

## The First Sunday after Christmas

### December 28, 2025



Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord and offer the sacrifice of two turtle doves as prescribed by the Old Testament law. While they were there, they meet a man named Simeon. He had been waiting his whole life to see the Savior. God had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

When he saw Jesus, he took the baby into his arms and declared to God that he was now ready for his life to end in peace. He had seen the Savior with his own eyes!

They also met a woman named Anna who was advanced in years. She also recognized that Jesus would be the redeemer. May we this day join Simeon and Anna to see in Jesus the salvation provided by God for all who will believe.

We also pray that Christian parents today will learn from the example of Mary and Joseph to be faithful in bringing their children to the Lord in Holy Baptism and raising them in the true Christian faith.

Note: In preparation for this service, light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

### Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

Lutheran Service Book 386, Lutheran Worship 47, The Lutheran Hymnal 92

1 Now sing we, now re - joice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;  
2 Come from on high to me; I can - not rise to Thee.  
3 Now through His Son doth shine The Fa-ther's grace di - vine.  
4 Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'n - ly ground?

He from whom joy stream - eth Poor in a man-ger lies;  
Cheer my wea-ried spir - it, O pure and ho - ly Child;  
Death was reign-ing o'er us Through sin and van - i - ty  
Where the an - gels sing - ing With all His saints u - nite,

Not so bright - ly beam - eth The sun in yon - der skies.  
Through Thy grace and mer - it, Blest Je - sus, Lord most mild,  
Till He o - pened for us A bright e - ter - ni - ty.  
Sweet - est prais - es bring - ing In heav'n - ly joy and light.

Thou my Sav - ior art!  
Draw me un - to Thee!  
May we praise Him there!  
Oh, that we were there!

Thou my Sav - ior art!  
Draw me un - to Thee!  
May we praise Him there!  
Oh, that we were there!

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

- Our help is in the name of the Lord,
- **who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8)**
- Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.
- **Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (Psalm 19:12, 13)**
- If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?
- **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (Psalm 130:3–4)**
- 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:
- **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.

## Entrance Hymn

## **Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

Lutheran Service Book 380, Lutheran Worship 49, The Lutheran Hymnal 94

A musical staff in G clef and common time. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a fermata over the eighth note on the fourth line. The notes are distributed across the first four lines of the staff.

1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;  
2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righ-teous-ness!

A musical staff in G clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and a sixteenth note followed by a eighth note. A fermata is placed over the eighth note. The staff ends with a half note and a fermata.

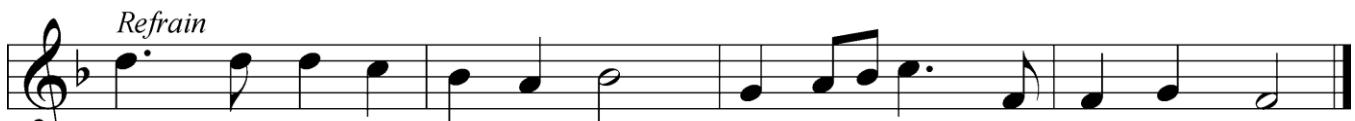
Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"  
Late in time be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir-gin's womb.  
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God - head see, Hail the in - car - nate De - i - ty!  
Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die,



With the an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Je - sus, our Im - man - u - el!  
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them sec - ond birth.



*Refrain*  
Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King!"

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## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.

## Gloria in Excelsis

### Angels We Have Heard on High

Lutheran Service Book 368, Lutheran Worship 55, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



