

The First Sunday in Advent November 30, 2025



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 message of Advent and Christmas is always stirring. It stirs our souls to know God's amazing love and sacrifice in sending His only-begotten Son to be Savior and King. Amid all the hustle and bustle of the season let your heart be stirred by the loving power of God's Holy Spirit working in your life through Word and Sacrament. Allow this Advent season to prepare you to kneel at the manger in stirring reverence and awe before such a gift.

If you have been extra observant, you may notice that the idea of God stirring up His people during the time of Advent is an ancient one. The collect for today and for two other Sundays in Advent include a prayer for God to be active and to stir up His power and our hearts.

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.

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 118:25–28; antiphon Zechariah 9:9b, alt

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

C Save us, we pray, O Lord!
O Lord, we pray, give us success!

L Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We bless you from the house of the Lord.

C The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

L You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.

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.

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest (omitted in Advent)

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.

Isaiah 2:1–5

¹The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.

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 Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

C From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Psalm 122

- L** ¹I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”
C ²**Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!**
L ³Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together,
C ⁴**to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.**
L ⁵There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.
C ⁶**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you!**
L ⁷Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”
C ⁸**For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, “Peace be within you!”**
L ⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
C **I will seek your good.**

Romans 13:11–14

¹¹Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse 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.**

Matthew 21:1–11

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21st chapter.
C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The Apostles' Creed

C 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

Lutheran Service Book 332, Lutheran Worship 13, The Lutheran Hymnal 95

“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.

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.

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.

4 From the Father forth He came
And returneth to the same;
Captive leading death and hell--,
High the song of triumph swell!

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?

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:

Happy New Year!!! I would often welcome people to church with these words on the First Sunday in Advent at the beginning of a new Church Year.

Why does the Church Year begin now? It reminds us that all of history, all of reality, centers on Jesus!

Before A.D. 525, years were counted by their relationship with Rome. The Roman Empire was considered the most significant institution in all of history. Dates in the western world were expressed in terms of when this or that emperor ruled or by naming the two consuls who held office in Rome that year. Some used AUC (*Ab Urbe Condita* – From Founding of the City [Rome]) to indicate dates.

However, in A.D. 525, a monk named Dionysius Exiguus (Dionysius the Humble) believed that history does not revolve around the pagan Roman Empire but it centers on Jesus Christ. He introduced our current dating system of A.D. (Anno Domini - The Year of our Lord) and B.C. (Before Christ).

Today, aggressive secularists are working hard to remove this concept from our calendars. They are trying to replace A.D. with C.E. (Common Era) and B.C. with B.C.E. (Before the Common Era).

Where do you stand? On one hand, it really doesn't matter how we count years. Jesus is still the Lord of history. On the other hand, what we say witnesses to what we believe in our hearts.

This brings us to the Church Year. The Church Year is a way of focusing our annual calendar on the life of Jesus. It begins with Advent and our preparations for our yearly celebration of Jesus' birth. It continues as we recount all the major events in Jesus' life from His baptism through His death and resurrection to His ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

So, if this is the time of year for anticipating Jesus' birth, why does our Gospel lesson recount the first Palm Sunday? Let's see if we can bring this all together.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem took Him through Jericho. There, the crowds around Jesus were so large that a man named Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to see Him.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and very rich. When Jesus went to his house, the people grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." They didn't know that Jesus' purpose in life was to save sinners! He told Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:1-10).

As He was leaving Jericho, Jesus encountered a blind beggar named Bartimaeus who cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus answered him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately Bartimaeus recovered his sight and followed Jesus (Mark 10:46-52).

Before entering Jerusalem, He stopped at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. Earlier, Jesus had caused quite a stir in Bethany by raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44; John 12:1-8).

All of this and much much more brought great excitement. John records that the next day the large crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem (John 11:12). They were thrilled at His impending advent!

Luke records that at Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus decreed that all the world should be registered. The Roman Empire was so large and powerful that it essentially made up the known civilized world! All of society was dominated by this pagan empire and religion. In the eyes of most people, everything revolved around and was centered in Rome! The phrase, "All roads lead to Rome" was not an idle boast.

