

The Second Sunday in Advent December 10, 2023

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 Second Sunday in Advent, we light the blue candle directly across from the rose candle and the blue candle clockwise from the first candle. You may choose to light it now or in the service where indicated.

Arise, O Christian People

Lutheran Service Book 354, Lutheran Worship 25, The Lutheran Hymnal 75

Note: The Lutheran Worship and Lutheran Hymnal translations of this hymn are quite different. My personal preference is the Lutheran Worship translation which is titled: O People, Rise and Labor. However, The Lutheran Hymnal translation also has much to commend it. It is titled: Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken.

An alternate non-Public Domain hymn is:

Prepare the Royal Highway

Lutheran Service Book 343, Lutheran Worship 27, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

My personal preference is the Lutheran Worship version

Arise, O Christian People



1 A - rise, O Chris - tian peo - ple! Pre - pare your - selves to -
2 Pre - pare the way be - fore Him; Pre - pare for Him the
3 The hum - ble heart and low - ly God rais - es up on
4 Pre - pare my heart, Lord Je - sus; Turn not from me a -



day; Pre - pare to greet the Sav - ior, Who takes your
best. Cast out what would of - fend Him, This great, this
high; Be - neath His feet in ter - ror The haugh - ty
side, And help me to re - ceive You This bless - ed



sins a - way. To us by grace a - lone The
heav'n - ly guest. Make straight, make plain the way: The
soul shall lie. The heart sin - cere and right, That
Ad - vent - tide. From stall and man - ger low Come



truth and light were giv - en; The prom - ised Lord from
low - ly val - leys rais - ing, The heights of pride a -
heeds God's in - vi - ta - tion And makes true prep - a -
now to dwell with - in me; I'll sing Your prais - es



heav - en To all the world is shown.
bas - ing, His path all e - ven lay.
ra - tion— It is the Lord's de - light.
glad - ly And forth Your glo - ry show.

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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 SECOND CANDLE:

L As we light the second candle on our Advent wreath, we remember John the Baptist who prepared the world for the light of Jesus, God's own Son. May the path into our hearts be made straight through repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins as we prepare to celebrate the lowly birth of the King of Kings:

C "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light" (John 1:6-8).

Introit Psalm 80:1, 8a, 9b, 7; antiphon Psalm 80:3

- L** Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
- C** Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.
- L** You brought a vine out of Egypt;
it took deep root and filled the land.
- C** Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
- 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** Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

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 during the season of Advent)

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Isaiah 40:1–11

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”

¹⁰Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

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 85

L ¹LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

C ²**You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.**

L ³You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

C ⁴**Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!**

L ⁵Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

C ⁶**Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?**

L ⁷Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

C ⁸**Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.**

L ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

C ¹⁰**Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

L ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

C ¹²**Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.**

L ¹³Righteousness will go before him

C and make his footsteps a way.

2 Peter 3:8–14

⁸Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

Mark 1:1–8

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

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

³the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

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

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

Lutheran Service Book 344, Lutheran Worship 14, The Lutheran Hymnal 63



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; Make straight the
3 We hail Thee as our Sav - ior, Lord, Our ref - uge
4 Lay on the sick Thy heal - ing hand And make the
5 All praise, e - ter - nal Son, to Thee Whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and hear - ken,
way for God with - in, And let us all our
and our great re - ward; With - out Thy grace we
fall - en strong to stand; Show us the glo - ry
sets Thy peo - ple free, Whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way Like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
of Thy face Till beau - ty springs in ev - 'ry place.
we a - dore And Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er - more.

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Devotional thoughts:

This week and next we have the opportunity to consider the work of John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus and His ministry. As John the Baptist prepared the people of his day with a call to repentance so also our hearts are prepared for Jesus today with repentance and faith.

But before we contemplate the ministry of John the Baptist, let's pause and follow some important advice from the Wizard of Oz, "It's always best to start at the beginning." Think for a moment about the very first words in the Gospel of Mark: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Mark is telling us good news about Jesus. The very first good news about Jesus is that He is Christ, the Son of God! These words are too remarkable to let pass. From the very beginning, from the earliest times, the most important thing to know about Jesus who came to save us is that He is the Son of God! True Christianity cannot exist without knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Likewise, true Christmas cannot exist without recognizing that the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger is the Son of God in human flesh who came to save the world. Every attempt to turn Christmas into something less extraordinary actually destroys Christmas itself!

