

Thursday, Dec. 1

See Your Savior Comes

Verse: “The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See your Savior Comes!’” Isaiah 62:11a

The word “advent” simply means coming into place, to await an arrival. As we begin our new church year we eagerly await the arrival of our Savior. What does that mean to us? Well, as a youngster, it meant that I now had to go to church with Mom and Dad on Wednesday nights as well as Sunday mornings. But, I knew at the end came Christmas, and boy, did I love Christmas.

A few years later, I was in confirmation, so going to church on Wednesday night wasn’t that big of a deal. But I knew Christmas was just around the corner, and boy, did I love Christmas.

As a young adult, I worked second shift and never got to go to Advent services, and I missed it terribly. Boy, did I love Advent.

Now, I have begun my old age. I anticipate Advent and look forward to celebrating Christ’s birth. No longer is it the awaited presents under the tree, but it is the promise of salvation, Christ’s present to all of us who believe.

Jim Howard

Friday, Dec. 2

Verse: "So do not fear, for I am with you." Isaiah 41:10

There are lots of scary things like alligators, bears, bad guys, monsters, scary dreams, lightning, ghosts, snakes and spiders.

But just remember: God is always with you. So do not fear. God will help you.

Holy Trinity Preschool Class

Saturday, Dec. 3

Verse: “I am coming soon; hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.” Revelation 3:11

When you play “Hide and Seek,” you shout, “Ready or not, here I come!” Then you look and look until you’ve discovered everyone! It’s lots of fun!

Every day the Devil says the same to us, “Ready or not, here I come.” This is not fun! His game is deadly. He comes to us with every kind of temptation to sin so he can lead us away from Jesus and His love. His goal is to bring us to hell for eternity.

During Advent we look back to Jesus’ birth as our Savior, and we look forward to the Last Day remembering Jesus has promised to come in glory. “I am coming soon,” Jesus said. It’s as if he said to you, me and the whole world: “Ready or not, here I come!”

May we eagerly await Jesus’ coming with joy and obedience even as we prepare to celebrate His birth!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to resist the Devil’s temptations and focus on your love and forgiveness as I look for your coming. Amen

Pastor Keith Loesch

Sunday, Dec. 4

Second Sunday in Advent:

Daughter of Zion: Behold, thy Salvation cometh. The Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and ye shall have gladness of heart.

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Thine only begotten Son , so that by His coming we may be enabled to serve Thee with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord.

Taken from "Introits, Collects and Graduals for the Church Year" from The Lutheran Hymnal.

Monday, Dec. 5

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You
By Paul Gerhardt

O Lord, how shall I meet you,
How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you,
My hope, my heart's delight!
Oh, kindle, Lord most holy,
Your lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please you best.

Your Zion strews before you
Green boughs and fairest palms;
And I too will adore you
With joyous songs and psalms.
My heart shall bloom forever
For you with praises new
And from your name shall never
Withhold the honor due.

He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to his foes,
A light of consolations
And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth your beams so cheering,
And guide us safely home.

Hymn #334 from *Lutheran Service Book*
Text: Matthew 21:1-9

Tuesday, Dec. 6

Verse: “In Him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it.” John 1:4-5

Jesus = Life. How comforting for us to think about that. What do you have if you do not have Jesus? You may have all the “things” the world has to offer, but what will that give you in the end? Christmas is the necessity of Jesus. Everyone, whether they know it or not, needs Jesus. And Jesus is the gift of God the Father that has come to all of us. Some receive the gift with joy and thanksgiving; some receive the gift, set it aside and never open it.

There is light, and there is darkness. The two compete against each other. Not only is Jesus life, He is light. With light, we can see where we are going, what we are doing, and who is around us. Sin is darkness. It is much harder to do things in the dark; evil things are done in the dark. And darkness makes us afraid. How much fear is there in our world?

Jesus is our life. Jesus shines in the darkness. He is the gift the Father gives. He is the gift we carry to others throughout our life.

*Confirmation Class – Ben Hildreth, Will Hildreth, Katie Heard, Marley Hock,
Jacob Loesch and Mia Roller*

Wednesday, Dec. 7

VERSE: “I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope!”

Psalm 130:5

We know what “HOPE” means --something we expect to happen.

But Christians have a different kind of hope. Ours is filled with confidence and trust. We KNOW God is going to fulfill the hope that we have within us.

Maybe that’s why HOPE is a strong theme during Advent. Believers have always had the HOPE for salvation. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah – all those Old Testament guys had HOPE – a certain trust – that God would fulfill the promise He made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. It was the promise of the Savior, and they were certain that hope would be fulfilled.