Every Roman city was filled with temples to the Roman gods. Pagan idols were proudly displayed across the empire even in Israel. Jerusalem was the one exception. The people would not tolerate graven images in their city with the temple of the true God.

As the people anticipated Jesus coming (advent), they recognized Him as the fulfillment of their hopes and dreams. They were waiting for God to free them from their Roman taskmasters. So when Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem, they welcomed Him as people would welcome a conquering hero. They spread their cloaks on the road before Him and shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” They declared that everything wasn’t centered on Rome but on God and His Chosen One, the Son of David, the Messiah, Jesus!

Their shout of “Hosanna” meant “Save, now.” Indeed, Jesus did come to be the Savior. But He didn’t come to be the kind of Savior that they expected. He did not come to save them from the Romans. He would save them from something far more deadly. He came to save them from sin. The angel told Joseph, “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus means Savior.

Today, more than ever, we need to remember that Christ will come again like a thief in the night to judge the living and the dead. The unrepentant will be swept away just as the unbelievers were in the days of Noah. However, our King and Judge is the Savior who died on the cross for our sins. In Him, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation. He will declare us to be not guilty for we have been justified by grace through faith.

The first Palm Sunday was a time when people were determined to change their focus from the pagan society and rule of Rome to the Son of God, Jesus. Advent is our annual reminder to change our focus from worldly standards and principles to our Savior, Jesus. It is time to hear again the words of John the Baptist and his call for repentance. It is time to prepare our hearts to stand with the shepherds and hear the angel proclaim, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” and to hear the heavenly choir declare “Peace on Earth. Good will toward men.” For, when we are truly and rightly prepared to celebrate Jesus’ first advent, we will be truly prepared for His second coming and to hear Him say, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Luke 25:34).

Whether or not you use the Church Year or continue to count years with A.D. and B.C. is a choice that you are free to make. But let us never forget that in God and His Son, our Savior, “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). May this Advent help you center your life on Jesus.

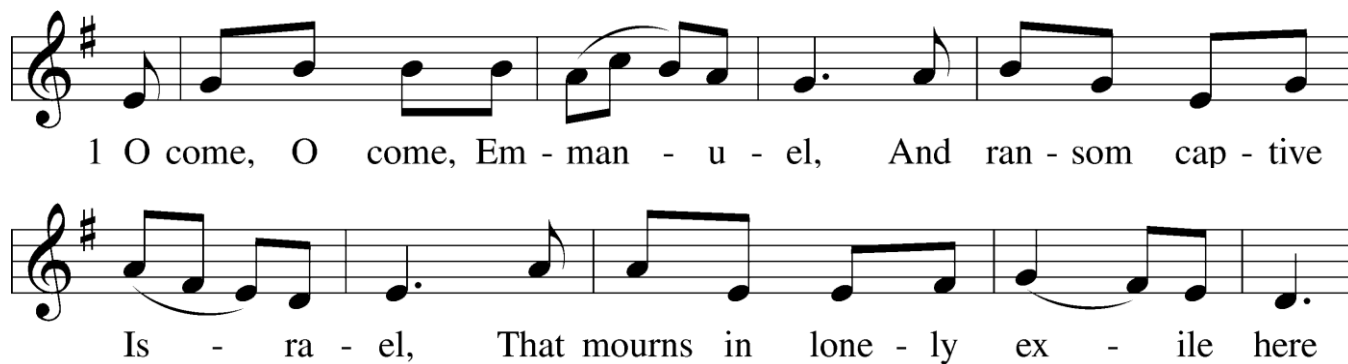
“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all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

