

The First Sunday in Advent

Note: In preparation for this service, you may choose to use an Advent wreath. The Advent wreath has four candles around its circumference. Three of them are blue or purple. One is rose-colored. A white candle is in the middle of the wreath. On the first Sunday in Advent, we light the blue candle directly across from the rose candle. You may choose to light it now or in the service where indicated.

Advent means coming. For the last few weeks, we have been anticipating Jesus' second coming at the end of all time. In the Season of Advent, we prepare to celebrate Christ's first coming all the while keeping our eyes on Jesus' second coming in triumph and glory. At Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the crowds recognized the coming of the long-promised King. We know that this King was born in the Royal City of Bethlehem, died in the Regal City of Jerusalem, and rules heaven and earth for the sake of His faithful people. He will one day come again to judge both the living and the dead.

The Advent of Our King Lutheran Service Book 331, Lutheran Worship 12, The Lutheran Hymnal 68



1 The ad - vent of our King Our prayers must now em - ploy,
2 The ev - er - last - ing Son In - car - nate deigns to be,
3 O Zi - on's daugh - ter, rise To meet your low - ly King,
4 As judge, on clouds of light, He soon will come a - gain



And we must hymns of wel - come sing In strains of ho - ly joy.
Him - self a ser - vant's form puts on To set His ser - vants free.
Nor let your faith - less heart de - spise The peace He comes to bring.
And His true mem - bers all u - nite With Him in heav'n to reign.

5 Before the dawning day
Let sin's dark deeds be gone,
The sinful self be put away,
The new self now put on.

6 All glory to the Son,
Who comes to set us free,
With Father, Spirit, ever one
Through all eternity.

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L 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. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(Luke 18:13)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH - THE FIRST CANDLE:

L As we light the first candle on our Advent wreath, we confess that Jesus, the wondrous child, is also the light divine, who came forth from the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary as the Prophet Isaiah long ago foretold: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

C Savior of the nations, come,
Virgin's Son, make here Your home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth. Amen.

Introit Psalm 89:6, 14–16, 18; antiphon Zechariah 9:9b, alt.

L Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.

C Who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,

L Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

C Blessèd are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,

L who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.

C For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

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.

L Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Jeremiah 33:14–16

¹⁴“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.

L Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

C Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem.

L Behold, your king is coming to you;

C righteous and having salvation.

L Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

C From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Psalm 25:1–10

L ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

C ²O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.

L ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

C ⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

L ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

C ⁶Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

L ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

C ⁸Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

L ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

C ¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

⁹What thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Luke 19:28–40

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 19th chapter.

G **Glory to You, O Lord.**

²⁸When he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.” ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” ³²So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” ³⁵And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

G **Praise to You, O Christ.**

G **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven**

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

“Savior of the Nations, Come” is one of the most ancient hymns in the Church. It is attributed to St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan. He lived from 340 A.D. to April 4, 397. He was a steadfast supporter of the divinity of Christ and opposed all who would make Jesus less than the Son of God.

Our English version comes from Martin Luther’s German translation of this hymn that the Church has been singing for more than 1,600 years. Lutheran Churches have been singing it since 1524 when it appeared in the first Lutheran hymnal together with Luther’s well-known hymns, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” and “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.”

Pastor Quardokus



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Savior of the nations, come,
Virgin’s Son, make here Thy home!
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth. | 4 From the Father forth He came
And returneth to the same;
Captive leading death and hell--,
High the song of triumph swell! |
| 2 Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh. | 5 Thou, the Father’s only Son,,
Hast o’er sin the victory won.
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be;
When shall we its glories see? |
| 3 Wond-drous birth! O won-drous Child,
Of the Vir-gin un-de-filed!
Tho’ by all the world dis-owned,
Sill to be in heav’n enthroned. | 6 Brightly doth Thy manger shine,
Glorious is its light divine.
Let not sin o’ercloud this light;
Ever be our faith thus bright. |
| 7 Glory to the Father sing,
Glory to the Son, our king,
Glory to the Spirit be
Now and through eternity. | |

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Devotional Thoughts:

As I write, I can hear the sound of a mower. Someone in our neighborhood is tending to a bumper crop of leaves. I can imagine that in each home, people are engaged in the everyday needs of life.

So much of what we do is necessary but mundane. Yet in the middle of the ordinary and commonplace, God enters our lives in surprising and amazing ways. Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem was one such occasion.

