



*The Heart of Christ...  
In the Heart of the City*

**St. John's Lutheran Church**

**Advent Devotional Booklet**

**2021**

As every year, the Worship Committee presents to you a daily devotional booklet for the season of Advent.

This year, along with reflections by our brothers and sisters in Christ, you will find hymns that are based on the daily scriptures.

We thank the members of our community who contributed to this endeavor and hope that you will find daily inspiration as we await Christ's coming.

**Sunday, November 28**

**Psalms 25**

<sup>1</sup> To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

<sup>2</sup> O my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be put to shame;  
do not let my enemies exult over me.

<sup>3</sup> Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;  
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

<sup>4</sup> Make me to know your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.

<sup>5</sup> Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.

<sup>6</sup> Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

<sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in what is right,  
and teaches the humble his way.

<sup>10</sup> All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

<sup>11</sup> For your name's sake, O LORD,  
pardon my guilt, for it is great.

<sup>12</sup> Who are they that fear the LORD?  
He will teach them the way that they should choose.

<sup>13</sup> They will abide in prosperity,  
and their children shall possess the land.

<sup>14</sup> The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,  
and he makes his covenant known to them.

<sup>15</sup> My eyes are ever toward the LORD,  
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

<sup>16</sup> Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
for I am lonely and afflicted.

<sup>17</sup> Relieve the troubles of my heart,  
and bring me<sup>[a]</sup> out of my distress.

<sup>18</sup> Consider my affliction and my trouble,  
and forgive all my sins.

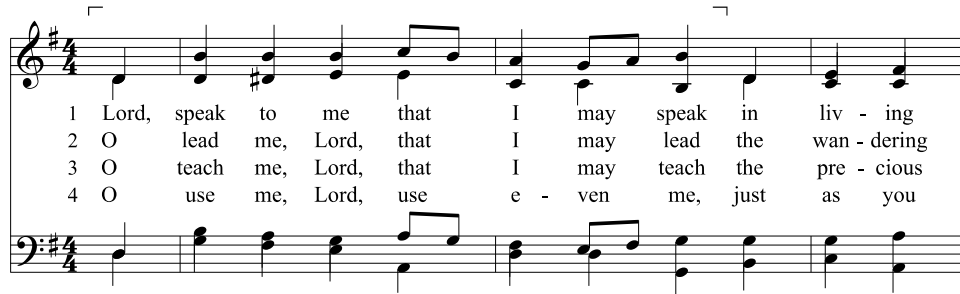
<sup>19</sup> Consider how many are my foes,  
and with what violent hatred they hate me.

<sup>20</sup> O guard my life, and deliver me;  
do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

<sup>21</sup> May integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
for I wait for you.

<sup>22</sup> Redeem Israel, O God,  
out of all its troubles.

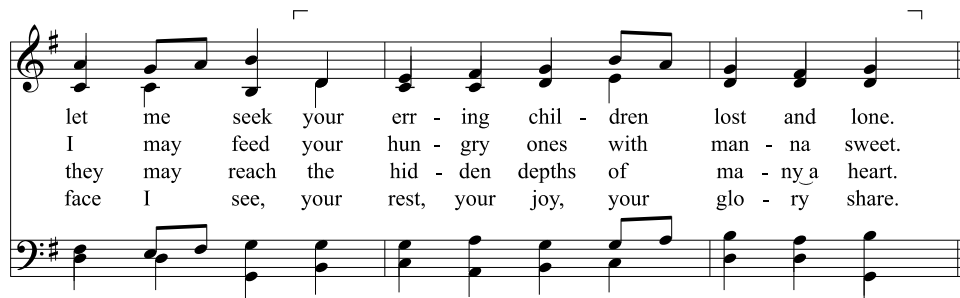
# Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak



1 Lord, speak to me that I may speak in liv - ing  
 2 O lead me, Lord, that I may lead the wan - dering  
 3 O teach me, Lord, that I may teach the pre - cious  
 4 O use me, Lord, use e - ven me, just as you



ech - oes of your tone. As you have sought, so  
 and the wa - vering feet. O feed me, Lord, that  
 truths which you im - part. And wing my words that  
 will, and when, and where un - til your bless - ed



let me seek your err - ing chil - dren lost and lone.  
 I may feed your hun - gry ones with man - na sweet.  
 they may reach the hid - den depths of ma - ny a heart.  
 face I see, your rest, your joy, your glo - ry share.

Text: Frances R. Harvergal, 1872, alt.  
 Tune: Robert A. Shumann, 1839, from  
*Nachtstücke*, Op. 23, No. 4



LM  
 CANONBURY  
[www.hymnary.org/text/lord\\_speak\\_to\\_me\\_that\\_i\\_may\\_speak](http://www.hymnary.org/text/lord_speak_to_me_that_i_may_speak)

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

**Monday, November 29**

**2 Peter 3:1-18**

**3** This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you <sup>2</sup> that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. <sup>3</sup> First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts <sup>4</sup> and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died,<sup>[a]</sup> all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!” <sup>5</sup> They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, <sup>6</sup> through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

<sup>8</sup> But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you,<sup>[b]</sup> not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening<sup>[d]</sup> the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup> But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. <sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.<sup>[e]</sup>

# Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy



1 Come ye sin ners, poor and nee - dy, Weak and woun ded,  
2 Come, ye thir sty, \_ come and wel - come, God's free boun - ty \_  
3 Come ye wea - ry, \_ hea - vy - la - den, Lost and ru - ined  
4 Let not cons - cience make you lin - ger, Nor of fit - ness



sick and sore; Je - sus read - y stands to save \_ you,  
glo - ri - fy; True be - lief \_ and true re - pen - tance,  
by the fall; If you tar - ry till you're bet - ter,  
fond - ly dream; All the fit - ness He re - qui - reth

## *Chorus*



Full of pi - ty, \_ love and pow'r.  
Ev' - ry grace that \_ brings you nigh. I will a - rise and \_  
You will ne - ver \_ come at all.  
Is to feel \_ your need of Him.



go to Je - sus, He will em - brace me \_ in His arms;



In the arms \_ of my dear Sa - vior,



O there are \_ ten \_ thou - sand charms.

**God's Eternity and Human Frailty**

**A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.**

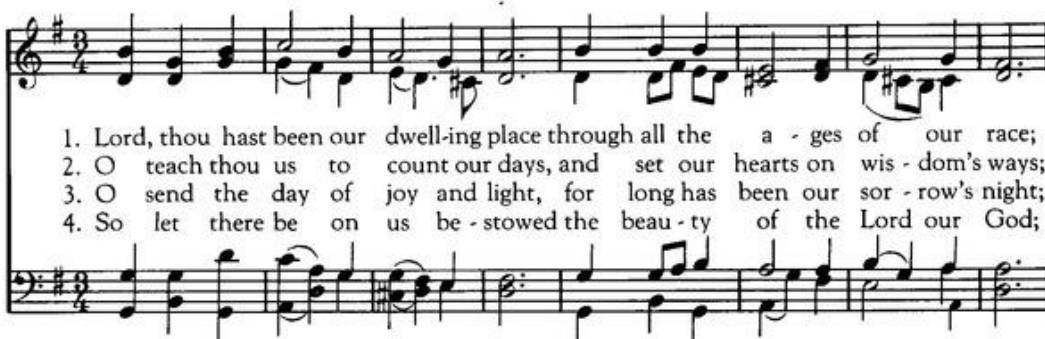
- <sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place<sup>[a]</sup>  
in all generations.
- <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- <sup>3</sup> You turn us<sup>[b]</sup> back to dust,  
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
- <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.
- <sup>5</sup> You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
- <sup>6</sup> in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.
- <sup>7</sup> For we are consumed by your anger;  
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
- <sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
- <sup>9</sup> For all our days pass away under your wrath;  
our years come to an end<sup>[c]</sup> like a sigh.
- <sup>10</sup> The days of our life are seventy years,  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;  
even then their span<sup>[d]</sup> is only toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- <sup>11</sup> Who considers the power of your anger?  
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.
- <sup>12</sup> So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.
- <sup>13</sup> Turn, O LORD! How long?  
Have compassion on your servants!
- <sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- <sup>15</sup> Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and as many years as we have seen evil.
- <sup>16</sup> Let your work be manifest to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.
- <sup>17</sup> Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and prosper for us the work of our hands—  
O prosper the work of our hands!

## Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Dwelling Place

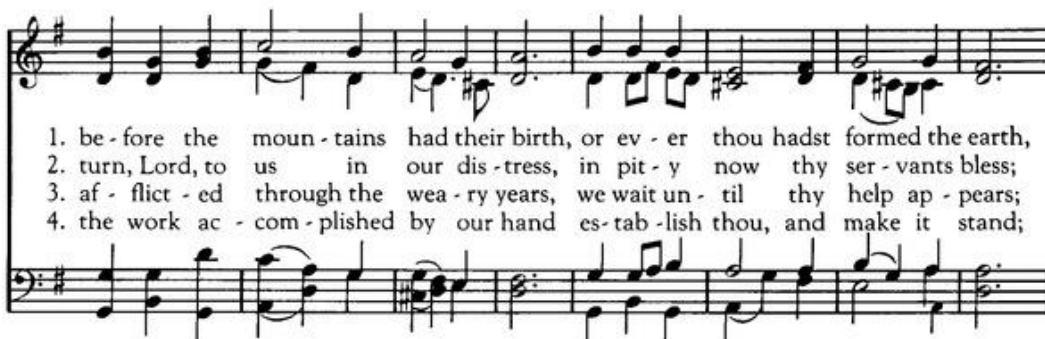
The Psalter (1912)

Collection of J. G. Wagner, 1742;  
harmonized by J. S. Bach

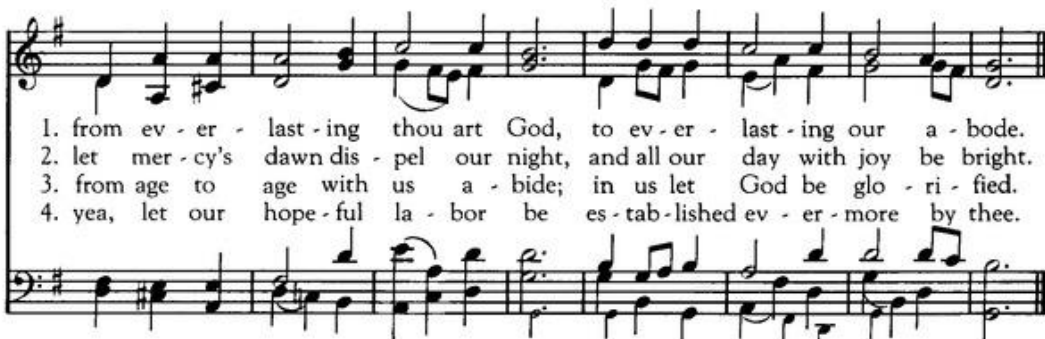
GOTTLOB, 88.88.88



1. Lord, thou hast been our dwell-ing place through all the a - ges of our race;  
2. O teach thou us to count our days, and set our hearts on wis - dom's ways;  
3. O send the day of joy and light, for long has been our sor - row's night;  
4. So let there be on us be - stowed the beau - ty of the Lord our God;



1. be - fore the moun - tains had their birth, or ev - er thou hadst formed the earth,  
2. turn, Lord, to us in our dis - tress, in pit - y now thy ser - vants bless;  
3. af - flict - ed through the wea - ry years, we wait un - til thy help ap - pears;  
4. the work ac - com - plished by our hand es - tab - lish thou, and make it stand;



1. from ev - er - last - ing thou art God, to ev - er - last - ing our a - bode.  
2. let mer - cy's dawn dis - pel our night, and all our day with joy be bright.  
3. from age to age with us a - bide; in us let God be glo - ri - fied.  
4. yea, let our hope - ful la - bor be es - tab - lished ev - er - more by thee.

Alternative tune: ST. CATHERINE, 459



Wednesday, December 1

Luke 11:29-32

## The Sign of Jonah

<sup>29</sup> When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. <sup>31</sup> The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! <sup>32</sup> The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

### Reflections on Luke: 11:29-32



During the time of Jesus, the people listening to these verses (also found in Matthew 12:38-42) would easily understand the reference to “the sign of Jonah.” For today’s readers, a little background is called for. Jonah is one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament. I classify him as the “reluctant prophet.” He was sent by the Lord to the city of Nineveh to deliver a simple message to its citizens: “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.” This message from the

Lord usually meant total destruction of the city such as what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Any Israelite would have been glad to deliver such a message since the Ninevites had been doing bad things to Israel for a long time, yet Jonah hesitated on the slim chance that the Ninevites would turn around and repent and the Lord, being “merciful and just, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” would forgive them and spare the city and all that is in it. So Jonah tried to run away and hide aboard a ship. The ship ran into foul weather that the crew attributed to someone who had offended the Lord. They pointed to Jonah and threw him into the sea. Jonah was swallowed by a “great big fish” (not a whale as popularly thought). He spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. He prayed to the Lord and on the third day, the Lord spoke to the fish whereupon the fish “spewed Jonah out onto dry land.” In the story, the Ninevites did indeed turn around and repented of their past deeds and the Lord spared them from destruction.

In the verses from Luke and Matthew, Jesus accuses the people of insisting on a sign rather than paying attention to what Jesus is teaching them about repentance as the key to salvation. The comparison is obvious – as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a great big fish, so will Jesus descend to the dead and in three days, rise up again, ascend into heaven and return to judge the living and the dead. **As in Jonah, the key to salvation is turning around from our evil ways, repent, trust in the Lord who is “merciful and just, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”** As an added bonus, the other lesson to be learned from the story of Jonah is: **you can run but you cannot hide from the Lord.** So when the Lord tells you to do something, **JUST DO IT!**

Pastor Mel Antonio

**Thursday, December 2**

**Malachi 3**

**3** See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; <sup>3</sup> he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

<sup>5</sup> Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

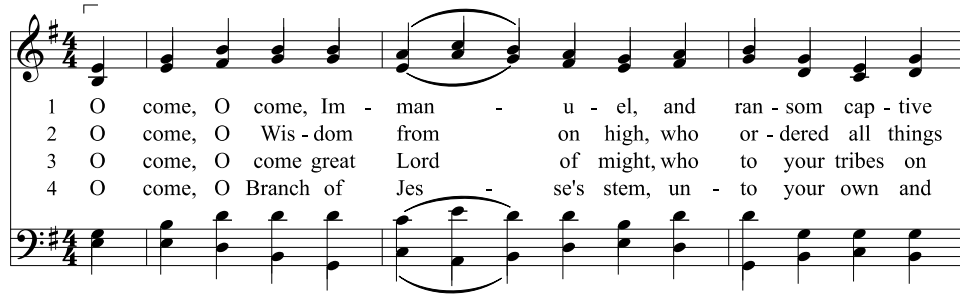
<sup>6</sup> For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. <sup>7</sup> Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?"

<sup>8</sup> Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! <sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! <sup>10</sup> Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. <sup>11</sup> I will rebuke the locust<sup>[b]</sup> for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>12</sup> Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

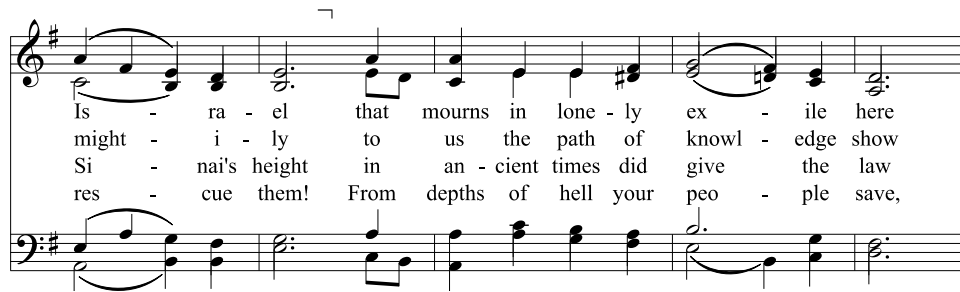
<sup>13</sup> You have spoken harsh words against me, says the LORD. Yet you say, "How have we spoken against you?" <sup>14</sup> You have said, "It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the LORD of hosts? <sup>15</sup> Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape."

<sup>16</sup> Then those who revered the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the LORD and thought on his name. <sup>17</sup> They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. <sup>18</sup> Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

# O Come, O Come, Immanuel

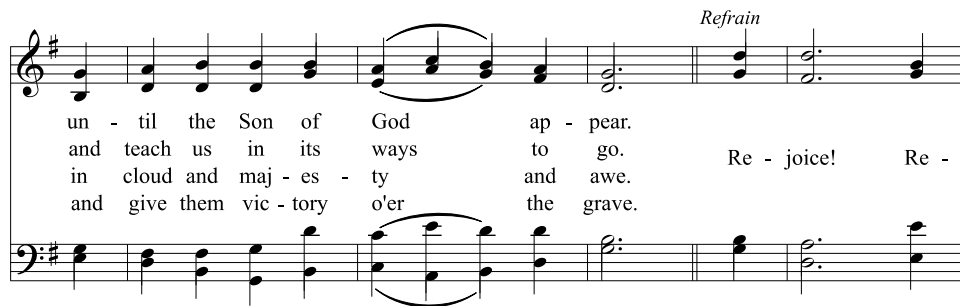


1 O come, O come, Im - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, who or - dered all things  
 3 O come, O come great Lord of might, who to your tribes on  
 4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se's stem, un - to your own and

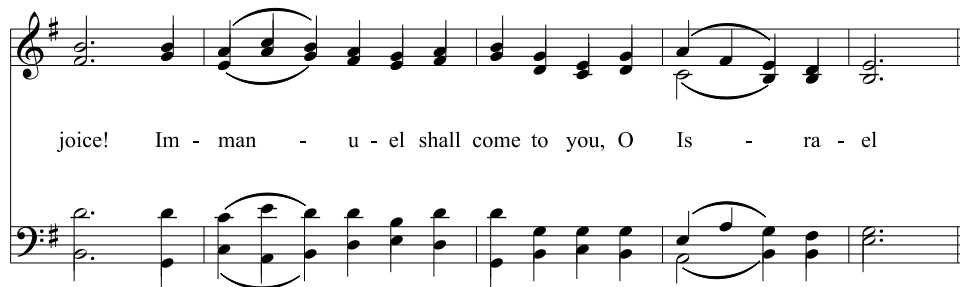


Is - ra - el that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
 might - i - ly to us the path of knowl - edge show  
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times did give the law  
 res - cue them! From depths of hell your peo - ple save,

*Refrain*



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 and teach us in its ways to go. Re - joice! Re -  
 in cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.  
 and give them vic - tory o'er the grave.



joice! Im - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el

Text: Latin, 12th cent.; composite  
 Tune: *Processionale*, 15th cent.; adapt.  
 Thomas Helmore, 1854



LM with refrain  
 VENI IMMANUEL  
[www.hymnary.org/text/o\\_come\\_o\\_come\\_emmanuel\\_and\\_ransom](http://www.hymnary.org/text/o_come_o_come_emmanuel_and_ransom)

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

**Friday, December 3**

**Luke 1:68-79**

<sup>68</sup> “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.  
<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty savior<sup>[a]</sup> for us  
in the house of his servant David,  
<sup>70</sup> as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
<sup>71</sup> that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.  
<sup>72</sup> Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,  
<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us <sup>74</sup> that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness  
before him all our days.  
<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
<sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
<sup>78</sup> By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon<sup>[b]</sup> us,  
<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Many people today do ancestry searches. There's something about exploring and knowing your roots, your heritage, where you came from that is exciting and interesting. Other people are adopted and search for their birth parents. Some people are blessed with wonderful family, others are not so fortunate. Whether you are a person that is interested in your ancestry or are comfortable just being who you are, I encourage you to read this passage in Luke as if you had received it in response to an ancestry search. It gives new meaning to who you are, where you came from, to whom you belong.

*You are a child of God; you will be called the prophet of the Most High.*

*The Lord God looked favorably upon your ancestors and redeemed them.*

*God made a promise, a covenant, one He did not forget.*

*Through your ancestor David, God sent His Son, to save us from all our enemies.*

*You are from the line of Abraham.*

*Filled with this knowledge of your bloodline, go forward in this life to give light to those who sit in darkness, guiding others to a way of peace.*

I marvel in this amazing response! I know to whom I belong! I am a Child of God! What could be more important than that? It fills me with comfort and peace.

My prayer for you is that you know regardless of any other ancestry, this is the one that is the most important. We are reminded that each of us is a Child of God, We can live in that knowledge. We have our history. We have our present. We have our future. Rejoice in knowing who you are. Spread the Good News. Christ is Lord of All.

As we await the birth of the Christ Child once again, may the Christmas story be renewed in you. Anticipate His coming. Sing the songs of the Angels. Seek the baby Jesus as did the Shepherds in the field that glorious night. Watch for the Star that led the Wise Men.

May you be filled with the Blessings of Advent.

.

*Peace and Grace,*

*Rosemary Petry*

Saturday, December 4

Luke 9:1-6

### The Mission of the Twelve

**9** Then Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,<sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.<sup>3</sup> He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.<sup>4</sup> Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there.<sup>5</sup> Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”<sup>6</sup> They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.