When you read the Gospel of Mark, keep these words in mind. See how Mark, again and again, shows Jesus to be the Son of God. Although the religious leaders refused to recognize Jesus for who He is, the unclean spirits cried out, "You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11, Mark 5:7). Even the Roman centurion acknowledged at Jesus' crucifixion, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 10:39). The most important identification of Jesus as God's own Son was given by God Himself when He declared at Jesus' baptism, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

Since Jesus is God's Son, it is no surprise that He made an impressive plan for the coming of the Savior. Beginning with Genesis 3:15, God had been promising a savior. All the Old Testament prophecies of a coming savior pointed exclusively to one and only one person, Jesus of Nazareth born in Bethlehem. Not only had God provided prophecies about the coming savior, but He also gave prophecies about the one who would be sent to prepare for His ministry. All four Gospels begin their account of Jesus' life and ministry with John the Baptist. All four Gospels recognize that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23).

John the Baptist was an impressive person. His birth is reported in Luke 1. The angel Gabriel informed his father, Zechariah that his wife would have a son who would prepare the way for the Lord. Luke is also very specific about the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry. He reports:

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."
(Luke 3:1-3)

In our calendar, this is about the year A.D. 29. Soon, John the Baptist became so famous that people from all the surrounding areas made arduous and demanding journeys into the wilderness just to hear this powerful preacher. We know that his message spread far and wide. He influenced untold numbers of people with his message of repentance. To call people to repentance, he needed to point out their sin. No one was immune. Pharisees and Sadducees who came to hear him were called a "brood of vipers." Tax collectors and soldiers came. His message even reached the ears of Herod the Tetrarch who John condemned for marrying his brother's wife. We later learn that his no-holds-barred message ultimately led to John's arrest and execution.

John's ministry and message were impressive but God did not intend for this last prophet of the Old Testament to stand on his own. He was there to prepare for Jesus. His message of repentance and forgiveness of sins could never be fulfilled unless sins were paid for by the Son of God and His sacrifice on the cross. He came to give His life as a ransom from sin, death, and the devil!

We still need the message of John the Baptist today. No one will want a savior unless they believe that they need a savior. Sin still needs to be condemned. Repentance needs to be proclaimed.

Speaking of sin, it's always easy to see it in others. It is easy to look at our modern society and see a permissive attitude toward sin and the moral decline of pop culture. We should never be afraid to call sin, sin.

But this is not how we prepare for Jesus. Advent is a time to examine the sin in our own lives. Advent is the time to look into our own hearts and come to our Savior in true repentance and faith. Only then will our hearts be prepared for the forgiveness of sins won for us by the baby born in Bethlehem, God's own Son!

“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 4:6-7).

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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Prayers

L Restore us, O God; let Your face shine, that we may be saved! As You led Joseph like a flock, so now by Your Son lead us into straight paths. Bring us out of the bondage of our sins, and plant us securely in Your eternal promises.

C Amen.

L Gracious God, You sent John the Baptist to herald the coming Messiah and proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In our day, let the proclamation of repentance for the forgiveness of sins lead Your people to trust in Your salvation through faithful pastors and teachers.

C Amen.

L God of all comfort, Your Word alone endures forever. The nations of the world come and go before You, even kings and rulers are like grass before Your breath. Preserve us from placing our trust in princes and mortal men.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, bless the homes of Your people, that parents may train their children with wisdom and love that children may know Your love and the salvation You have granted to them through faith in Your beloved Son, Jesus.

C Amen.

L O God of peace, during this time of war in the ancient land of Israel and in Ukraine, we pray that You would grant a swift end to the conflict, that right and justice would prevail, and that You would grant Your mighty hand of protection to the innocent and helpless.

C Amen.

L Righteous God, You give leaders to every nation and people. Grant us good and wise public servants to defend the innocent and punish evil. Guard those who protect us, especially our armed forces, police, and firefighters.

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.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas with true repentance and faith during this Advent season and always.

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.

The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

Lutheran Service Book 348, Lutheran Worship 26, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



1 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns And light tri - um-phant breaks,
2 Not as of old a lit - tle child, To bear and fight and die,
3 Oh, bright-er than the ris - ing morn When Christ, vic - to-rious, rose
4 Oh, bright-er than that glo - rious morn Shall dawn up - on our race
5 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns And light and beau - ty brings.