What do we hope for today? Salvation through Jesus. We know we have it; it is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit. Now, we wait with great certainty for that hope to be fulfilled. That will happen when we die and we fully realize the gift of salvation.

We stand ready to give answer to the HOPE that is within us. (1 Peter 3:15) It’s Jesus. And that’s all we need.

Liz Wheeler

Thursday, Dec. 8

Verse: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

How can it be Christmas?! Violence, abuse, homelessness, joblessness, economic uncertainties, hunger, mass shootings. How can it be Christmas? Where is the joy? Where is the peace?

The peace of the world is a myth because the world has no interest in, nor does it care about, peace. The world is interested in our hearts being troubled and in our being afraid.

God knows we need Christmas. With Christmas comes peace. It is not the peace of the world. It is the peace of Him who made the world. It is the peace of the Savior Jesus. God knows troubled hearts and the manipulated peace of the world.

And God gives something better. The Father gives us Christmas because God doesn't want us to be afraid of our sins. He wants us to have the peace that we are forgiven.

Let Christmas come. Grasp God's peace.

Anonymous

Friday, Dec 9

Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People

By Johann Olearius

Translated by Catherine Winworth

Comfort, comfort, ye My people,
Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover
And her warfare now is over.

Make ye straight what long was crooked,

Make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble,
As befits His holy reign.

For the glory of the Lord
Now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken.

Hymn #347 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Text: Isaiah 40:1-8

Saturday, Dec. 10

Verse: “Be joyful always.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16

The day is getting nearer. Children are becoming more excited as Christmas draws ever closer. There is a general excitement of anticipation by almost all.

Others, however, dread that day. People without families anticipate another lonely Christmas. Fathers and mothers who are unemployed or underemployed are disappointed they can't buy gifts for their children or for each other. Still others, because of a death in the family, are spending their first or another Christmas without their dear loved one. And so people in difficult situations may wonder: “So what's to be so excited about joyful about?”

Well, even in this season when it's so easy to become depressed, our heavenly Father gives us the reason to rejoice. Whether we find ourselves in poverty or wealth, solid families or broken ones, for us as Christians, the reason for our rejoicing is not to be found in our circumstances. Rather, it is to be found in the gracious heart of God. He sent His Son to live, suffer and die for us so that we might be reconciled to God. One day, those in the faith will live in His perfect paradise of heaven, where we will always be joyful.

Pastor Kevin Schnakenberg

Sunday, Dec. 11

Third Sunday in Advent

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say "Rejoice!" Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

Lord, we beseech Thee, give ear to our prayers and lighten the darkness of our hearts by Thy gracious visitation.

Taken from "Introits, Collects and Graduals for the Church Year" from The Lutheran Hymnal.

Monday, Dec. 12

Verse: “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Romans 5: 3-5, The Lutheran Study Bible, English Standard Version

I’m a runner, and when I’m training for a half marathon, it is hard and often painful. However, training is necessary to build the endurance that is needed to run 13.1 miles. I train for several months and often get burnt out and frustrated. When I cross the finish line on the day of the race, I not only feel relieved to be done but alive and ready to take on the world (after a good day or two of rest).

Sometimes living a Christian life can feel like we’re training for a half marathon or even a marathon! The struggles we have in life are hard and can be painful. At times it may feel never ending and perhaps even hopeless. Suffering is necessary though, and those sufferings build our endurance eventually, which in return strengthens our faith in God. We have hope, because of Jesus Christ, that we can take on whatever is thrown our way! We can rejoice in our sufferings because we know God loves us!

Melissa Baldwin

Tuesday, Dec. 13

Verse: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and He answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.” Jonah 2:2

In this verse, Jonah is calling to the Lord from the belly of the fish. We are calling to Him from the belly of sin. Jonah is also calling in distress. When the Lord answered Jonah, He saved Jonah by making the fish vomit him onto dry land.

People cry to the Lord in many distresses, such as when there is no food, not enough money, no clothes to wear or no place to live. We are saved by God, and He gives us the opportunities to answer the cries we hear.

God answered us ultimately with Jesus at Christmas, and He is ours every day of the year.

God listens and responds.

Jacob Loesch

Wednesday, Dec. 14

Verse: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

The most important job you will ever do in your life is to see to your children’s spiritual health.