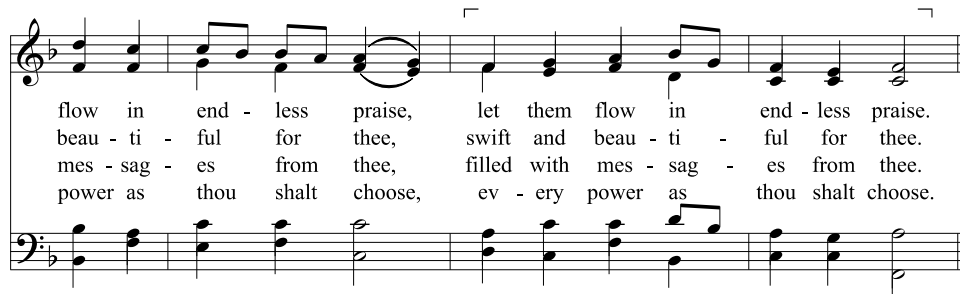
# Take My Life and Let It Be



1 Take my life and let it be con - se - crat - ed,  
 2 Take my hands and let them move at the im - pulse  
 3 Take my voice and let me sing al - ways, on - ly,  
 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold; not a mite would



Lord, to thee. Take my mo - ments and my days; let them  
 of thy love. Take my feet and let them be swift and  
 for my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with  
 I with - hold. Take my in - tel - lect and use ev - ery



flow in end - less praise, let them flow in end - less praise.  
 beau - ti - ful for thee, swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.  
 mes - sag - es from thee, filled with mes - sag - es from thee.  
 power as thou shalt choose, ev - ery power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;  
 it shall be no longer mine.  
 Take my heart—it is thine own;  
 it shall be thy royal throne,  
 it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
 at thy feet its treasure store.  
 Take myself, and I will be  
 ever, only, all for thee,  
 ever, only, all for thee.

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1874  
 Tune: H. A. Cesar Malan, 1827

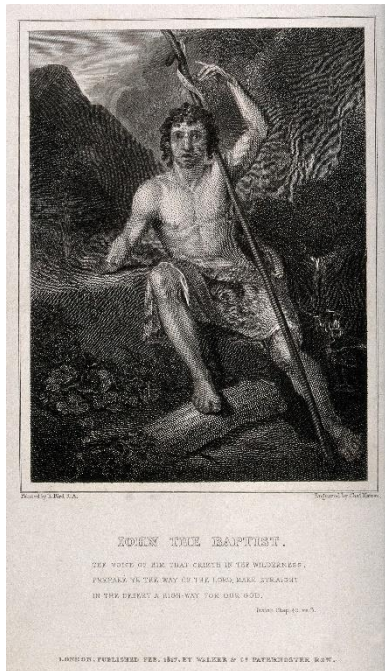


77 77 with repeat  
 HENDON  
[www.hymnary.org/text/take\\_my\\_life\\_and\\_let\\_it\\_be](http://www.hymnary.org/text/take_my_life_and_let_it_be)

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

**Sunday, December 5**

**Luke 3:1-6**



**3** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler<sup>[a]</sup> of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler<sup>[b]</sup> of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler<sup>[c]</sup> of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, **4** 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.

**5** 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;

**6** and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

In these verses Luke recounts the time and place where John the Baptist was “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.” Luke also speaks of how John received the word of God in the wilderness. Luke connects John’s work with the prophesy from Isaiah of “one crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.”

Luke is calling us to listen to likewise receive the word of God. We are all called to “prepare the way of the Lord ...and see the salvation of God.”

Sam Méndez



**Monday, December 6**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

**40** Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak 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.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every 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.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;<sup>[a]</sup>  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,<sup>[b]</sup>  
lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

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

<sup>11</sup> He 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.



## Advent Reflections on Isaiah 40: 1-11, *God's People Are Comforted*

Prepare! Awake! Spread the good news, God's promise of salvation is near! We anticipate and anxiously await the coming of the Lord the weeks of Advent. In addition to preparing our homes and church for the Christmas season, I encourage you to prepare your hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus and the promise of salvation his birth brings.

My reflections today are from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, one of my favorite books of the Bible. As I recently read through the verses at the beginning of Chapter 40, I was reminded of songs and hymns that use the words as their texts. Some of these verses have become lyrics to songs included in

the major work of Handel's "Messiah", as well as Advent hymns found in our hymnal. The first verse in chapter 40 is in the hymn, "Comfort, Comfort Now My People," # 256. The text is set to the famous German hymn tune *Freu Dich Sehr*, and it tells us of the importance of preparing the way of the Lord. A couple of other Advent hymns, "Prepare the Royal Highway," #264, and "There's a Voice in the Wilderness," #255, also contain passages from Isaiah that urge us to prepare, be watchful, and share the good news of the glory of the Lord. Continuing with the Bible verses in this chapter, we are reminded God's word is forever, unlike human life which withers and fades like grass (vs. 8). Hymn #249, "On Jordan's Banks the Baptists Cry" says in verse 3 that "without your grace we waste away like flowers that wither and decay." Handel's powerful song "And the Glory of the Lord" uses the text from verse 5, "Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together." Another beautiful but contrasting song from the Messiah, "He Shall Feed His Flock," bases its lyrics on verse 11. These songs highlight the contrasting nature of God; His strength, (vs. 10) "the Lord God comes with might" and gentleness, (vs. 11) "he will gather the lambs in his arms...and gently lead the mother sheep".

