



St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



4th Sunday of Advent

December 22nd 2024 10:30 Service of the Word

The Sunday school children are leading us in worship today. They will be “stirring things up” in both a figurative and literal way! We’ll be stirring together ingredients with symbolic significance into a treat that we can all enjoy. Come, enjoy worship in this final Sunday of the season of Advent, which is the root of the word “adventure.”

Welcome to worship today!

If you are visiting with us we invite you to sign the Guest Book in the back of the sanctuary.

Large print bulletins are available on the usher’s stand.

The Zoom feed for this service is available in the church nursery.

† GATHERING †

Prelude and Announcements

Reader 1: Blessed Advent! One of the touchstones of Advent for liturgical churches like ours is the “stir up” prayers we use each week. As we are all busy with making this season meaningful for others, we will take this time together to “stir up” some meaning and time for reflection for ourselves, and hopefully have a fun time doing it.

Advent Wreath Lighting

Leader: From the One who was, who is, and who is to come,
grace and peace be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
ruler of the universe.
You call all nations to walk in your light,
and to seek your ways of peace and righteousness,
for the night is past,
and the dawn of your coming is near.
Bless us as we light four candles on this wreath.
Rouse us from sleep,
that we may be ready to greet our Lord
when he comes,
and welcome him into our hearts and homes;
for he is our light and our salvation.

C: Blessed be God forever.

As the fourth candle on the wreath is lit we sing:

The King Shall Come

(For music turn to Hymn 260 in the Red Hymnal)

1. The King shall come when morning dawns

**And light triumphant breaks,
When beauty gilds the eastern hills
And life to joy awakes.**

2. Not as of old a little child,

**To bear and fight and die,
But crowned with glory like the sun
That lights the morning sky.**

3. **Oh, brighter than the rising morn**
When Christ, victorious, rose
And left the lonesome place of death,
Despite the rage of foes.
4. **Oh, brighter than that glorious morn**
Shall dawn upon our race
The day when Christ in splendor comes,
And we shall see his face.
5. **The King shall come when morning dawns**
And light and beauty brings.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray:
Come quickly, King of kings.

Text: John Bownlie, Music A. Davisson, Kentucky Harmony; arr. Theodore A. Beck

‡ PART 1: CONFESSION ‡

Reader 1: Yes, the King *shall* come. That’s what Advent is really all about. Each week during Advent we will light another candle as we wait patiently for the “big event.” And what’s that “big event”? Why, we all know the answer: It is Christmas, the birthday of our Lord Jesus.

Our prayers during Advent often include the phrase, “Stir up.” And what better way to prepare for a birthday than to *stir up* a birthday cake? But this will be no ordinary birthday cake. It will be created by the gifts of many people. As we stir in these ingredients this morning, we still stop to look at them. Each one will teach us something about Advent, and each one will help us worship our coming King.

We mix our cake today but it takes a long time to bake. It will not be ready for us to eat today. It will be ready on Christmas Eve when we celebrate Jesus’ birth. Then we’ll bring out the special birthday cake we’re “stirring up” this morning.

Reader 2: We get ready for Christmas by confessing our sins. I’d like to invite those who have *blue dots* on the front of their bulletin to go to the back of the church and bring forward the raisins, figs and nuts, and help stir them in.

Reader 1: Our first ingredients are raisins, figs, (which kind of look like raisins), and nuts. What do raisins have to do with anything? Well, if

you look right inside that word, you will see another word--sins! Yes, sins are something we think about in Advent as we prepare for Christmas. And nuts remind us of all those crazy, nutty things we sometimes do that we'd just as soon forget about. As we bring up these ingredients, let's think about how we can bring Jesus our sins and nutty mistakes, because we know that Jesus will forgive us and let us start over.

Reader 3: Thus said the Lord in Exodus 23: "No one shall appear before me with empty hands."

C: See, Lord, our hands are not empty.

Reader 3: But look! Your hands are stained! What is this?

C: Alas, our hands *are* stained--with lovelessness, with self-seeking, with failure to do those things which we ought to do. Lord, there are so many stains.

Reader 3: What is it you bring to this altar?

C: We offer raisins and nuts, symbols of the wrinkled ugliness of our sins, the nutty foolishness of our ways. Alas, Lord, this is all we can bring by our own strength.