I live near a place that was once a small but thriving community. It had a train station, a baseball team, and an abundance of pride. The train tracks are long gone. Only a dilapidated station remains. Except for a few curious historians and possibly some local residents, no one knows that it was once a place known as Derby.

Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem, is a place like that. Today, no one is quite sure exactly where it was located. It is only mentioned three times in the Bible, once in Matthew, once in Mark, and once in Luke. It is still remembered today because there was a man who lived there who owned a donkey!

We know nothing more about this man. We don't know what he was doing that Sunday. No doubt, he was busy at his occupation whatever it was. The Sabbath had just ended. It was time to get back to work.

In all likelihood, it was an ordinary day with ordinary chores. He rolled out of bed early in the morning, ran his fingers through his hair, and rubbed his eyes. Soon the rigors of the day were upon him.

Before long, his life would change. While he was distracted by his daily routine, two men walked up and untied his donkey. He or someone else must have spotted these suspicious strangers and yelled, "Hey! What are you doing? Leave that donkey alone."

To this, the surprising answer came, "The Lord has need of it." At that point, Jesus entered this man's life in an amazing and surprising way. He would never forget that encounter and we remember it to this very day.

Likewise, in Jerusalem, life was progressing as expected during the week leading to Passover. Pilgrims were inundating the shops. For some of the merchants, it was their equivalent to "Black Friday." Meals were being prepared. Children were getting out of hand. But then a distant and surprising commotion was heard. As the noise increased, they could make out the chant, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Jesus was coming to Jerusalem in an amazing and surprising way. He was riding on the colt of a donkey. People were spreading their cloaks along His route descending the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem.

I have had the privilege of walking down the Mount of Olives. It is much steeper than I expected. As you descend into the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem fills your view. In the same way, people in Jerusalem can see the Mount of Olives. They could witness the throng of people rejoicing as David's greater Son came down the mountain on a donkey. Their lives would never be the same.

Not everyone was thrilled that the King was coming in the name of the Lord. The Pharisees were offended by such language. They demanded that Jesus stop such impertinent talk.

The Pharisees, like so many people today, couldn't bear to hear the truth. But Jesus refused to meet their demands. His mission could not be derailed. In fact, if the crowds were silent, then the rocks would cry out!

The account of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem has long been the Gospel reading for the first Sunday in Advent. Just as King Jesus came into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, Jesus comes to each of us to be our Savior and King.

Yet, Jesus doesn't come in ways that we expect. He comes in surprising and amazing ways. He comes humbly. He came riding on a donkey. He came wrapped in swaddling clothes. He comes through word and sacrament. He comes through the cross where Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, offered Himself up in love for each of us.

Advent means "to come." We don't have to wait for Christmas for Jesus to come to us. Indeed, we have to be careful not to allow our preparations for Christmas to distract us from the Savior who is here for us today.

Few of us will be famous. But like the unnamed man with a donkey whatever we do for the Lord will last. Advent is a time that we can use to prepare our hearts for Jesus. It is also a time that we can use to help others welcome the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

There is an important footnote to our Gospel lesson for today. In the very next verses, we read, "And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes'" (Luke 19:41-41). Then, He says destruction will come upon them "because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44).

Like Jesus, Advent is also a time of weeping for us. We see the countless people around us who continue with their daily activities without ever stopping to see their King coming to them. We pray for them. But let us never be counted among them. Rather, may God establish faith in our hearts that we may be blameless in holiness before Him at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Lutheran Service Book 357, Lutheran Worship 31, The Lutheran Hymnal 62
Stanza 1

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive

Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here

Refrain
Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice!

Em - man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

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L Heavenly Father, in this time of Advent as we enter a new Church Year, grant us Your Holy Spirit that we would walk humbly in the way of Jesus, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L O Lord, as our nation experiences turmoil and strife, grant us the peace that surpasses all understanding as we welcome into our hearts the Prince of Peace who made peace between You and us by His sacrifice on the cross.

C Amen.

L O Lord, thank You that You have granted to us the privilege of living in the time when the Righteous Branch of David’s line has sprung up to be our Savior King.

C Amen.

L O Lord, make Advent a time for us to reflect on our lives. Where we have fallen into sin, grant to us full repentance that we may be found to be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

C Amen.

L O Lord, make us willing to generously provide for the ongoing work of Jesus through the Church when we learn that the Lord has need of our time, talents, and treasures.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during the pandemic. As we again experience an increase in infections, we ask for Your continued protection and grace.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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.