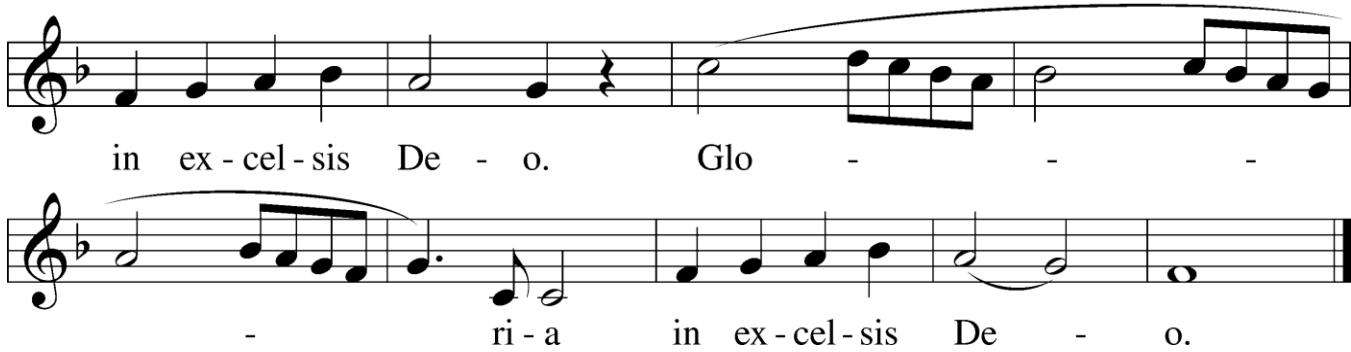
1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet - ly sing-ing o'er the plains,  
2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?  
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;



And the moun-tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.  
What the glad - some tid - ings be Which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?  
Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.



Glo - ri - a



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## Collect of the Day

**L** Let us pray: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## Isaiah 63:7-14

<sup>7</sup>I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD,  
the praises of the LORD,  
according to all that the LORD has granted us,  
and the great goodness to the house of Israel  
that he has granted them according to his compassion,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

<sup>8</sup>For he said, “Surely they are my people,  
children who will not deal falsely.”

And he became their Savior.

<sup>9</sup>In all their affliction he was afflicted,  
and the angel of his presence saved them;  
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

<sup>10</sup>But they rebelled  
and grieved his Holy Spirit;  
therefore he turned to be their enemy,  
and himself fought against them.

<sup>11</sup>Then he remembered the days of old,  
of Moses and his people.

Where is he who brought them up out of the sea  
with the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them  
his Holy Spirit,

<sup>12</sup>who caused his glorious arm  
to go at the right hand of Moses,  
who divided the waters before them  
to make for himself an everlasting name,

<sup>13</sup>who led them through the depths?  
Like a horse in the desert,

they did not stumble.

<sup>14</sup>Like livestock that go down into the valley,  
the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.  
So you led your people,  
to make for yourself a glorious name.

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1b

**L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
**C** and the government shall be upon his shoulder.  
**L** And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
**C** Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
**L** Sing to the Lord a new song,  
**C** for he has done marvelous things!

### Psalm 111

**L** <sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!  
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.  
**C** <sup>2</sup>Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.  
**L** <sup>3</sup>Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.  
**C** <sup>4</sup>He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful.  
**L** <sup>5</sup>He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.  
**C** <sup>6</sup>He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.  
**L** <sup>7</sup>The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;  
**C** <sup>8</sup>they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.  
**L** <sup>9</sup>He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.  
Holy and awesome is his name!  
**C** <sup>10</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

### Galatians 4:4–7

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Verse Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.  
Alleluia.

## Matthew 2:13–23

**L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.  
**C** Glory to You, O Lord.

<sup>13</sup>Now when [the wise men] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” <sup>14</sup>And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt <sup>15</sup>and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

<sup>16</sup>Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. <sup>17</sup>Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> “A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

<sup>19</sup>But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, <sup>20</sup>saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” <sup>21</sup>And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

**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

## Away in a Manger

Lutheran Service Book 364, Lutheran Worship 64, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,  
2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,  
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask Thee to stay

The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head.  
But lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes.  
Close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.

The stars in the sky \_\_\_\_\_ looked down where He lay,  
I love Thee, Lord Je - sus! Look down from the sky,  
Bless all the dear chil - dren in Thy ten - der care,

The lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
And stay - by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.  
And take us to heav - en to live with Thee there.

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### Devotional thoughts:

On Christmas Eve, I attended both our early and late Christmas Eve services. I enjoyed the singing and listening to carols commemorating the birth of Savior in the little town of Bethlehem.

On that very same night, in or near Little Rock, Arkansas, someone held the single winning ticket for the second-largest U.S. lottery prize ever, \$1.817 billion! Of course, that number represents the total if it were to be paid out over many years. The lump sum was less than half that number, \$834.9 million. I'm not an expert in such things, or even knowledgeable, but I understand that the government will take about half that amount in taxes. Nevertheless, \$400 million dollars is nothing to sneeze at.

