending, unsurpassable love. We *do* have use of the land – we have been given dominion over creation. We *do* have protection from the Lord – we have been saved from death and given new life. But we do not provide some sort of service to our Lord *in exchange* for use of the land and for protection from our Lord. We provide our services, share our gifts, act in “lovingkindness,” not in exchange but in gratitude, as a way of showing our thanks for use of God’s creation; thanks for protection from death; thanks for the forgiveness of our sins. Our Lord is like no other, offering us the use of the land and protection for nothing in return. Our Lord is like no other, helping the least and the lowest instead of casting them out. Our Lord is like no other, coming to us not in power, but powerless, as an infant. Our Lord is like no other, coming to be among us rather than staying out of the ordinariness of our daily lives. Our Lord is like no other, causing joy instead of sorrow and strife, inspiring glad response, not fearful.

Jesus, our Lord, the infant we welcome tonight, when he had grown and begun his ministry, said he was the Light of the World. Indeed, his coming brought light not darkness. He came and was like no other, bringing light to the darkness. In grateful response, it is right that we follow his example and go out to be light to the world, sharing the gifts of God’s love with all people. “Let your light shine before all people that they will glorify God in heaven.” Let us begin by sharing light among one another as we prepare to sing Silent Night. Once all have received the light, in grateful response let us welcome again the Son of God, love’s pure light, love the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudalism>