

The Second Sunday in Advent December 4, 2022

Each of the four Gospels begins with the work of John the Baptist. It is impossible to tell the story of Jesus and His work without telling the story of John the Baptist. His impact on his world is difficult to overestimate. It is only because Jesus' amazing and wonderful life, death, and resurrection overshadow the life of John the Baptist that he is easily ignored.

He was so well known that when Herod heard of Jesus' astonishing works, he exclaimed, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him!" (Matthew 14:2). Even as John the Baptist stirred the people to repentance and he pointed his disciples to Jesus, may we also be stirred to repentance and follow Jesus, our savior.



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.

The chief and leading theme of all the prophets is their aim to keep the people in eager anticipation of the coming Christ... Likewise in our time, too, whatever we teach and establish in the church, we do with a view to getting the people to await the coming of the Savior. Here we must not act in an ungodly manner, but we must live sober, upright, and godly lives (Titus 1:8; 2:12), not, however, as if we always had to stay here ("for here we have no lasting city" [Heb. 13:14] but through Christ we should await another life to come after this life).

Martin Luther, Preface to Isaiah

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.

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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 105:4–8; antiphon Isaiah 40:3b

- L** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- C** **Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!**
- L** Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
- C** **O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**
- L** He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
- C** **He remembers his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.**
- 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** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

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 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 11:1–10

- ¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
- ²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- ³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire,
and his resting place shall be glorious.

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 72:1–7

L ¹Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!

C ²May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!

L ³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness!

C ⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

L ⁵May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!

C ⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!

L ⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,

C and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

Romans 15:4–13

⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

⁸For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

¹⁰And again it is said,
“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹And again,
“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹²And again Isaiah says,
“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

Matthew 3:1–12

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 3rd chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;

make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

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.

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:

How many channels do you get on satellite, cable, or over the air? How many streaming services do you subscribe to? I can't keep track of them all. When award shows are broadcast, I haven't even heard of half the winners. In my childhood, there were three networks, one or two independent stations, and public television. Actually, when we lived in Ignace, Ontario, we only had one channel, CBC, and just two radio stations! TV was less complicated then. Today, how do you sort out the wheat from the chaff?

On the other hand, if you are a broadcaster today, how do you get noticed? Your first answer might be, "Produce high-quality programming." Unfortunately, it seems that many producers of programming have chosen to take the low road. They seek to be noticed by being outlandish and vulgar. You may have heard the term for this. They call it being "edgy."

I find this quite distressing. Immoral and irreligious lifestyles are praised in an attempt to get ratings. As a result, vulgar language and wicked ways of life are presented as normal. It seems as though it's never been this bad. What are we to do?

Take a deep breath. We may live in appalling times but it's nothing new. The Bible records dreadful days experienced by God's people throughout history. From the days of Noah to Israel in exile, the Old Testament details how faithful people have survived in hostile surroundings.

In our Gospel lesson, we read of John the Baptist who faced times like ours. It is easy to show how corrupt the pagan world of the Roman Empire was. But the Romans weren't the focus of John the Baptist.

Herod Antipas ruled in Galilee. He was the son of Herod the Great. John the Baptist condemned him for marrying his brother's wife (Mark 6:18). But in our Gospel lesson, even this is not the heart of John's message. It is the everyday people of Jerusalem, Judea and those who live near the Jordan River who are directed to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Have you noticed how easy it is to identify people who are "worse" than you are? We tend to justify ourselves by pointing out that at least we're not as bad as someone else. That excuse will not work with John the Baptist. His call to repentance is for every one of us.

How will you spend this Advent (pre-Christmas) season? Will you put up a Christmas tree? Will you decorate your house? Will you shop for presents? Will you send Christmas cards? Will you find time for repentance?

Our preparation for Christmas is noble but we dare not allow it to overshadow our greatest need, our need for repentance. Those who feel that they have no need for repentance have no need for Christmas!

Isaiah long ago prophesied the ministry of John the Baptist by saying that he would be, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" The straight path for Jesus to come into your heart is through repentance.

It is important for us to be concerned about the morals in our nation. It is important for us to be concerned about decency in our society. But it is infinitely more important for us to recognize our own need for a savior.

Advent is a time to ponder God's love for us in sending His Son to be born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. Advent is a time for us to contemplate our need for a savior and our need for repentance. Advent is a time to make a straight path for Jesus to come to us with the forgiveness of sins that we so desperately need.

John the Baptist declared, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The kingdom of heaven is still at hand today. It comes to us in the person of Jesus through word and sacrament. May our lives always be ready to receive Him by repentance and faith.