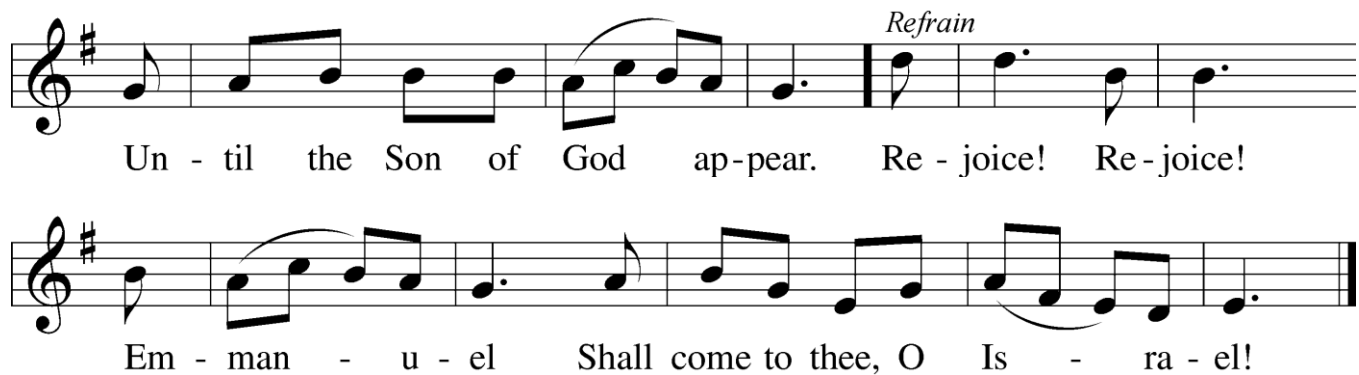
God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Lutheran Service Book 357, Lutheran Worship 31, The Lutheran Hymnal 62

Stanza 1





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Prayers

- L** Stir up Your power, O Lord, to rescue us from the dangers of this dark world by the advent of Your Son, that we may ever walk in His light and learn the way of peace.
- C Amen.**
- L** Gracious Lord, though we do not know the day or hour of Your Son's appearing, grant that we would always be prepared by sending us faithful pastors and teachers who will boldly proclaim Your Word of Law and Gospel to us, that we may be constantly encouraged and built up in the faith.
- C Amen.**
- L** O God of Jacob, You have established Your kingdom as a beacon to call all nations unto Yourself. Teach us to walk in the light of Your peace.
- C Amen.**
- L** O Lord of love, visit our homes and defend us from the temptation to walk in the works of darkness, that husbands and wives may love one another and raise their children in the faith.
- C Amen.**
- L** O Lord, give us vigilant and wise leaders. Be with all who serve to keep us safe. Bring peace and harmony to our nation in this time of contentiousness. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that the new found peace in Gaza would be sustained.
- C Amen.**
- L** Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.
- C Amen.**
- L** Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank, bless and praise You forever that You have sent Your Son to reign over us poor sinners, who for our trespasses deserve rightly to remain in bondage to sin and Satan. You have given us a righteous and humble King who, through His death, has saved us from sin and eternal death. We implore You, enlighten, govern and direct us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may remain faithful to this righteous King and Savior and not be offended by His humble appearance or despised Word, but believe in Him and obtain eternal salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever
- 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.