Reader 3: And what do you seek here?

C: We bring our sins, and ask that you will remove them. Wash them away, Lord.

Leader: Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength, and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, for you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Reader 1: God has promised that he *will* forgive our sins. Let us come to him in confidence, and confess our sins:

C: Most merciful God, we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned, both in our actions and in our failure to act.

(Brief silence while each person silently names the sins that are troubling to that person)

Reader 1: All these sins, gracious God, we bring before you and ask for your mercy.

C: We ask this, Lord, in the name of Christ, our coming King and Lord. Amen.

Leader: God's mercy is everlasting, and he forgives the sins of all who turn to him. By God whose promises hold true, I declare to you that your sins are forgiven.

C: Amen.

Hymn O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
(For music turn to Hymn 257 in the Red Hymnal)

1. **Oh come, Oh come Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.*

3. **O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud and majesty and awe. *Refrain***

4. **O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain***

5. **O come O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain***

† PART 2: THE WORD OF LIFE †

Reader 2: We get ready for Christmas by letting the Word of Life change us. I'd like to invite those who have *red dots* to go to the back of the church and bring forward the butter, sugar, and fruits, and help stir them in.

Reader 1: Our next ingredients are butter, sugar and candied fruits. What do these things mean to us? It almost makes our mouths water, doesn't it, to hear all these good and tasty things. They seem to tell us what our lives ought to be like. Lives filled with good and sweet things--like love, and kindness, and caring. The Bible tells us, in so many ways, how to live lives like that.

Reader 3: "Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him." "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

C: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Reader 3: What is it that you bring to this altar?

C: The sweet and tasty things of life: butter, sugar, and fruits, symbols of the sweet and good life we want to live for you.

Reader 3: And what do you seek here?

C: Lord, show us the way, and let your spirit give light to our paths so that we may be ready to greet your appearing with joy.

Leader: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Leader: God has promised that he will give us guidance through the darkness of this world. Let us turn our hearts now to listen to his Word.

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

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

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

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

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

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

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

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

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Psalm: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

¹You have been gracious to your ¹land, O LORD;
you have restored the good for-¹tune of Jacob.

²**You have forgiven the iniquity ¹of your people
and blotted out ¹all their sins.**

⁸I will listen to what the LORD ¹God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn
their ¹hearts to you.

⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to ¹those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell ¹in our land.**

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have ¹met together;
righteousness and peace have ¹kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up ¹from the earth,
and righteousness shall look ¹down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed ¹grant prosperity,
and our land will ¹yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go be-¹fore the LORD
and shall prepare for ¹God a pathway.**

Gospel Luke 1:57-80

We remember that the birth story of Jesus isn't a story all by itself. It is preceded by the story of a person who will grow up to prepare the way for Jesus.

⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶²Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all
who hate us.
⁷²Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”
⁸⁰The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the
wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

Hymn On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry
(For music see Hymn 249 in the Red Hymnal)

- 1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**
- 2. Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.**
- 3. We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flow'rs that wither and decay.**
- 4. Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more;
oh, let your face upon us shine**

and fill the world with love divine.

**5. All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.**

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749; tr. Composite. Music: European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1517-1621

✠ PART 3: GOD'S PEACE ✠

Reader 2: We get ready for Christmas by remembering that Jesus will come again in glory. I'd like to invite those who have *green dots* on their bulletin to go to the back of the church and bring forward the eggs, and help stir them in.

Reader 1: Our next ingredient is eggs. Our cake is getting to look very good. It is such a mixture of things. There are all sorts of sizes, shapes and colors. It is much like a picture of the Church. Each ingredient adds its own special flavor to make one great cake; and so too, each person here and in our congregations adds something unique to make our Church what it is. Now we are going to stir eggs into our cake. For centuries eggs have reminded people of the resurrection, not only Jesus' resurrection but our own as well. This is also part of Advent. We not only get ready for Christmas Day by remembering that Christ came long ago, but we also remember that he will come again in glory, and we will live in perfect peace with him. When we share the peace with one another, God touches us with some of that peace and joy.

Reader 3: Thus said the Lord: "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory... And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake!"

C: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid... I am going away, and I am coming to you."

Reader 3: What is it that you bring to this altar?

C: We bring eggs, the symbol of Christ's resurrection, and our resurrection to life everlasting at his coming.