When beau - ty gilds the east - ern hills And life to joy a-wakes.
But crowned with glo - ry like the sun That lights the morn-ing sky.
And left the lone-some place of death De - spite the rage of foes.
The day when Christ in splen-dor comes And we shall see His face.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your peo-ple pray: Come quick-ly, King of kings!

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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 Second Sunday in Advent December 11 - 16, 2023

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: Luke 3:4b, 6

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 80:1, 8a, 9b, 7; antiphon Psalm 80:3

- L** Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
C Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.
L You brought a vine out of Egypt;
it took deep root and filled the land.
C Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
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 Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

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.

With all the talk of repentance this time of year, sometimes we forget that there is a purpose for repentance. God doesn't call us to repent without a reason. He is not just seeking humility for the sake of humility. God's call for repentance is directed toward the purpose of restoration! The plea of Psalm 80:3 is "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!"

Without repentance, we are headed for destruction. John the Baptist came as a servant of salvation. All of our calls for repentance today have this one goal: That together, we may be restored and saved!

St. Paul explains it this way: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:10-11).

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and the entire Church Year have one goal, that we would be restored in our relationship to God and saved through faith in Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, died, and rose again in Jerusalem!

L Let us pray. O Great Shepherd of the sheep grant to us true repentance and faith as You restore us and save us. Let your face shine upon us and give us peace.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 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 our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen

Have you ever heard the expression, "His heart is not in it"? This is a way of saying someone has no passion for what he is doing.

Last week, we prayed for God to stir up His power. This week we pray for Him to stir up our hearts. We pray that He will give us a passion for Jesus and service to Him. Sometimes Advent and Christmas can be purely mechanical, only going through the actions. Our prayer this week is that this will not happen to us.

One reason our hearts may not be stirred is that we do not see the purpose of what we are doing. I must admit that much of secular Christmas has a questionable purpose, that is, increased sales, increased profits, etc.

When I considered where God might be directing my life, I found that there were many things that I enjoyed and would have been content to pursue as a career. You know they say that if you find something you like to do, you will never work a day in your life. I never felt that this was enough. The Lord directed me to the ministry of the word because He knew that this was the one thing that I would do with a passion. It wasn't always fun. It wasn't easy but it did and does stir my heart.

May the Christ of Christmas always stir up our hearts.

Prayer: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You 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: Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 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.

Psalms 85

L ¹LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

C ²**You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.**

L ³You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

C ⁴**Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!**

L ⁵Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

C ⁶**Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?**

L ⁷Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

C ⁸**Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.**

L ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

C ¹⁰**Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

L ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

C ¹²**Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.**

L ¹³Righteousness will go before him

C **and make his footsteps a way.**

You don't know what you've got until it's gone! Here is an example. One of the most enduring Christmas traditions is A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. Although first published in 1843, it is fresh in each retelling.

In short, a young happy Ebenezer Scrooge was transformed into an unhappy old man, a real Scrooge! His transformation to unhappiness was so slow and complete, that he hadn't even noticed it until it was almost too late! Part of his restoration to happiness was accomplished by visiting past Christmases and reliving the happiness of youth and then watching it slip away. Through this miraculous intervention, Scrooge repented

and was restored!

The account of John the Baptist and Jesus, of Advent and Christmas, tells us that it is never too late to repent. With repentance comes restoration.

The Children of Israel had neglected God and because of that, they lost everything. The northern kingdom was lost. Judah, the southern kingdom was carried into exile in Babylon. But all was not lost forever. God eventually restored them to their land. The temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem and many of them became faithful again. John the Baptist's parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother and stepfather were among the faithful.

Psalm 85 is a tribute to God and His restoration of the lost. Advent and Christmas are a celebration of God's restoration of lost people through forgiveness and the gift of salvation.

Without Christ, we are all Ebenezer Scrooges. But it's not too late. God's steadfast love and salvation can revive even the most hardened Scrooges among us.

Prayer: O Lord, show us your steadfast love and grant us Your salvation. Melt our hearts of stone and revive in us a lively faith. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 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 40:1–11

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the LORD's hand

double for all her sins.

³A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,

and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level,

and the rough places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

and all flesh shall see it together,

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶A voice says, "Cry!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Behold your God!"