Although gambling was common in the Roman Empire, I don't suppose Mary and Joseph could have imagined anything like the Powerball Lottery. Still the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh from the wise men must have felt very much the same. As we can conclude from our Gospel Lesson, those gifts would soon be put to good use.

This year we have "won the lottery" of a coincidence in the Church Year. Every year, December 28 is designated as Holy Innocents Day. Approximately, once every seven years Holy Innocents Day falls on the Sunday after Christmas. Two out of three years, the Gospel Lesson for the Sunday after Christmas is the account of the Presentation of Jesus at the temple and His encounter with Simeon. However, once every three years, as is the case this year, The Gospel Lesson for the Sunday after Christmas is also the Gospel lesson for Holy Innocents Day. Doing the math, this coincidence only happens, on average, once every twenty-one years!

It was no coincidence that the wise men appeared in Bethlehem bearing gifts. It was God's plan. He led them by a special star to the very place where Jesus was staying with Mary and Joseph. Along the way, they received directions through Herod from the chief priests and scribes who quoted Micah 5:2:

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.” (Matthew 2:6)

Now, after the wise men left their gifts, the plot thickens. Herod shows his true colors. Although he is known in history as Herod the Great, he could rightly be called Herod the Evil. He was about to search for the child, to destroy him. To make absolutely sure that Jesus would be killed, Herod ordered his troops to kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and younger. We honor those children each year on Holy Innocents Day.

As an aside, because of Herod's order, some people have speculated that Jesus must have been two years old when the wise men came. I believe that is a false conclusion. If Herod believed that Jesus was two, why did he order babies under one year old to be killed? Herod was being ruthless and thorough. If he believed Jesus was two, I think that he would have ordered that those four years old and younger should be executed. From what we know of Herod, I think it is safe to conclude that Jesus was younger than one year old at this time.

In addition, if the star appeared at Jesus' conception, he may have been a small baby when the wise men arrived. At any rate, we know that He was more than 40 days old when they came because Jesus had been presented at the temple when He was 40 days old (Luke 2:22-38). Mary and Joseph had returned to Bethlehem and Joseph took Mary and Jesus by night to Egypt immediately following the visit of the wise men.

Now, let's get back to our story. Joseph was a craftsman. He was not a wealthy man. We know this because the standard sacrifice for a first born son at the temple was a lamb. However, if the family could not afford a lamb, a pair of turtledoves was permitted. The gift of gold from the wise men must have seemed like a treasure from heaven to Joseph. He would soon need it.

We don't know how he financed his trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem. How would he get to Egypt? At just the right time, God provided him with Gold!

God enabled him to keep Mary and Jesus safe from Herod's evil intent. God's plan of salvation could not be thwarted. Good would triumph.

While there is much more to this story, let's stop here for now. God's plans always succeed!

I've never won the lottery, although my chances of winning are only a slightly less than for those who buy tickets! For someone in Arkansas to win \$1.817 billion, there had to be millions and millions of losers! (As I always say, “If you don't play the lottery, you can't lose.”)

God is never a loser! His plans always accomplish His purpose. God's ultimate plan for you is not to win the lottery. God's ultimate plan for you is an eternity with Him in paradise.

To make that happen, throughout the Old Testament, He promised a Savior. Then on the first Christmas, He sent the Savior in the person of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To accomplish salvation, Jesus lived a perfect life for you and died on the cross to pay for your sins. On the third day, He rose from the dead so that you, too, will one day rise from the dead. He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for you.

Next, God has worked everything out in your life so that you would believe in Him and receive eternal life. He continues to preserve your faith until you will one day join Him forever in the mansions of heaven.

If getting you to heaven would require that you needed to win the lottery, you would win, even without buying a ticket. If getting you to heaven meant that you needed gold, frankincense and myrrh, wise men would show up at your door.

However, your salvation cost much more than that. You were redeemed, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot (1 Peter 1:19). May you enter the New Year trusting God's promises for time and eternity.

“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).