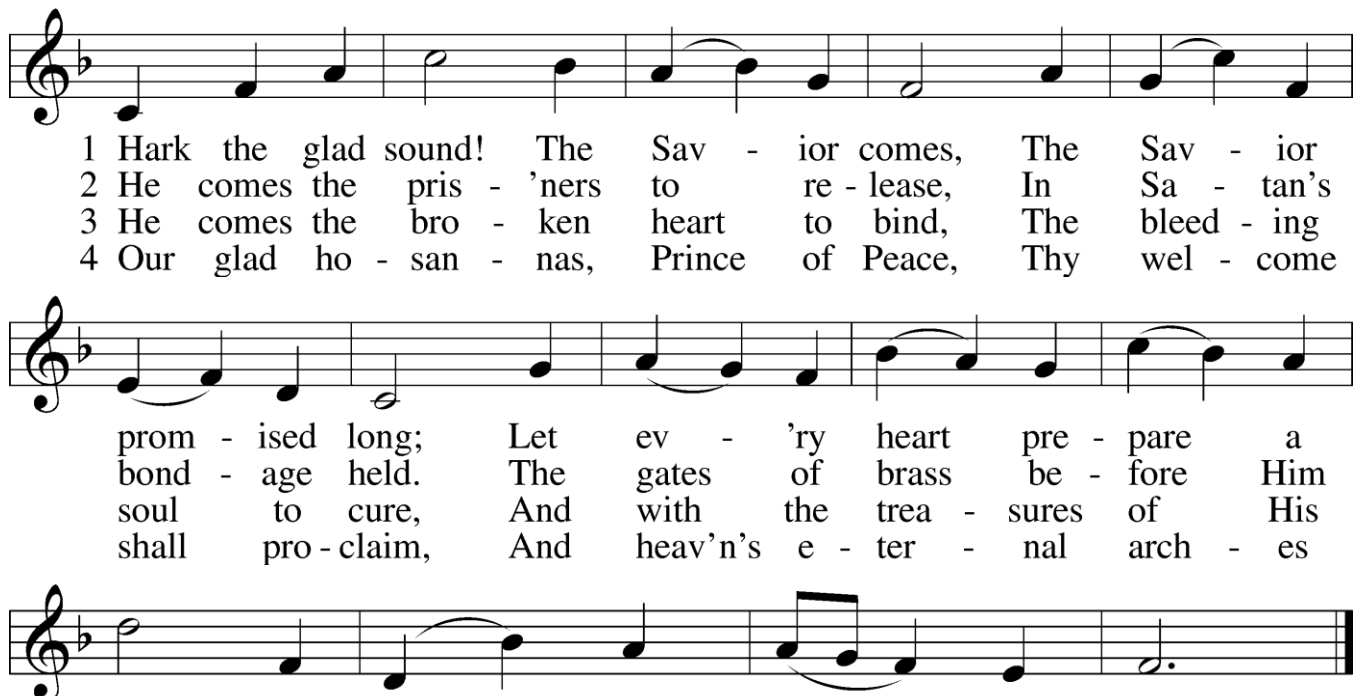
C Thanks be to God.

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 Church Year

The majority of Christians follow a worship calendar known as The Church Year. Unfortunately, it is foreign to many American Protestants who have forgotten or rejected their connection to the Church throughout history.

The Church Year follows a rhythm of focusing half of the year on the life of Christ and half a year on the life of the Church (or Christian growth). This discipline is helpful in keeping individual pastors or churches from becoming one-dimensional in their spiritual lives. It is also helpful for Christians throughout the world to express their unity through their weekly sharing of the same lessons from God's Word.

We are at a turning point of The Church Year today. The Church Year ends with our focus on the return of Christ at the end of the age. Today, all around the world Christians are rejoicing in the blessed anticipation of seeing their Savior return with all of His angels to bring a culmination to all of the promises of Holy Scripture.

This Sunday we begin anew our annual celebration of Advent with its dual focus on both the first and second coming of Christ. We will again hear the cry of John the Baptist. We will join Isaiah in joyful anticipation. We will overhear Gabriel's grace-filled greeting to Mary as she learns that she will be the mother of our Savior and Lord.

About 50 years ago the series of lessons read on Sunday was reformed to include more Scripture than had previously been read in the churches. The one-year lectionary was replaced with a three-year cycle of lessons that reflect the Church Year more broadly from all four Gospels.

Today, we begin Series A. The Gospel According to St. Matthew will provide most of our Gospel lessons for the coming Church Year.

A summary of the Church Year is found on page x in Lutheran Service Book. The lessons appointed for Series A are found on page xiv. Since Easter is the key day around which the Church Year pivots, the Epiphany Season is shortened or lengthened each year. The dates of Easter until the year 2050 are found on page xxiii.

While you are exploring the introductory pages of the Lutheran Service Book, turn to page xxiv and review the glossary of worship terminology. The Church has used most of the terms defined on those pages for over a thousand years. Sports fans and hobbyists, professionals, and specialists become familiar with the distinctive vocabulary for their chosen interests. Christians who seek to be more than just casual observers will also want to explore the richness of our historic vocabulary of worship and worship practices.

Pastor Quardokus

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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Enhancing Your Worship

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 Week of The First Sunday in Advent December 1—6, 2025

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 mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

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

Verse Psalm 24:7

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

Introit Psalm 118:25–28; antiphon Zechariah 9:9b, alt

- L** Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.
G Save us, we pray, O Lord!
O Lord, we pray, give us success!
L Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
G The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!
L You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.
G 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.