Reader 3: And what do you seek here?

C: Lord, touch us with your peace, grant us a foretaste of that perfect peace we shall know in our resurrection at your coming. Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Stir up your power, Lord, and come. Strengthen in us a lively hope of our resurrection at your coming, that among the many evils and problems which beset us, we may have your peace; for you reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Prayers

Leader: And now in peace let us pray for the church, for the world, and for ourselves. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the peace of the whole world, the well-being of the Church of God, and the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For this holy house, and for all who offer their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For our bishops and pastors, for our missionaries and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For all those who govern, that they might do so with justice, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the sick and for those who mourn, that they may be healed and comforted, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the church, as it prepares for the coming of Christ, that we may be given gifts of patience and love, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Help us, save us, and protect us, dear Lord, by your power and your love.

C: Amen.

Leader: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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.**

Passing of the Peace

Leader: The peace of the Lord be with you always!

And also with you!

(Share signs of peace)

Special Music

‡ PART 4: JOY! ‡

Reader 2: We get ready for Christmas with joy. I'd like to invite those who have *yellow dots* on their bulletin to go to the back of the church and bring forward the flour, wine and spices.

Reader 1: Our final ingredients are flour, wine, and spices. There is not much question about what comes to our mind when we hear of flour and wine. Surely we think of the bread and wine of Holy Communion. That is part of getting ready for Christmas, too. That leaves the spices. Well, isn't communion one of those good things that God gives us to spice up our lives?

Reader 3: Thus says the Lord: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,

C: We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes!

Reader 3: What is it that you bring to this altar?

C: We offer flour and wine, food and drink, the gifts of life which sustain our bodies--as symbols of the gifts of eternal life by which you sustain us in the Spirit: namely, your love and forgiveness.

Reader 3: And what do you seek here?

C: Lord, we seek to meet you. Come to us through the sacrament when we celebrate it, and bring us the joy of your salvation.

Leader: Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the hindrance of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn All Earth Is Hopeful
(for music, please turn to Hymn 266 in the Red Hymnal)

- 1. All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**
- 2. People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us," our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**
- 3. Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**
- 4. We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us and ever sets us free.**

Text and music: Alberto Taule, tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, arr. Skinner Chavez-Melo; Text and music copyright 1972 Alberto Taule, admin. Virgil C. Funk; Tr. Copyright 1995 Madeliende Forell Marshall, admin. Augsburg Fortress; Arr. Copyright Estate of Skinner Chavez-Melo

✠ SENDING ✠

Leader: The God of peace bless you,
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,
and the anointing of the Spirit remain upon you
now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn Cold December Flies Away
(For music turn to Hymn 299 in the Red Hymnal)

1. **Cold December flies away at the rose red splendor.
April's crowning glory breaks
while the whole world wonders
at the holy unseen pow'r
of the tree which bears the flow'r.
On the blessed tree blooms the reddest flow'r
on the tree blooms the rose
here in love's own garden,
full and strong in glory.**

2. **In the hopeless time of sin shadows deep had fallen.
All the world lay under death.
Eyes were closed in sleeping.
But, when all seemed lost in night,
came the sun whose golden light
brings unending joy, brings the endless joy
of our hope, highest hope,
of our hope's bright dawning,
Son beloved of heaven.**

3. **Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world awakens.
In the lily's purest flow'r
dwells a wondrous fragrance.
and it spreads to all the earth
from the moment of its birth;
and its beauty lives. In the flow'r it lives,
in the flow'r, and it spreads
in its heav'nly brightness
sweet perfume delightful.**

Text and music: Catalonian Carol; tr. Howard Hawhee

Dismissal

Leader: Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

C: God's Work. Our Hands.



Thanks to John Michael Sullivan (See Luke 2:1-16)

12-23-2005

AT LEAST WE CAN SAY THAT HE WAS BROUGHT
UP IN A STABLE HOME

Worship assistants TODAY:

Greeters and Ushers	Mary and Greg Zuege
Acolyte	Elijah Young
Counters	Bill and Katy Stimmel
Coffee Hour	Cupcakes

Worship assistants for next Sunday, December 29

Greeters and Ushers	John and Linda Thompson
Acolyte	Thomas Bullwinkle
Counters	Mary and Greg Zuege
Coffee Hour	

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