Baptism is the beginning, and Confirmation is a good continuance. In between, children need frequent contact with sound Biblical teaching so they recognize what Jesus has done for them, coming into this world as a baby, growing up to be a great teacher and miracle worker, and then, best of all, dying on the cross to take away all their sins.

As we await the arrival, or Advent, of our Lord as a baby in the manger, let us prepare our hearts, and our children’s hearts, for loving and sharing, to combat the greed and commercialism that often threaten to overwhelm this most blessed occasion.

Judy Rauscher

Thursday, Dec. 15

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior;
For He has regarded
the lowliness of His handmaiden.
For behold, from this day
all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One has done great things to me,
and holy is His name;
And His mercy is on those who fear Him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
and has exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent empty away.
He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy
as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Luke 1:46-55

Friday, Dec. 16

Verse: “Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.” Jeremiah 33:6

My confirmation verse translated from the German document: “See I will heal you and make you healthy and allow you everlasting peace.” Jeremiah 33:6

I believe this is true. In 2006, when we were told I had lung cancer, I needed an operation right away. KUMC said the sooner the better. I got a second opinion. It was confirmed. After seeing the surgeon, I said No.

In time, I was healed.

When I cracked my rotator cuff, no operation again. It took about 13 months to heal.

Thanks be to GOD!

Erika O. Van Dyne

Saturday, Dec. 17

Prayer for Advent:

Mercifully hear, O Lord, the prayers of Thy people, that, as they rejoice in the advent of Thine only-begotten Son according to the flesh, so when He cometh a second time in His majesty, they may receive the reward of eternal life.

Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, who liveth and reignth with you, world without end.

Amen.

Taken from "Introits, Collects and Graduals for the Church Year" from The Lutheran Hymnal.

Sunday, Dec. 18

Fourth Sunday in Advent

*Drop down, ye heavens, from above and let the skies pour down righteousness.
Let the earth open and bring forth salvation.*

*Stir up, O Lord, we beseech Thee, Thy power, and come and help us with Thy
great might, that by Thy grace whatsoever is hindered by our sins may be
speedily accomplished through Thy mercy and satisfaction.*

Taken from "Introits, Collects and Graduals for the Church Year" from The Lutheran Hymnal.

Monday, Dec. 19

Come, O Long-Expected Jesus
By Charles Wesley

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
Born to set your people free;
From our fears and sins release us
By your death on Calvary.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope to all the earth impart,
dear desire of ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Born your people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a king;
Born to reign in us forever,
Now your gracious kingdom bring.
By your own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By your all-sufficient merit
Raise us to your glorious throne.

Hymn #22 from *Lutheran Worship*

Tuesday, Dec. 20

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Micah 5:2



Wednesday, Dec. 21

Verse: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10

There is a creation aspect to Christmas. The plan of salvation was that the Son of God would come in human flesh, as one of us. God the Father is never done with His work of creating. Each day or season or year is a new one for us and is a gift from God. We have all experienced many Christmases in the past, yet it is timeless and fresh and all due to the creating work of our loving Father.

There is a sad reality to Christmas too. We plead for God to do His creating work in us. The gift of Jesus in the manger is about our shortcomings. We cannot be perfect nor can we save ourselves. So we look to the stable in Bethlehem. We see the eternal fresh start that God gives. We see the purity of Jesus as he lies in the place where animals feed.

Creation. Realism. Christmas.

Anonymous

Thursday, Dec. 22

Verse: “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” Luke 2:8-20

This area of Judea was good for grazing sheep. It was a dark night, the sky was filled with stars. The sheep were little white dots against the green hills – a peaceful setting. Now the lowly shepherds were in charge of their flocks. These were not wealthy men, not kings in purple robes, not highly educated, but very devoted to their sheep. This group of people is who God chose to come to with His multitude of angels. The angel came to these men; they were rightfully afraid but were reassured by the exciting news. Then a multitude (probably thousands) of angels sang out. Oh, to hear and see this! The shepherds didn’t keep all this to themselves. They checked out the baby and then told others and glorified and praised God! Oh to be a lowly shepherd with the multitude of angels singing! This is how I picture heaven!

Kris Stork

Friday, Dec. 23

Angels We Have Heard on High
By French carol

Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing over the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Hymn #368 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Gloria in excelsis Deo is Latin for "Glory to God in the highest."

Text: Luke 2: 7-20

Saturday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve

Verse: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:1-5 (NIV)

For many years, these verses were only remembered as the “Christmas Day” reading. Even as the reason for Advent seemed lost and forgotten.

Vance Tigges