## What Child Is This

Lutheran Service Book 370, Lutheran Worship 61, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a



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## Prayers

**L** O Lord, grant us grace to rejoice in Christ's incarnation; and thankfulness that, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us and give us the adoption as Your sons and heirs; and grant us a glad new year.

**C** Amen.

**L** O God, You declare that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Him. Preserve us from all ungodly prejudice, yet instill in us a deep appreciation of our distinctive callings. Grant that we would not be offended by what You have called us to be and to do, but rejoice to serve as You have intended.

**C** Amen.

**L** O Lord, bless the lonely, that they would be comforted with the sure and certain knowledge that You will never forsake them, and that within the household of faith they might find family, friends and loving companionship.

**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, You are the bringer of true joy. Grant Your Holy Spirit to increase and sustain us in this joy and thanksgiving throughout the days of this Christmas season until that day when at last Christ calls us to depart in peace and be with Him in the mansions of heaven for all eternity.

**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.

## Joy to the World

Lutheran Service Book 387, Lutheran Worship 53, The Lutheran Hymnal 87



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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 First Sunday after Christmas December 29, 2025—January 3, 2026

### 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

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

### Verse Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.  
Alleluia.

### Introit Jeremiah 31:15–17; antiphon Hosea 11:1

**L** When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.  
**C** Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.  
**L** Rachel is weeping for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."  
**C** Thus says the Lord: "Keep your voice from weeping,  
and your eyes from tears,  
**L** for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord,  
and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.  
**C** There is hope for your future, declares the Lord,  
and your children shall come back to their own country."  
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** When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> <b>Have mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b> <b>Have mercy on us.</b>
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> <b>Have mercy on us.</b>

We didn't use the introit on Sunday but let us not neglect it. For a number of reasons, the introit may seem curious to you this week. First, most introits come from the Psalms but neither the antiphon nor the body of this introit is from the Psalms. Second, our introit doesn't seem very "Christmassy." Nevertheless, it contains two Bible passages that are important to the Christmas story.

Most of our Gospel lessons this year come from the Gospel of Matthew. His Gospel is filled with features and information that help us to understand that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience in the Holy Land and the surrounding area.

He begins by pointing out that Jesus is a descendant of David and Abraham. Then he presents us with Jesus' genealogy. Both of these are important to people whose lives were immersed in God's word of the Old Testament. Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

In carefully reading through Matthew, you will notice that in the first four chapters, Matthew documents the fulfillment of seven Old Testament prophecies in the life of Jesus. Our Gospel lesson for this week features two of these fulfillments. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses wrote, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—."

There are many parallels between the life of Jesus and the life of Moses. Two of them are highlighted this week.

First, we read this week in our Gospel lesson:

<sup>13</sup> Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup> And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Matthew 2:13-15).

The Prophet Hosea (Hosea 11:1) declared that the Savior would come out of Egypt just as God used Moses to save His people from bondage in Egypt. This time the Savior would be like Moses but much greater than Moses. He would come out of Egypt to save God's people from sin, death, and the devil!

Before Moses was born, Pharaoh ordered the death of all the baby boys born to the Hebrew women. Now when the new and greater Moses is born, baby boys are again killed at the hands of a ruthless king. Matthew recognized this as the fulfillment of the prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Just as Moses was saved from such an evil order by divine intervention so also was Jesus saved by divine intervention. This happened when the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in dream directing him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt and Joseph obeyed.

Sin has corrupted our world. Powerful forces are at work in opposition to the will of God. However, God's plans are never spoiled by pharaohs, kings, or present day politicians.

Just as God worked in history to fulfill His plan of salvation, God also is at work in your life fulfill His ultimate plan of salvation for you. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

<sup>38</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose... <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28, 38-39).

**L** Let us pray. O Lord, let us never become discouraged because of the difficulties of life and the evil that we see all around us. Remind us that Your ultimate plan for us is to spend eternity with You. It was for this reason that you sent Jesus to be our Savior.

**C** Amen.

## Tuesday

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

**C** Amen.

## Verse Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. 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: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

“From Atlantic to Pacific, Gee, the traffic is terrific<sup>1</sup>,” Many people travel at Christmas time. I’ve done some figurative traveling in preparing for today’s devotion on the Collect for the Day for the First Sunday after Christmas. I’ve been searching for its source. It turns out that this collect is different from collects found in both Lutheran Worship and The Lutheran Hymnal. It doesn’t seem to come from other non-Lutheran sources either.