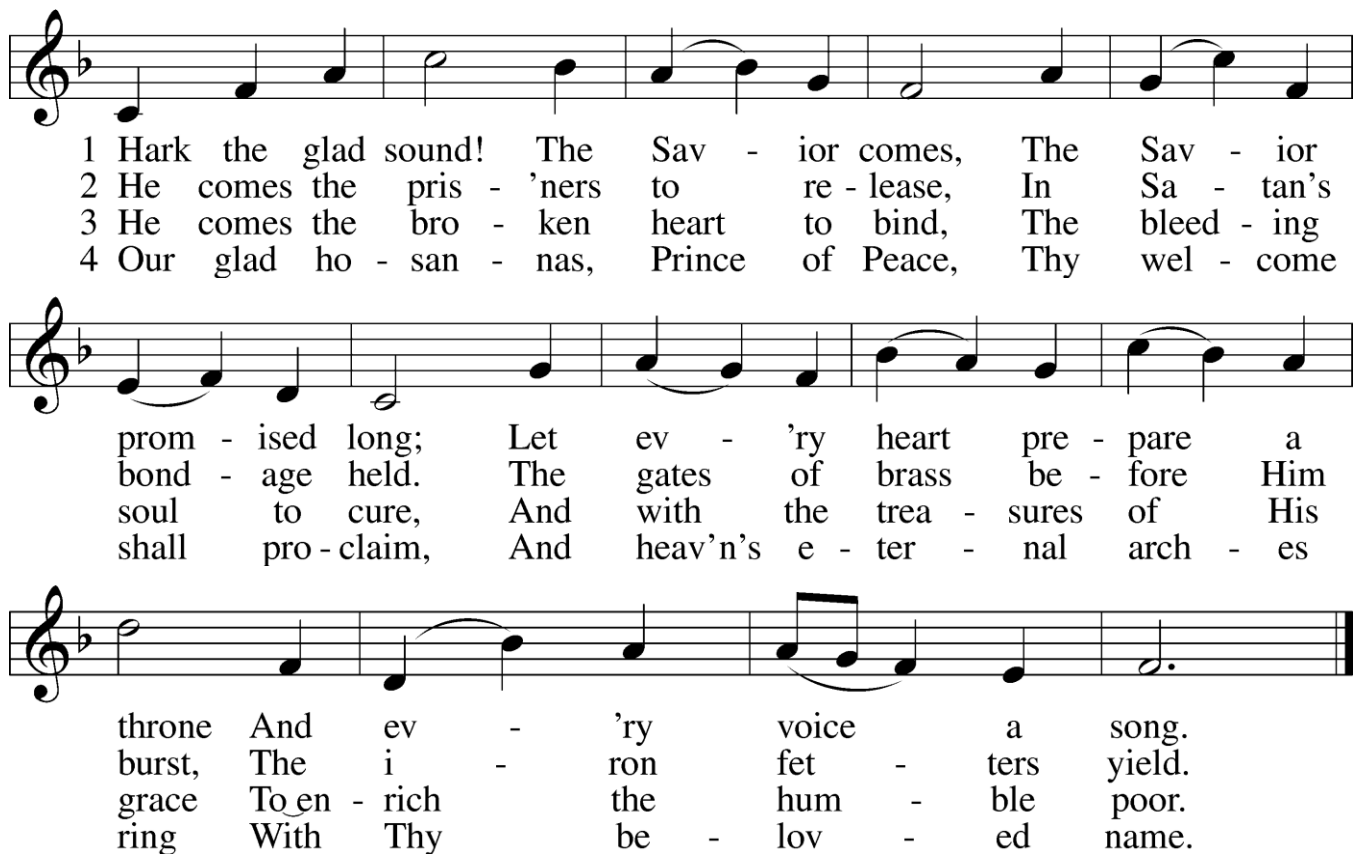
L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Hark the Glad Sound Lutheran Service Book 349, Lutheran Worship 29, The Lutheran Hymnal 66



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come

prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a
bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es

throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.
burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.
grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.
ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

The Gospel According to Luke

As we begin a new Church Year, we also begin reading the Gospel of St. Luke. We follow a three-year lectionary. In the first year, most of our Gospel lessons come from Matthew. In the second year, they come from Mark. We are now reading from Luke as we enter the third year. Readings from John are spread throughout the three-year cycle of readings.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels meaning that they are written from a similar viewpoint. Our lectionary uses them in the order that they are found in the Bible. John was written later and approaches the life of Jesus from another perspective.

