

CREATED, SAVED AND GIFTED BY GOD,
WE SEEK, SERVE AND SHARE JESUS CHRIST.



THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 22, 2024 - 10:30 AM

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Introduction

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and the blessed virgin Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in the holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."

Not Fate but Faith

It's easy to take for granted that everything came together just so. With Christmas only days away, the expectant mood of the Advent season turns swiftly to joy. We might as well already be pacing outside the stable as we eagerly anticipate the baby soon to be born. Because we know what happens next, we might even assume that events had to unfold exactly the way they did: The angel Gabriel came to Mary, her pregnancy seemed inevitable, and the promises God had made to Israel would be proven complete. We are not likely to give Mary's role in the story a second thought. We assume she had little choice. At least that's the way we often think about her response.

But that's not entirely the way the story goes. The gospel itself doesn't assume as much. Elizabeth certainly doesn't. She acknowledges Mary's willingness to honor the angel's announcement: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Luke 1:45). For indeed, the angel's words initially confused Mary: none of it seemed to make sense. Her part in the story could have ended there. And yet she is moved by what she hears. Her trust in God's word is neither coerced compliance nor certain knowledge, but a response rooted in trust—not a foregone conclusion but a faithful leaning into the promises presented to her. The story did not have to go the way it did, but Mary trusted that it would.

Often only when we reflect on the journey we've already made, do we fully appreciate the ways God has repeatedly shown up. There's a gift in such moments of clarity. There's also a gift in the realization that even in seemingly impossible circumstances, choices must often be made. This was true for Mary, and also for Jesus. His journey from the cradle to the cross was not fate: it was a series of faithful choices, like Mary's, to trust in God's promises of new life.

GATHERING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pr. Bob Swanson

CALL TO WORSHIP

“Come, Emmanuel” | Chancel Choir

Response, sung during the verses:



Come, O come, Em - man - u - el.

Verse 1

Cantor:	O Beloved, all-creating God.	All: <i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, grieving for us God	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, come to court us, God.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, wed to us, O God.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>

Refrain: All



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall



come to you, O Is - ra - el.

Verse 2

Cantor:	O Beloved, Word made flesh, we cry.	All: <i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, dwell with us, we cry.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, full of grace, we cry.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, grace on grace, we cry.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>

Refrain: All

Verse 3

Cantor:	O Beloved, hear us night and day.	All: <i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, seek us night and day	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, hide us night and day.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>
	O Beloved, wake us night and day.	<i>Come, O come, Emmanuel.</i>

Refrain: All

OPENING LITANY

Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God.

And our spirits rejoice in you.

We will praise you as long as we live.

We will sing praises to you our whole lives long.

We will not trust in the powerful of this world,

But will trust in you—Creator of heaven and earth,

the One who gives food to the hungry,

the One who enacts justice for the oppressed.

Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God

As we worship you in this place.

** GATHERING SONGS

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, thou long-ex - spect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

My Soul Magnifies the Lord

(Verse 1 - Praise Team)
Good news of great joy
For every woman every man,
This will be a sign to you:
A baby born in Bethlehem,
Come and worship, do not be afraid.

(Verse 2 - All)
A company of angels,
Glory in the highest
And on the earth a peace among
Those on whom His favor rests.
Come and worship, do not be afraid.

(Refrain - All)
My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord,
My soul magnifies the Lord;
He has done great things for me,
Great things for me.

(Verse 3 - All)
Unto you a child is born,
Unto us a Son is given.
Let every heart prepare His throne,
Let every nation under Heaven
Come and worship, do not be afraid.

(Refrain - All)
My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord,
My soul magnifies the Lord;
He has done great things for me,
Great things for me.

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord,
My soul magnifies the Lord;
He has done great things for me,
Great things for me.

(Praise Team)
Of His government there will be no end,
He'll establish it with His righteousness,
And He shall reign on David's throne,

And His name shall be from this day on
Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father
Wonderful Counselor.
And His name shall be Everlasting Father!

(Praise Team/**Congregation**)

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord.
My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord.

He has done great things for us,
He has done great things for us.
He has done great things for us,
He has done great things for us.

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord.
My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord.
My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord.

(Refrain - All)

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord,
My soul magnifies the Lord;
He has done great things for me,
Great things for me.

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord,
My soul magnifies the Lord;
He has done great things for me,
Great things for me.

He has done great things!
He has done great things!

CONFESSION

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

God of mercy,

we confess that we have sinned.

We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.

We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.

God of might,

we confess that we have sinned.

We have turned away from our neighbors.

We have trusted false promises.

God in our midst,

we confess that we have sinned.

We plead: come to us.

Bring your mercy to birth in us.