It does have a kinship with the Collect for the First Sunday after Christmas in 1662 Book of Common. Here it is.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee, and the same Spirit, ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

I think our modern prayer captures the essence of this old prayer. Our prayer is directed to the almighty God who is our Maker and Redeemer.

Both prayers focus on the incarnation of Jesus. The older prayer makes it primary and the modern prayer makes it secondary. Either way, we must never forget that our Christian faith is rooted in “the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Some might put it this way, “Jesus’ incarnation is the reason

<sup>1</sup> From “Home for the Holidays,” a song popularized by Perry Como in 1954 composed by Robert Allen with the lyrics written by Al Stillman.

for the season.”

Our modern collect reminds us that God has “wondrously restored our human nature.” The older prayer is more thorough in its explanation. We have become regenerate (born again) and made God’s children by adoption and grace. Both prayers ask for the daily blessing of renewal of the Holy Spirit or to be alive in Christ.

There is something to be said for brevity in our prayers. However, this sometimes comes at the expense of the richness that older prayers offer. What do you think?

Prayer: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Wednesday – New Year’s Eve

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

## Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, **A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.**  
Alleluia.

## Psalm 111

**L** <sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!  
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.  
**C** **2Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.**  
**L** <sup>3</sup>Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.  
**C** **4He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful.**  
**L** <sup>5</sup>He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.  
**C** **6He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.**  
**L** <sup>7</sup>The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;  
**C** **8they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**  
**L** <sup>9</sup>He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.  
Holy and awesome is his name!  
**C** **10The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!**

## 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.**

Today is New Year’s Eve! It is a good time to think of Psalm 111, the psalm for this week. Verse 4 begins, “He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered.”

New Year’s Eve is an important time for remembering. I know some would like to forget 2025. Things didn’t go their way or loved ones died or there was suffering from illness or injury, etc.

But 2025 has also produced many examples of heroism and self-sacrifice that we ought to not soon forget. We remember the tireless hours of service given by men and women in hospitals, clinics, emergency departments and critical care units of our nation. We remember the self-sacrifice given by the thousands of

volunteers who worked to ease the difficulties that the poor and needy face in life. We remember the first responders in police departments, fire departments, and emergency medical services who quickly responded to desperate calls for help. We remember family members who were there day in and day out in times of need.

Self-sacrifice and devotion demonstrated by our fellow citizens is more than we can even begin to imagine. Nevertheless, even more important is remembering the wondrous works of the Lord. The most important wondrous work of them all is the redemption that the Lord sent to His people in the person of Jesus. Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross so that as His people we not only have the opportunity to remember but we also are granted the ability to look ahead to eternity with Him! How holy and awesome is His name!

Prayer: O Lord, the psalmist has reminded us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, grant that we may not enter the New Year foolishly. Grant that we may have the wisdom to remember Your wondrous works and anticipate eternity with You, through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

### O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Lutheran Service Book 733, Lutheran Worship 123, The Lutheran Hymnal 180



1 O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,  
2 Un - der the shad-ow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;  
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood Or earth re - ceived her frame,  
4 A thou-sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home:  
Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.  
From ev - er - last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.  
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Soon bears us all away;  
We fly forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last  
And our eternal home!

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### Thursday – New Year's Day

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

### Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1b

**L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
**C** **and the government shall be upon his shoulder.**  
**L** And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
**C** **Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**  
**L** Sing to the Lord a new song,  
**C** **for he has done marvelous things!**

## Verse of the Day: Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.  
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.

## Galatians 4:4–7

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Tick, tock, time flies! Many years ago, when digital displays were very uncommon, I built for my dad a digital clock. Hours, minutes, and seconds were displayed by LEDs. I was proud of my accomplishment when I presented it to him. After a while, he declared that he wasn't particularly fond of it. I asked him why and he answered, “I don't like seeing the seconds of my life tick away before my eyes!” I had never considered that before but now I do sometimes remember his words when I see a digital clock.