Matthew's Gospel is written primarily for the earliest Christians who were fully acquainted with the Old Testament and life in the Holy Land. Mark understands that many of his readers are not familiar with the land of Jesus' birth. He explains words that would be known to residents of the Holy Land such as Mark 15:22, "And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull)."

Luke tells us that he is a thorough researcher. He twice reports that "Mary treasured these things in her heart" (Luke 2:19 and 51). From this, we can assume that Luke interviewed Mary or someone very close to her.

Luke's Gospel is the first volume in a two-volume set. The second volume is The Acts of the Apostles or often referred to simply as Acts. He wrote sometime around A.D. 55-60.

You may wish to read the entire Gospel of Luke as you prepare for the coming year.

Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The First Sunday in Advent November 28 – December 4, 2021

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 89:6, 14–16, 18; antiphon Zechariah 9:9b, alt.

- L** Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.
- C** Who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,
- L** Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.
- C** Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,
- L** who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.
- C** For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- 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.
- L** Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

One of the blessings of working through all the lessons for these daily meditations is that I am forced to think about each one individually.

Our antiphon comes from Zechariah 9:9. Zechariah 9:9 has three couplets:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

But our antiphon is only the middle one. In contemplating our meditation for today, I stopped and asked, “Why?”

The connection between our introit and Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem is unmistakable. However, since the antiphon omits the reference in Zechariah 9:9 to Jesus humbly riding a donkey, our introit intends for us to think in broader terms about God’s planned rescue of sinners.

First, it is not our choice! Our King is coming whether we want Him to or not. We deceive ourselves if we believe that we may choose to have our King come to us. He is coming.

Our King is righteous and He is coming. He is coming with salvation or He is coming in judgment.

For our King to come with salvation, we must recognize our need for salvation! The Pharisees were known for their self-righteousness. They rejected the acclaim of the adoring crowds on the first Palm Sunday. They felt no need for a savior.

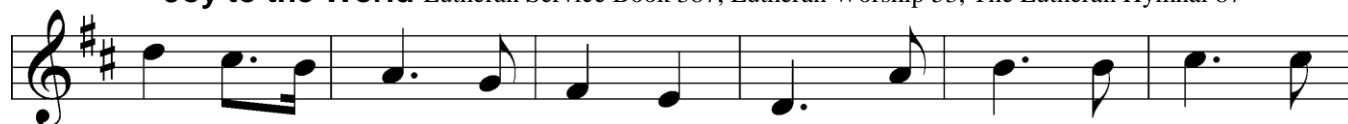
There are no “Pharisees” today. But we are surrounded by people who feel no need for a savior. They are self-righteous in the same way as the Pharisees of old.

Advent is a time for genuine self-examination. When we are truthful with ourselves, we must agree with Isaiah that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). We can never come before a righteous King unless He comes with salvation!

Second, the remainder of the introit from Psalm 89 tells us that our coming King is fully able to work salvation for us. No one in all creation compares to Him! Although He is righteous and just, He is filled with steadfast love! Sinners can approach His throne in confidence.

Finally, when we recognize our need for a Savior King and know that He comes with salvation for sinners, we shout for joy! Our introit for this week about our coming King is echoed by this Christmas hymn.

Joy to the World Lutheran Service Book 387, Lutheran Worship 53, The Lutheran Hymnal 87



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em -
 3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow Nor thorns in - fest the
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the na - tions



King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him
 ploy, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 ground; He comes to make His bless - ings
 prove The glo - ries of His righ - teous -



room And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture
 plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
 flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is
 ness And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His



sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, Far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, And won - ders, won - ders of His love.

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Tuesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L Let us pray: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Three of the four Advent collects begin with these words, “Stir up.” As a young pastor, I first was made aware of this by Father Day, an Anglican Priest and friend from my first years in the ministry. This warm memory reminds me of two important benefits that come from using the historic worship of the Church.

First, it connects us with the worldwide community of Christians. Christians, from many different denominations across the globe, pray this collect on the First Sunday in Advent and share in using the lectionary and propers for the day. It connects us to fellow believers in an increasingly disconnected world filled with division and strife.