“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).

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** Heavenly Father, You stir the hearts of Your faithful to prepare us for the advent of Your Son. Continue to strengthen us with Your holy word as we look for His return.
- C** Amen.
- L** O Lord, as we await Your Son’s return in glory. Send forth faithful preachers to walk in the way of John the Baptist and proclaim Your Law and Gospel. Grant us ears to listen and hearts to believe their words and message of salvation through faith in Jesus.
- C** Amen.
- L** Heavenly Father, grant that we may be kept in joy and sustained in hope through every trouble and trial of life until we are welcomed into the eternal mansions of heaven prepared for us by Your Son, Our Savior Jesus.
- C** Amen.
- L** Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all

who are suffering from illness. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

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.

On What Has Now Been Sown Lutheran Service Book 932, Lutheran Worship 217, The Lutheran Hymnal 46



1 On what has now been sown Thy bless - ing, Lord, be - stow;
2 To Thee our wants are known, From Thee are all our pow'rs;
3 O grant that each of us, Now met be - fore Thee here,



The pow'r is Thine a - lone To make it sprout and grow. Do Thou
Ac - cept what is Thine own And par - don what is ours. Our prais -
May meet to - geth - er thus When Thou and Thine ap - pear And fol -



in grace the har - vest raise, And Thou a - lone shalt have the praise!
es, Lord, and prayers re - ceive, And to Thy Word a bless - ing give.
low Thee to heav'n, our home. E'en so, a - men, Lord Je - sus, come!

A Stirring Advent and Christmas!

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.

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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Picture of the Advent Wreath: Lutheran Advent wreath with one rose and three blue candles around a decorated white central candle, all lit, the Wikimedia Commons, used by permission, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Adventwreath.jpg>

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 Second Sunday in Advent

December 5 - 10, 2022

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.

Introit Psalm 105:4–8; antiphon Isaiah 40:3b

- L** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- C** **Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!**
- L** Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
- C** **O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones!**
- L** He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
- C** **He remembers his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.**
- 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** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Verse Luke 3:4b, 6

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. 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. |

It's funny how memory works. We often forget important things and remember insignificant details. In the fall of 1973, I was teaching confirmation instruction as a seminary fieldwork student at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Barnhart, Missouri. It's a day that I remember well.

I had a 7th-grade student and I was teaching her about God's covenant with His people. Unfortunately, I was pronouncing "covenant" as Midwesterners do. My supervisor was Rev. Paul Pallmeyer. He insisted that I pronounce it as though I was a native of New England. Every time I would say "covenant," he would stop and correct me. I've never forgotten that day. (I still pronounce "covenant" in the Midwestern way but sometimes for fun I'll pretend that I have a New England accent and say "covenant" as though I lived in Coventry, Connecticut to honor Pastor Pallmeyer.)

Are there some things that you will never forget? Psalm 105:8 tells us that God remembers His covenant forever! (Covenant is *berith* in Hebrew if you want to know the correct pronunciation <wink, wink>.) He never forgets the promises that He has made to us!

John puts it this way, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We never have to worry that God might forget His promise to forgive us for Jesus' sake.

- L** Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for remembering the covenant that You made with Your people of old.
Thank You for remembering the covenant that made with us in baptism. Grant us the confidence and assurance of Your eternal grace and mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Tuesday – Saint Nicholas Day

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

Verse Luke 3:4b, 6

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. 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.

Saint Nicholas—the man, the myth, the legend.

Yes, Virginia, there really is a St. Nicholas. He was born in the year A.D. 270 and died on December 6, 343 which is why today is called Saint Nicholas Day.

He was the bishop of Myra (Demre in present-day Turkey). It is believed that he was imprisoned and tortured during the Great Persecution under Emperor Diocletian before Christianity was legalized by Constantine. He is listed as having attended the First Council of Nicaea where the Nicene Creed was approved.

St. Nicholas is mostly remembered for his compassion and generosity as a pastor. One story that has been retold is that he secretly helped three girls with gifts of gold.

In the Netherlands, his generosity was celebrated by giving gifts to children on his day. One version of Saint Nicholas in Dutch is Sinterklaas. It is not hard to connect the dots and see how our English version of Saint Nicholas became Santa Claus.

Unfortunately, much of the American version of Santa Claus has lost its connection to this Christian hero of the faith. Nevertheless, on this day we remember the ultimate generosity of all, the gift of God's own Son. Because of God's love and generosity to us, we become loving and generous people. May God grant us joyful hearts as we share our blessings with those in need and remember that "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

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 Luke 3:4b, 6

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

Psalm 72:1–7

- L** ¹Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!
C ²**May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!**
L ³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness!
C ⁴**May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!**
L ⁵May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
C ⁶**May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!**
L ⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
C **and peace abound, till the moon be no more!**

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.