What was your biggest take away from the Covid-19 pandemic and our response to it? If I had to pick one word, it would be “surprise!”

We were all surprised by Covid-19. Valerie and I were returning from a visit with our daughter and her family in the spring of 2020. We flew from Boston to Chicago. Sometime that very day, we learned that the first case of Covid-19 was detected at the Boston airport! What a surprise!

We had planned to visit our other daughter in Miami a few weeks later. As we contemplated the trip, we decided not to fly but to drive because of Covid-19. Finally, we decided to just stay home and ride out the “storm.” Surprised again, it was more than a year before we could travel to Miami. I’m sure everyone has similar stories.

The first major lockdown occurred while we would have been in Miami. I could never have imagined how bad it would get. Michigan was particularly severe with its enforcement of the travel ban and prohibiting activities outside the home. By this, I mean your main residence.

One individual was pulled over on the highway and fined because he was traveling to his cottage up north. Golfing was prohibited. Kayaking and canoeing were allowed but boating was not permitted if the boat had a motor! We may debate the wisdom of these rules but I must admit that I was surprised that the prohibitions and restrictions could be enacted simply by an “executive order.” Amazing! I had no idea that presidents and governors could wield such power. This all serves as a preface to considering the antiphon from our introit: “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation” (Zechariah 9:9).

I actively served as a pastor for more than 40 years. During this time, I often faced the challenge of explaining kings and kingdoms to students of every age. From praying “Thy kingdom come” to our antiphon to numerous other references (The words king and kingdom appear over 2,500 times in the Bible!). I would say, “Although we live in a democracy, throughout most of history, countries were governed by kings who made all the rules.” The Revolutionary War is often characterized as a rebellion against the king. The phrase “all men are created equal” is in the Declaration of Independence. It originally meant that no king could rule by “divine right.”

Surprise! I hadn’t considered “executive orders.” I have learned that under the right circumstances, we live in a country where one individual can make all the rules. This shouldn’t have been surprising. The quest for power is universal. Even in our country with two parties and three branches of government, there is a constant struggle in which one group or individual tries to dominate all the others.

So why would anyone rejoice at the coming of a king (or president or governor)? We rejoice at the coming of King Jesus because He is unlike any other king. He is the King of the Jews who was crucified for the sins of the world (John 19:19). He is not a king who comes to dominate and oppress us. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

Jesus doesn’t come to dominate and control us with His power. He comes with righteousness and having salvation. His is a kingdom of grace, not a dictatorship. He doesn’t rule with an iron fist. He rules in our hearts with love. He grants mercy to all who call on Him.

This Advent and always, we joyfully lift up our heads that King Jesus may come into our lives with healing and forgiveness.

L Let us pray. O Jesus, Lord and King, thank You for bringing Your righteousness and salvation into our lives. Grant that we would receive You with joy. Amen.

C Amen.

Tuesday

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

Verse 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. |

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.

As I write this, I am listening to a man on TV talk about his failure. No one likes to fail. Have you ever felt like a failure?

The collect prayer for the First Sunday in Advent assumes that we are all failures. We have all given in to the temptation to sin. Every human attempt to achieve perfection ends in failure. If we believe otherwise, we are simply deceiving ourselves.

In this prayer, we come to God in human weakness and ask for His power. Our helplessness was emphasized in the old translation of this ancient Latin collect which began, “Stir up Thy power, *we beseech Thee*, O Lord, and come.”

We begin Advent by asking the Lord to come in power to rescue and save us from sin. This was no easy task. It required the gift of God’s own Son. God’s rescue mission required Jesus to give His life for us as a sacrifice for sin.

We could do nothing to save ourselves. But Advent is a time of hope because God tells us, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). This is the mighty power of God at work for us.

Prayer: 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.

Note: For the curious, here is the original Latin collect for the First Sunday in Advent.

EXCITA, quæsumus, Dómine, poténtiam tuam, et veni: ut ab imminéntibus peccatórum nostrórum perículis, te mereámur protegénte éripi, te liberánte salvári: Qui vivis et regnas cum Deo Patre in unitáte Spíritus Sancti Deus: per ómnia sæcula sæculórum.