Second, and equally important, it connects us to the long line of those who walked in the faith before us. Our Advent collects were first prayed centuries ago in Latin. Their time tested insights into the life and work of believers and our total dependence on God for all that we have, all that we are, and all that we hope to become are treasures that should not be casually discarded.

The first words of our collect, “Stir up Your power, O Lord and come,” sound like an imperative or a demand. They are not. They are a desperate plea for help! The original Latin and the translation of this collect in the Lutheran Hymnal include these words, “We beseech Thee.” In this prayer, we are not so bold as to order God to fulfill our demands. Rather, we are begging for His help!

Life is filled with waiting! We wait in the checkout line. We wait in the doctor’s office. We wait for the game to start.

The people of the Old Testament waited centuries for God’s plan of salvation to be fulfilled in Jesus. Advent is a time to realize that our waiting is over! God’s power and protection have finally been awakened in the stirring of the babe born in Bethlehem. He has come with mighty deliverance to save us from our sins and rescue us from the grave. In Him, all of our waiting is over!

Let us pray: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Psalm 25:1–10

L ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

C ²**O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.**

L ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

C ⁴**Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

L ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

C ⁶**Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

L ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

C ⁸**Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

L ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

C ¹⁰**All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

Our psalm for this week is the first half of Psalm 25. Walter Roehrs writes that this Psalm of David “vibrates with feelings arising from a real-life experience.”¹ He faces the two problems that we all face, enemies that surround us and the enemy within.

One of the great heartaches of life is watching your children discover that not everyone is kind and friendly. It is even more difficult to witness them learn of deceit and harm caused to them by phony friends. It has happened to all of us.

I imagine that David was particularly troubled by this. We first meet him as a faith-filled shepherd boy. He trusts God to deliver him and all of Israel from Goliath and the Philistines. But eventually, he learns that they are not the worst of his troubles. Mighty King Saul turns on David and attempts to kill him. He is wantonly treacherous!

But the enemy within is even a greater threat for each of us. David is fully aware of this inner struggle. He pleads with God, “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions.”

We join David in praying the 25th Psalm because we share in the same troubles. We are not disappointed because we are praying to “the God of my salvation!” As Paul writes in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

For Jesus’ sake, God does not remember our sins. Instead, He remembers us because of His steadfast love! May our Advent waiting be filled with the faith David expressed in Psalm 25.

Prayer: O Lord, grant us joy in Your mercy, love, goodness, uprightness, faithfulness, and grace that You give to us each day. Fill our Advent with a complete expectation of Your salvation in Jesus as we wait all the day long through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

L	In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C	Amen.

Verse of the Day: Mark 13:13b

L	Alleluia, Alleluia.
C	The one who endures to the end will be saved. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

¹Walter H. Roehrs and Martin H Franzmann, joint author, *Concordia Self-Study Comentary*, electronic ed., 352 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998, c1979).

Jeremiah 33:14–16

¹⁴“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

Jeremiah was one of the greatest prophets and preachers in all of history. He is the author of the longest book in the Bible! Yet, none of us would like to be him.

He was called by God to speak judgment upon a society that had abandoned the true God. His assignment was to announce the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. He predicted the day when Jerusalem and the temple would lay in ruins. But in popular opinion, he was on the wrong side of history. The culture of his day believed that the righteous and holy God of their fathers was old-fashioned and out of touch.

But our God is the God of history. He commandeered the great world powers to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecies that He gave to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah’s mission was not all condemnation. Our Old Testament lesson for this week reveals that he also was given the privilege of proclaiming the day when God would save His people.

Surprisingly, these words of comfort came to Jeremiah from God while he was under arrest (Jeremiah 33:1). One day, in David’s royal city, a branch would spring up with justice and righteousness. For this to happen, the God of history would again use the great powers of the world to fulfill His plans. It would take a decree from Caesar Augustus to bring Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But nothing is too difficult for our God.

On that day, salvation would come in the form of a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Those who see with eyes of faith recognized in this baby the Savior, who is Christ the Lord. He would be the Lord our Righteousness that would fulfill the divine law for us and offer Himself for the sins of the world. In Him, we have forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Prayer: Almighty and most gracious God, thank You for Your promise of salvation and the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus. In Jesus and Jeremiah’s day, You controlled history to accomplish Your purpose. Grant us the faith to trust that today You are still the God of history who accomplishes Your purpose in a sinful and rebellious world. Fill us with hope as we await the final fulfillment of all of Your promises through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

⁹What thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

I haven't seen some of my close family members in a long time. For me, that's the worst consequence of this pandemic. When I mention this in conversation, I almost always hear from someone with a similar story. If you are experiencing this, you know how heartbreaking this is.