Unfortunately, my father was the first of my immediate family to go home to be with Jesus. The seconds of his life were ticking away faster than I had imagined.

Time can go by quickly or slowly. But in God's economy, things always happen at the right time. In Galatians 4:4, we are informed that Jesus was born at just the right time, in the fullness of time.

God's plans never go astray. He knew all along that He would send His Son to be our Saviour. He worked it out so that when Caesar Augustus issued a decree for all the world to be taxed, it was just the right time to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus to be born in the City of David.

All of this meticulous planning and timing was for the purpose of making you a child of God! You are no longer a slave to sin but an heir of salvation. Rejoice and be glad!

Prayer: O Lord, the New Year is before us. Last year on this day, we could have never imagined what 2025 would bring. Yet we know that you were with us each and every minute of the day. As we enter the Year of our Lord 2026, grant that we would not forget that all of our times and seasons are in Your hands and You have promised to never leave us or forsake us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Friday

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

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

## Verse Luke 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.  
Alleluia.

## Kyrie

<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.
<b>L</b>	O Christ,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.
<b>L</b>	O Lord,	<b>C</b> Have mercy on us.

## Isaiah 63:7-14

<sup>7</sup>I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD,  
the praises of the LORD,  
according to all that the LORD has granted us,  
and the great goodness to the house of Israel  
that he has granted them according to his compassion,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

<sup>8</sup>For he said, “Surely they are my people,  
children who will not deal falsely.”

And he became their Savior.

<sup>9</sup>In all their affliction he was afflicted,  
and the angel of his presence saved them;  
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

<sup>10</sup>But they rebelled  
and grieved his Holy Spirit;  
therefore he turned to be their enemy,  
and himself fought against them.

<sup>11</sup>Then he remembered the days of old,  
of Moses and his people.

Where is he who brought them up out of the sea  
with the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them  
his Holy Spirit,

<sup>12</sup>who caused his glorious arm  
to go at the right hand of Moses,  
who divided the waters before them  
to make for himself an everlasting name,

<sup>13</sup>who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in the desert,  
they did not stumble.

<sup>14</sup>Like livestock that go down into the valley,  
the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.

So you led your people,  
to make for yourself a glorious name.

The New Year is a time to look back and to look to the future. Isaiah 63:7-4 gives us a chance to do both. In verses 7-9, Isaiah recounts “the steadfast love of the LORD.” It includes His great goodness and compassion (7). How He became their savior (8) and saved them (9). This is who God wants to be.

However, His people rebelled against Him and grieved His Holy Spirit and God’s judgment fell upon the people. However, God did not abandon His people. He welcomed them back just like the father of the Prodigal Son.

As we look forward to a new year, it is important to remember God’s faithfulness. He never approves of

disobedience. He still punishes sin. But He is a God of steadfast love. His mercy endures forever. He will always welcome repentant sinners back to the Shepherd's flock and give them rest.

Prayer: Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ended and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Saturday

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

**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 2:30, 32

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, My eyes have seen your salvation; Alleluia.  
**C** **Alleluia, Alleluia, A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.**  
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.**

## Luke 2:29-32 (KJV)

<sup>29</sup> Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

<sup>30</sup> For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

<sup>31</sup> Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

<sup>32</sup> A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Two out of three years, we hear the Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon, read on the Sunday after Christmas. The Bible doesn't tell us how old Simeon was when he spoke these words that we so often sing after the Lord's Supper. Most assume that he was advanced in years because "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26).

In those years, we also learn about Anna, an 84 year old widow who daily worshiped in the temple. When she encountered the baby Jesus, "she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

Both Simeon and Anna recognize the baby Jesus to be the long-promised savior. Although they are in the twilight years of their lives, the future looks bright! Their eyes have seen the salvation that God has prepared for

all people.

No matter what your age, enter the New Year with eyes of that have seen your salvation! No matter what you may experience this year, your future is secure in the Lord. If the Lord should grant you one year or a century, you are ready to depart in peace according to God's word and enjoy eternity with the Savior, Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Prayer: Almighty God, give us grace to greet the New Year with the confidence that our eyes have seen Your salvation prepared for all people. Let us never become discouraged or disheartened by the darkness of sin around us as we live each day in the light of Christ; 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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