STIR up Thy power, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come: that from the threatening dangers of our sins, we may deserve to be rescued by Thy protection, and be saved by Thy deliverance: Who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.

Wednesday

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

Verse 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 122

- L** ¹I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”
C ²**Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!**
L ³Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together,
C ⁴**to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.**
L ⁵There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.
C ⁶**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you!**
L ⁷Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”
C ⁸**For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, “Peace be within you!”**
L ⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
C **I will seek your good.**

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. |

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were always glad when someone said, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!” Walter Roehrs writes about Psalm 122, “This *Song of Ascents* can help to prevent our meeting together for worship (Heb 10:25) from degenerating into a hollow formality or a wearisome drudgery.”¹ However, too often we allow our worship to collapse into these two disastrous scenarios.

Until my retirement, I had the privilege of leading worship and preaching almost every Sunday. Actually, I conducted two worship services every Sunday. When I served Faith and Hope Lutheran Churches in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, I had one service at 11 a.m. and the second service 90 miles away at 7 p.m. For several summers, I conducted a third service on Sunday afternoons at a fishing camp. Then at First Lutheran Church in Papillion, Nebraska, I was blessed by having two Sunday morning services with Bible class. At Christ Lutheran Church in Stevensville, Michigan, I continued that practice but added a Thursday evening service for a total of three services a week.

To be honest, sometimes I was exhausted or not feeling well on Sundays. On those occasions, I may not have been as passionate about worship as I could have been. However, for the vast majority of the time, I was glad to go into the house of the Lord, hear His word, and praise His name.

Now as part of the worshiping congregation, I have a new perspective. I’m not the leader. I am the one who responds.

¹Walter H. Roehrs and Martin H Franzmann, joint author, *Concordia Self-Study Comentary*, electronic ed., 400 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998, c1979).

When I was preaching and leading worship, I was always disheartened when I witnessed worshippers who seemed to be disengaged. But since I retired, it is even more disheartening when I see the same thing in a worship leader.

How can we prevent that from happening? How can we be passionate about being in the house of the Lord? The answer is worship from your heart.

If you find a hymn to be unsingable or if the worship leader conveys a hollow formality or a wearisome drudgery, pause and think about the words! Contemplate the meaning behind everything you say.

Our hymns, liturgy, and Church Year are abundantly rich in the message of sin and grace. Each week we are reminded of God's great love for us in Jesus Christ. All most every word overflows with a wealth of meaning.

When you gladly and joyfully worship in the house of the Lord, you add meaning to the experience of every other worshiper. Your passionate worship of our Savior helps to dispel hollow formality or wearisome drudgery that some may feel.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

Prayer: O Lord God, heavenly Father, thank You for the peace and joy that is ours in Christ through the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation won for us on the cross. Move us to express true gladness in our worship in Your house. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse 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.

Isaiah 2:1–5

¹The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;

and all the nations shall flow to it,

³and many peoples shall come, and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob,

that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go the law,

and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,

and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

Our children loved to light the Advent wreath for family devotions. We established a schedule so that each would get their turn. The Advent wreath is a cherished Christmas tradition in many countries and in many different Christian denominations. Research tells us that it originated among 16th Century German Lutherans.

Over the years, Advent wreaths have been produced with a variety of candles and colors. Also, meanings have been attached to the candles and their colors. Recently, it has become popular to identify the candles with Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy. From what I can tell, the order isn't always the same. Our lessons for this week suggest that beginning with peace would be an appropriate alternative.

In our Old Testament lesson, Isaiah speaks about a time when:

They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

With these words, he gives us a magnificent description of peace.

Psalm 122:6 urges us to, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!" Verse 7 speaks this blessing, "Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" Finally, verse 8 promises, "For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, 'Peace be within you!'"

Peace is such an important concept in the Bible that it is mentioned more than 350 times. However, it is often unrecognized that real peace is completely intertwined with God's kingdom. The promise of peace is fully and completely fulfilled when the Prince of Peace reigns as king!