Similarly, the Apostle Paul had to endure a long separation from the church in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was the largest city in the Roman Province of Macedonia. At the time, it had a population of 200,000. It was an ideal place to plant a mission congregation. You can read about the founding of the church in Acts 17:1-9.

Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica after being released from prison in Philippi. For three Sabbaths, Paul explained from the Old Testament that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead. He concluded his exposition of Scripture with these words, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." Through Paul's proclamation of the Gospel, God worked faith in the hearts of many of his hearers.

But Paul's opponents formed a mob and attacked the house of Jason where he had been staying. They couldn't find Paul and Silas there so they dragged Jason and some other believers out of the house and took them in front of the authorities. They accused Paul, Silas, and the believers of fermenting a revolt against Caesar by saying there is another king, Jesus!

Jason was required to post a bond. Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica.

As Paul continued on his mission trip, he had great concern for this new flock of believers in Thessalonica. After only three weeks of teaching, he was forced to leave them in an extremely hostile environment.

The fate of these Christians weighed heavy on his heart. In 1 Thessalonians 2:17, he writes, "But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face." He goes on to say that when he "could bear it no longer," he sent Timothy to work with this infant church.

1 Thessalonians was written to these believers after Timothy returned to Paul with a report on his work there. In our Epistle lesson for this week, Paul writes, "We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Paul knew, what we have come to appreciate during this pandemic, there is nothing as good as face-to-face conversation. Zoom, email, and texting are great blessings. I am happy to watch Sunday morning services online. But nothing compares to being there and communicating face to face.

Paul's motivation for visiting the Thessalonian Christians was not to simply see them and exchange stories. His goal was to bring them God's word. After three weeks, he had been forced to leave before he could more thoroughly teach the Christian faith to these new believers. There was much more for them to learn.

Reading through 1 Thessalonians, you will discover that the coming of the Lord is one teaching that he needed to clarify. The end of the Church Year and Advent are opportunities for us also to learn more about this important tenet of our faith.

We live in a time of waiting for Christ's second coming, His second Advent. While we wait, there is much to do. The Gospel must be proclaimed. New churches must be established. We are under obligation to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us!

To this Jesus attached a wonderful promise. He is with us always! As we await His return, let us never lose heart. Rather, let us continue to trust His promises and live under His cross.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of our savior, Jesus who suffered many things and rose from the dead for our sake. Grant that we may never become discouraged or abandon the faith when we endure persecutions. Move us to make good use of our time and fulfill the Great Commission as we await the coming of our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Gradual Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.

- L** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.
C Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem.
L Behold, your king is coming to you;
C righteous and having salvation.
L Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
C From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Verse of the Day: Psalm 24:7

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Our first week of Advent has gone by so quickly. Are you in the Advent spirit?

What is the Advent spirit? I'm not sure. It's hard to define. But everyone seems to agree that it is not the Christmas spirit.

But maybe it is. In one sense, Advent is not different from Christmas which is not different from Epiphany which is not different from Lent which is not different from Easter, which is not different from Pentecost.

In every season of the Church Year, we must remember God's plan of salvation. God's plan includes the promise of a savior; the coming of our savior, Jesus; His life, death, and resurrection; His ascension into heaven; the gift of the Holy Spirit; repentance, faith, and the forgiveness of sins. This is why we confess our faith every Sunday with the Apostles' or Nicene Creed whether it is Advent or Christmas, Lent or Easter. The only real difference is emphasis. All the elements of God's plan of salvation are there in every season of the year. Thanks be to God!

An important part of Advent is repentance and humility. But our gradual this week reminds us that rejoicing is also an important part of Advent. And our rejoicing is not muted or stealthy. No, we REJOICE GREATLY in Advent! We rejoice greatly because the babe born in Bethlehem is the Savior who is Christ the Lord!

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for Your wonderful plan of salvation. Grant us the ability each day of our lives to rejoice greatly at the coming of our Savior King, Christ the Lord. Amen.

P.S. As an Advent exercise, you may want to watch for other elements of the Church Year in our Advent hymns.

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