¹⁰Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

There is so much to say about Isaiah 40, that I hardly know where to start. There are 66 chapters in Isaiah and there are 66 books in the Bible. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and many have compared the first 39 chapters of Isaiah to the message of the Old Testament. There are 27 books in the New Testament and some have seen the last 27 chapters of Isaiah as a precursor of the New Testament. This idea is not without merit.

Isaiah 40's words of comfort begin with a prophecy fulfilled by John the Baptist:

³A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Advent and Christmas are times of comfort for God's people. God's long-promised savior is about to appear in the person of Jesus. He will be humble, wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. He will come in humility riding on a donkey. He will die stricken, smitten, and afflicted on the cross. (Isaiah 53:4. Read all of Isaiah 53 to see Isaiah's description of Jesus' suffering and death.)

He will bring the comfort of the forgiveness of sins. He will bind up the brokenhearted and proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

May the God of all comfort bring you peace.

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Lutheran Service Book 347, Lutheran Worship 28, The Lutheran Hymnal 61



1 "Com - fort, com - fort ye My peo - ple, Speak ye peace," thus
2 Yea, her sins our God will par - don, Blot - ting out each
3 Hark, the her - ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert
4 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed; Make the rough - er



saith our God; "Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, Mourn - ing
dark mis - deed; All that well de - served His an - ger He no
far and near, Call - ing sin - ners to re - pen - tance, Since the
plac - es plain. Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be -



'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem
more will see or heed. She hath suf - fered man - y a day,
King - dom now is here. O that warn - ing cry o - bey!
fits His ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry of the Lord



Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her
Now her griefs have passed a - way; God will change her
Now pre - pare for God a way; Let the val - leys
Now o'er earth is shed a - broad, And all flesh shall



sins I cov - er And her war - fare now is o - ver."
pin - ing sad - ness In - to ev - er - spring - ing glad - ness.
rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.
see the to - ken That His Word is nev - er bro - ken.

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Prayer: Mercifully hear, O Lord, the prayers of Your people, that, they may find the comfort promised to them by Isaiah and fulfilled in the coming of our savior, Jesus. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 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.

2 Peter 3:8–14

⁸Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Peter writes that God does not want any to perish but “that all should reach repentance.” Time goes by. The end is closer now than it was last year. Why does the world continue? It continues because God is patient. He is giving us all time to repent.

Serving more than 40 years as an active pastor, God gave to me the opportunity to meet many people. Some of whom may have been called lost causes.

Many years ago an older woman in our congregation asked me to visit her brother who was dying of cancer. I think it was her last-ditch effort to bring him to faith.

Her brother had spent many years in the navy. At least this is what I surmised by the tattoo on his forearm and the fact that he talked like a sailor. (I beg the pardon of my sailor friends and golf buddies, but I’m sure that you understand the expression.)

I believe that he was trying to scare me off with his extra salty language but I persevered. Little did he know that although I had been raised in a Christian home, I had several relatives who used language that would give him a run for the money.

During our visit, I shared the message of forgiveness and salvation. I told him of Jesus’ death and resurrection. I asked if I could pray with him and if I could visit him again. To my surprise, he invited me back. Over the next several weeks, I am convinced that he came to faith and is in heaven today. God had patience with him and granted him the opportunity to repent, receive comfort for his soul, and the gift of eternal life.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your patience and forgive me for the many times that I have been impatient with you. Grant that I may learn to have the same patience with people around me. 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: Luke 3:4b, 6

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia Prepare the way of the Lord, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia make his paths straight; all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 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 40:9–11

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”
¹⁰Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
¹¹He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Pause for a moment and consider these last verses of our Old Testament reading for this week.

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

Or as Isaiah puts it:

Get you up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good news;

Advent and Christmas are all about Good News. They are all about the Gospel. They are all about salvation given freely to sinners.

This is something to shout from a mountain, or a pulpit, or a street corner. It is the work of John the Baptist. It is the work of all the prophets. It is a work of all the Apostles. It is the work of all the preachers. It is the work of every Christian.

Put it in writing. Put it in lights. Send it by mail and internet. Put it on TV. Stream it on YouTube.

Get up to a high mountain! Tell the Good News. Jesus Christ is born!

Prayer: O Lord God, grant that we may use the Advent time and every day to tell the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus. Amen.

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

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

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

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