Consider these verses from Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**
⁷ **Of the increase of his government and of peace**
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 52:7

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

The Palm Sunday crowds recognized that God's reign of peace was coming to them in the person of Jesus. Matthew reports:

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘**Behold, your king is coming to you,**
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

Today, the peace of Jesus reigns in our hearts by faith. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we have peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. It is a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Jesus told His disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

This is why Paul begins his epistles with, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:3). The last words we hear from the pastor in the service on Sunday morning are:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you **peace**.
(Numbers 6:24-26)

We are people of peace living in God's kingdom. May God's peace rule in our hearts until Jesus comes to welcome us into His eternal kingdom of perfect peace.

Prayer: O Lord God, thank you for the gift of peace that surpasses all understanding. Guard our hearts and minds by the working of Your Spirit so that we may look forward to the day we receive the perfect peace that awaits us in heaven. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse 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.

Romans 13:11–14

¹¹Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and

drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

It's always interesting how we gather tidbits of wisdom from the people we encounter. Here's one example.

When we lived in Nebraska, I briefly served as a district director for a national fund drive for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (Our move to Michigan cut my service short). I attended an orientation meeting in St. Louis and I can well remember an illustration told by one of the presenters. (I'm sorry that I can't recall his name to give him credit.)

He told the story of a little boy who loved to stay overnight at his grandfather's house. His grandfather had a collection of clocks. Grandpa particularly treasured an elaborate grandfather clock that had been in his family for generations. His grandson enjoyed listening to it chime each quarter-hour and counting out each toll of the bell on the hour. He also appreciated that his grandfather was lax in enforcing bedtime restrictions that he experienced at home.

One particularly late night, he brushed his teeth, said his prayers, and jumped into bed just as the clock began to toll. As he lay with his head on the pillow, he counted: 1,2,3,4,...9,10,11,12...13!

When the ancient grandfather clock struck the 13th hour, the little boy jumped out of bed, ran down the stairs, and found his grandfather. In an excited voice, he exclaimed, "Grandpa! Grandpa! It's later than it's ever been before!"

This is the message that the Apostle Paul brings to us in our Epistle lesson. It's later than it's ever been before. The night is far gone! The day is at hand! Salvation is near! It is time to wake up!

It is easy for us to put things off until tomorrow but Paul warns that day may not come. Now is the time to get our lives in order. Now is the time to cast off the works of darkness. Now is the time to put on the armor of light!

Anyone acquainted with the history of Rome can appreciate how difficult it must have been to live a decent and upright life in the city. Paul wrote to the believers living there, "Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy." These were commonplace in ancient Rome. In some ways, history seems to be repeating itself in our country.

Before it's too late, now is the time to return to God. Now is the time to put on the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

Too soon, our short lives come to an end. The day of grace may not be there tomorrow. Listen again to the words of Paul and Silas to the jailer at Philippi who asked, "What must I do to be saved?" They encouraged him saying, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:25-34).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us time. Let us use it wisely. Grant us the wisdom, courage, and faith to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

Verse Psalm 24:7

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

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.**

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.**

Can we still rejoice greatly? Does our King still come to us righteous and having salvation?
Indeed, we can! Indeed, He does!

I am often captivated by the Antiques Roadshow on PBS. According to some observers, the greatest find on the Antiques Roadshow was a pocket watch brought in for appraisal in 2004. At that time, the auction price was estimated to be \$250,000. In 2016 the value was updated to \$1.5 million and again to \$2–\$3 million in 2018! The owner of the watch did not know how valuable a treasure his great-grandfather had passed on to him.

I'm afraid that this is often the case among Christians. We don't rejoice because we fail to recognize how wonderful it is that our King, Jesus, comes to us bringing salvation.

Today, Jesus doesn't come riding a donkey. People do not throw their cloaks on the road before Him. They do not wave palm branches and shout "Hosanna." But He still comes to us. He comes to us through word and sacrament. And when He comes in this way, He brings salvation. It is a great treasure. When we recognize it for what it is, we rejoice greatly. Those who find no value in the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation will yawn at the thought of Jesus coming. But those who truly recognize the blessings that Jesus brings still rejoice greatly. May we be counted among them!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the treasure of salvation through faith in Jesus. Grant us true joy as we contemplate this wonderful gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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