Psalm 72 is a prayer for a king, the son of David. The greatest descendent of David to rule is Jesus. God made this promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Gabriel told Mary that her Son would be the fulfillment of this promise, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father

David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33). This makes Psalm 72 a fitting psalm for Advent when we celebrate His coming.

King Jesus rules with perfect justice and righteousness. He defends the cause of the poor and needy. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom of peace.

Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies from Psalm 72. First, ponder Matthew 12:17-21:

¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

²⁰ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,

until he brings justice to victory;

²¹ and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

And also consider Matthew 11:5, “The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”

Finally, remember the words of the angels to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14 KJV).

Every descendant of David that came before Jesus fell short of the ideal king described in Psalm 72. Not only did Jesus fulfill the promises of Psalm 72, but He also went far beyond them. The King who rode into Jerusalem to shouts of “Hosanna” (Save now), is the King who offered Himself for the sins of the world. He is the King who welcomes us into His eternal kingdom of paradise in heaven.

Hail to the Lord's Anointed Lutheran Service Book 398, Lutheran Worship 82, The Lutheran Hymnal 59



1 Hail to the Lord's a - noint - ed, Great Da - vid's great - er Son!
2 He comes with res - cue speed - y To those who suf - fer wrong,
3 He shall come down like show - ers Up - on the fruit - ful earth;
4 Kings shall fall down be - fore Him And gold and in - cense bring;



Hail, in the time ap - point - ed, His reign on earth be - gun!
To help the poor and need - y And bid the weak be strong;
Love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, Spring in His path to birth.
All na - tions shall a - dore Him, His praise all peo - ple sing.



He comes to break op - pres - sion, To set the cap - tive free,
 To give them songs for sigh - ing, Their dark - ness turn to light,
 Be - fore Him on the moun - tains Shall peace, the her - ald, go;
 To Him shall prayer un - ceas - ing And dai - ly vows as - cend;



To take a - way trans - gres - sion And rule in eq - ui - ty.
 Whose souls, con - demned and dy - ing, Were pre - cious in His sight.
 And righ - teous - ness in foun - tains From hill to val - ley flow.
 His king - dom still in - creas - ing, A king - dom with - out end.

5 O'er ev'ry foe victorious,
 He on His throne shall rest,
 From age to age more glorious,
 All blessing and all-blest.
 The tide of time shall never
 His covenant remove;
 His name shall stand forever—
 That name to us is Love.

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Thursday

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

Verse Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. 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 11:1–10

¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
 and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
 the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the Spirit of counsel and might,
 the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire,
and his resting place shall be glorious.

The number one song this week on the Billboard Hot 100 is *Anti-Hero* by Taylor Swift. It has been number one since it was first released six weeks ago!

The song (as they used to say on American Bandstand) has a beat and you can dance to it. Other than that it's a heartbreakingly sad song. It is an extended description of a woman blaming herself for her unhappiness. There is nothing "upbeat" about it. The haunting refrain states, "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me. At tea time, everybody agrees."

Whether people blame themselves or someone else for their unhappiness, there seems to be a lot of it going around today. Television talk shows are filled with anger. Politicians no longer simply disagree with each other over the best course of action. They accuse each other of being evil. Are we doomed to be gloomy and miserable?

In one sense the answer is "yes." Because sin has corrupted every part of creation, life is filled with sorrow. *Anti-hero* contains a line that underscores this problem. At one point, Taylor Swift sings, "She's laughing up at us from hell." Sin and rebellion against God and His law have left us in a death spiral to hell.

But all is not lost! Ancient Israel was "in a world of hurt." They rebelled against God and He brought His judgment upon them. But Isaiah proclaimed that one day into this world of gloom and sin, Christ would enter in.

In 1964, Frank Sinatra with Count Basie and his orchestra released an album titled "It Might as Well Be Swing" with music arranged by Quincy Jones. The third cut on side two is a song titled "The Best is Yet to Come." On February 25, 1995, it became the last song he sang in public. The words "The Best is Yet to Come" are etched on Frank Sinatra's tombstone. In one sense, this is the theme of our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 11.

Isaiah lived in unhappy times. In chapter 10, he was given the task of pronouncing "woe" to the sinful and godless. But in chapter 11, he had the privilege of declaring that much better times were coming.

One day, a shoot would come from the stump of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. A descendent of David would have the Spirit of the LORD rest upon Him!