I encourage you to listen to these songs and hymns in a new way. And don't be afraid to "lift up your voice with strength" (v. 9) when you sing Advent and Christmas songs this season. May the love, light, peace, and joy of this sacred season be with you.

Lisa Lozito

**Tuesday, December 7**

**Psalm 126**

**A Song of Ascents.**

- <sup>1</sup> When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,<sup>[a]</sup>  
we were like those who dream.  
<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them.”  
<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.  
<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
<sup>5</sup> May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.  
<sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.

The times of trouble and sorrow do not last. God will turn your sorrow to joy and your tears to laughter. We are encouraged to wait expectantly for God.

When rock bottom feels like the end of us, we can trust that God will wrap his arms around us and send his power, love, and GRACE. When there is no joy in the present you can know that there will be joy in the future. Psalm 126:5 -- “May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.” The tears we cry today will reap a joyful harvest in due time. Let us wait for the seasons of change.

Prayer -- Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God that keeps your promises to us. We praise you for the great things that you have done for us in the past and continue to do today. We thank you for your faithfulness.

Bea Imken

**Wednesday, December 8**

**Isaiah 35:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands,

and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

<sup>6</sup> then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,

and streams in the desert;

<sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool,

and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,<sup>[a]</sup>

the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

# Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

D G D G Em D G D7 G D

1 Oh, for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,  
 2 My gra-cious Mas-ter and my God, as-sist me to pro-claim,  
 3 The name of Je-sus charms our fears and bids our sor-rows cease;  
 4 He breaks the power of can-celed sin, he sets the pis-oner free;  
 5 He speaks, and, lis-tening to his voice, new life the dead re-ceive;

G C G/D D7 G

the glo-ries of my God and King, the tri-umphs of his grace!  
 to spread through all the earth a-broad the hon-ors of your name.  
 'tis mu-sic in the sin-ner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.  
 his blood can make the foul-est clean; his blood a-vails for me.  
 the mourn-ful, bro-ken hearts re-joice; the hum-ble poor be-lieve.

6 Hear him, you deaf; you voiceless ones,  
 your loosened tongues employ;  
 you blind, behold your Savior come;  
 and leap, you lame, for joy!

7 To God all glory, praise, and love  
 be now and ever given  
 by saints below and saints above,  
 the church in earth and heaven.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.  
 Tune: Carl G. Gläser, 1828, adapt. and arr.  
 Lowell Mason, 1839



CM  
 AZMON  
[www.hymnary.org/text/o\\_for\\_a\\_thousand\\_tongues\\_to\\_sing\\_my](http://www.hymnary.org/text/o_for_a_thousand_tongues_to_sing_my)

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

**Thursday, December 9**

**Isaiah 12:2-6**

<sup>2</sup> Surely God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD<sup>[a]</sup> is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

<sup>3</sup> With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. <sup>4</sup> And you will say in that day:

Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

<sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known<sup>[b]</sup> in all the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal<sup>[c]</sup> Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

# Stand Up and Bless the Lord



1. Stand up and bless the Lord, ye peo - ple of his
2. Though high a - bove all praise, a - bove all bles-sing
3. O for the li - ving flame from his own al - tar
4. God is our strength and song, and his sal - va - tion
5. Stand up and bless the Lord; the Lord your God a -



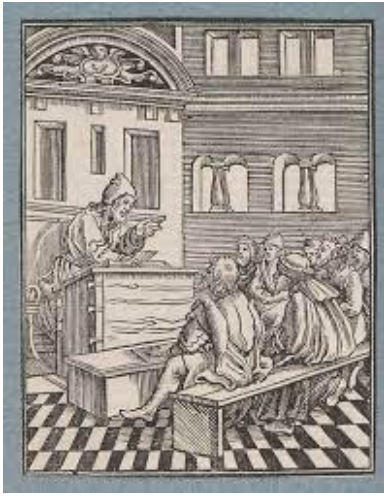
choice;	stand	up	and	bless	the
high,	who	would	not	fear	his
brought,	to	touch	our	lips,	our
ours;	then	be	his	love	in
dore;	stand	up	and	bless	his



Lord your God with heart and soul and voice.  
 ho - ly name, and laud and mag - ni - fy?  
 minds in - spire, and wing to heaven our thought!  
 Christ pro - claimed with all our ran - somed powers.  
 glo - rious name, hen - ceforth for - e - ver - more.