FORGIVENESS

A righteous branch springs forth:

it is Christ the Lord, our Savior, in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, receive the grace and forgiveness of God through ☐ Christ Jesus, whose day draws near. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

** LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Blessed are you, God of hosts, for you promised to send a son, Emmanuel, who brought your presence among us; and you promise through your Son Jesus to save us from our sin.

As we light these candles, turn again to us in mercy; strengthen our faith in the word spoken by your prophets; restore us and give us life that we may be saved.

O house of David, come, **let us rejoice, for the Son of God, Emmanuel, comes to be with us. Amen.**

Advent Week 1 - December 1	Verse 1
Advent Week 2 - December 8	Verse 1, 2
Advent Week 3 - December 15	Verse 1, 2, 3
<u>Advent Week 4 - December 22</u>	<u>Verse 1, 2, 3, 4</u>

Verses



1. Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban ish
2. Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban ish
3. Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban ish
4. Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban ish



dark - ness. He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el,
 dark - ness. He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd,
 dark - ness. Lift your heads, and lift high the gate - way
 dark - ness. He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings.



God ful - fills the prom - ise.
 gent - ly lead them home - ward.
 for the King of glo - ry.
 Let your lights be shin - ing!

Refrain



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the dark - ness.



Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gath-ered to-day.

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING

Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

A reading from the book of Micah.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM

Luke 1:46b-55

You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Lk. 1:52)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.

**You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.**

You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
**casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.**

You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,**

the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

SECOND READING

Hebrews 10:5-10

The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.

A reading from the book of Hebrews.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

** GOSPEL READING

Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ..**

YOUTH MESSAGE

MESSAGE

Pr. Bob Swanson

**** APOSTLES' CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

GATHERING OF GIFTS

OFFERTORY

*Gabriel's Oboe
by Ennio Marricone
Paula Bennett, oboe*

OFFERING PRAYER

Creator God, you made the whole world, even the farthest stars, and you draw near to feed us. We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine. Strengthen us with this food that we may live in expectation for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Lift up your heads; **we lift them up to God.**

Lift up your voices; **we lift them up to God.**

Lift up your hearts; **we lift them up to God.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

And so we gather at the table. We come from many different places in life. And as we come together around the table we discover that our differences are not something we just tolerate, but that our differences are indeed a blessing. So come, children of God, just as you are. Wherever you are on this journey of life and faith, you are welcome here - here in this place, here in this community, here at this table. Come, children of God, come and remember. Remember the stories that Jesus' friends tell: Stories of bread broken and shared to feed a multitude; stories of gathering both enemy and friend together around a common table; stories of unlikely guests revealing the face of the sacred.

On a night of both celebration and betrayal Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it; gave it to his disciples and said, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." Then Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And so we pray: Lord, bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine. Bless all of us in our eating and drinking that our eyes might be open, and that we might recognize the risen Christ in our midst, indeed in one another .

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

For those of you communing at home or in the pews.

COMMUNION - *Receiving the Lord's Tangible Presence*

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

*Each person may respond **Amen**.*

Communion Statement ~ *If you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is your Savior and Redeemer and would like to receive Holy Communion, then come forward to receive the elements. If you would just like to come forward and receive a blessing, then you may do that also.*

NOTE: We invite everyone to come forward for Holy Communion. If you have a gluten allergy, gluten-free wafers are available upon request when receiving Communion. Also, if you prefer not to receive wine at Communion, apple juice is available upon request. For those choosing to remain in the pews, there are communion all-in-one cups containing grape juice available in the Narthex.

REFLECTION DURING COMMUNION

As we prepare to receive the sacrament today, may we quietly take this time to center ourselves on Christ, and reflect the amazing gifts of grace and forgiveness that we have been given. As we receive the body and the blood of our Lord, let us reflect upon His sacrifice. Finally, may we take this time to ask the Holy Spirit to enter our hearts, and then to work in us and through us each and every day.

**** TABLE BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and always keep you in God's grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name. **Amen.**

SENDING OF COMMUNION

Communion ministers may be sent to take the sacrament to those who are absent. The presiding minister may lead this prayer of sending.

Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care: As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are sick, homebound, and imprisoned. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

** BLESSING

God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, bless and keep you now and forever. **Amen.**

** SENDING HYMN

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn! (ELW 254)



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for
man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

**** DISMISSAL**

Assistant Minister

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

Created, saved and gifted by God, we seek, serve and share Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah! Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

“W + 2” = Worship Plus Two

**Make a commitment to not only worship each week
but also try to find a way to serve in the congregation
and seek out a way to serve our community.**

YOU ARE NOW ENTERING THE MISSION FIELD

Upcoming Commemorations

Stephen, Deacon and Martyr Thursday, December 26, 2024

Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.

John, Apostle and Evangelist Friday, December 27, 2024

The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs Saturday, December 28, 2024

This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.

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