The people of the Old Testament did not need to despair. God had planned better times for them. One day, the savior would come and rescue them and the entire sinful world. "The best was yet to come."

We live in a time when we are tempted to allow sadness to overwhelm us. The devil, the world, and our own sinful selves war against godliness. But do not despair.

King Jesus has overcome sin, death, and the devil. Because Jesus died on the cross to bring us forgiveness, life, and salvation, there is no need to live in sadness and guilt. The best is yet to come. The Apostle Paul put it this way.

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

The Best is Yet to Come!

Prayer: O Lord God, thank you for the gift of Savior, Jesus. Grant that we would not be overwhelmed by sadness but remember that the best is yet to come in the eternal mansions of heaven through the same, 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 Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. 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.

Romans 15:4–13

⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

⁸For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

¹⁰And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹²And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Romans 15:13 is a spectacular Advent/Christmas blessing. It abounds in hope, joy, and peace.

Many years ago, in the middle of the night, a severe storm rolled in with heavy wind and rain. We were on vacation in Northwestern Ontario. Lying in bed, I could hear a steady thump, thump, thump. Valerie and I both concluded that our boat had broken loose and was banging against the rocks.

At that moment, I discovered that Valerie and I are cut from quite different pieces of cloth. I knew that this fierce storm would smash our boat to bits on the rocks. I was resigned to examining what was left in the morning. But Valerie had hope that we could save our boat.

She organized the troops and in a few minutes, we were all out the door in the wind and pouring rain. Fortunately, it was a very warm summer night.

We could hear a constant thumping a long way off. We set off on a narrow path through the woods toward the sound. Soon we came to a narrow but raging creek that lay between us and the neighbor's shore. We bravely made our way across a little bridge (a board). This single plank bridge was slippery and as I remember it, Valerie's foot slipped. Her leg went into the water up to her knee. This wouldn't be the last time she got wet.

The boat was against the rocks next to our neighbor's dock. We all jumped into the waves and managed to pull the boat off the rocks and tie it to the dock.

Mission accomplished, we made our way back through the woods and across the creek. Every one of us was soaked from head to toe.

The next day all was calm. We managed to pull the boat back to our place and get it on the trailer. The damage was minor and easily repaired. This happened more than twenty years ago. We still have the boat. It stands as a testimony to Valerie's determination to not give up hope!

Paul tells us that our God is not a God of despair. Our God is a God of hope!

Paul tells us that the Scriptures were written so that we might have hope! Hope is a word that informs us about the future.

What does the future hold for you? Without God, there is no reason to have hope for the future. Everything is captive to the second law of thermodynamics. Everything winds down. Moth and rust destroy.

With God, we have a future filled with hope. God promises that in Christ, we have victory over sin and death. No matter how good or bad things are now. With God, the future will be better. He has promised us peace and joy.

Advent is a time of anticipation and expectation. In biblical terms, hope is the expectation for the fulfillment of all of God's promises. When Christians talk about the hope of heaven, they do not mean, “I would

like to go to heaven, but who knows.” Rather, we mean, “I’m not in heaven yet but that is my expectation (hope) because Jesus paid for my sins and promised me eternal life.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Prayer: Dear God of hope, thank You for Your promise of a blessed future with You for Jesus’ sake. Grant that we would live each day with joy and peace in expectation of eternal life in paradise through the same Jesus Christ, 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 Luke 3:4b, 6

L Alleluia, Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. 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.

In 1934, long before I was born, Walt Disney produced a film that made a big impact on my young life. This Silly Symphony wasn’t an original story by Disney. It was a story first told in the 6th Century B.C. by Aesop. It is known as The Ant and the Grasshopper.

You may know the story. It’s an allegory comparing a hard-working ant and a lazy grasshopper. Through the ages, this fable has been interpreted in a variety of ways (usually reflecting the personal bias of the interpreter.) But for our purposes, this fable demonstrates that the love of idleness has been around for a long time! It is in our human nature to avoid work.

Not only do we try to avoid physical work but we also will go to great lengths to avoid spiritual work. Spiritual laziness infects us all. This is why we need God to stir up our hearts to make ready the way for Jesus.

Our hearts need to be stirred to repentance. Our hearts need to be stirred to faith. Our hearts need to be stirred to service. We cannot do this on our own. It is only the Holy Spirit working through God’s law and Gospel that changes us.

First, He stirs our hearts to recognize our sins and turn to Him in repentance. Then, He stirs our hearts to

believe in His promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation through faith in Christ. May this Advent and Christmas stir up our lazy 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.

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