Friday, December 10

Amos 8:4-12



<sup>4</sup> Hear this,  
you that  
trample on  
the needy,  
and bring  
to ruin the  
poor of the  
land,

<sup>5</sup> saying,  
“When will

the new moon be over  
so that we may sell grain;  
and the sabbath,  
so that we may offer wheat for sale?  
We will make the ephah small and the  
shekel great,  
and practice deceit with false balances,  
<sup>6</sup> buying the poor for silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”

<sup>7</sup> The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:  
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

<sup>8</sup> Shall not the land tremble on this account,  
and everyone mourn who lives in it,  
and all of it rise like the Nile,

and be tossed about and sink again, like the  
Nile of Egypt?

<sup>9</sup> On that day, says the Lord GOD,  
I will make the sun go down at noon,  
and darken the earth in broad daylight.

<sup>10</sup> I will turn your feasts into mourning,  
and all your songs into lamentation;  
I will bring sackcloth on all loins,  
and baldness on every head;  
I will make it like the mourning for an only  
son,

and the end of it like a bitter day.  
<sup>11</sup> The time is surely coming, says the  
Lord GOD,  
when I will send a famine on the land;  
not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,  
but of hearing the words of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> They shall wander from sea to sea,  
and from north to east;  
they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of  
the LORD,  
but they shall not find it.



# God of the Ages



1. God of the a - ges, whose al-migh - ty hand
2. Thy love di - vine hath led us in the past;
3. From war's a - larms, from dead - ly pes - ti - lence,
4. Re - fresh thy peo - ple on their toil-some way;



leads forth in beau - ty all the star - ry band  
in this free land with thee our lot is cast;  
be thy strong arm our e - ver sure de - fense;  
lead us from night to nev - er - end - ing day;



of shin - ing worlds in splen - dor through the skies,  
be thou our rul - er, guard - ian, guide, and stay,  
thy true re - li - gion in our hearts in - crease;  
fill all our lives with love and grace di - vine,



our grate - ful songs be - fore thy throne a - rise.  
thy Word our law, thy paths our cho - sen way.  
thy boun - teous good - ness nour - ish us in peace.  
and glo - ry, laud, and praise be e - ver thine.

**Saturday, December 11**

**Luke 1:57-66**

### **The Birth of John the Baptist**

<sup>57</sup> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

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

The biblical accounts of events accompanying John’s entrance on the earthly scene and Jesus’ statements about John make it understandable why the church esteems and venerates the Baptist so highly. John is more than a prophet; according to Jesus, “among those born of women none is greater than John” (Lk 7:28). He is the one of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee” (Mal 3:1). The feast of the nativity of John the Baptist on June 24 is celebrated six months before the feast of the Lord’s birth, in accordance with Lk 1:36a. Since the days grow shorter after the summer solstice and longer after the winter solstice, Augustine sees in the two dates a cosmic confirmation of John’s own words: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). John’s vocation is clear as is his importance in the history of salvation.

You set John the Baptist apart from other men, marking him out with special favor. His birth brought great rejoicing: even in the womb he leapt for joy, so near was man’s salvation. You chose John the Baptist from all the prophets to show the world its redeemer, the Lamb of sacrifice. He baptized Christ, the giver of baptism, in waters made holy by the one who was baptized. You found John worthy of a martyr’s death, his last and greatest act of witness to your Son. (*Preface Prayer for the Solemnity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist*)

Inspired by John, let us too leap for joy in anticipation of Christ’s coming, as we run to meet him, the giver of salvation and peace. Only as we decrease may Christ increase in us.

Jennifer Seighman

Sunday, December 12

Luke 3:7-18



<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” <sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” <sup>12</sup> Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” <sup>13</sup> He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, “And we,

what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with<sup>[b]</sup> the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

<sup>18</sup> So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

*And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”*

We live in a world based on a philosophy of scarcity and a zero sum game. We are taught that there is only so much to go around and we must be very careful in distributing what’s there. But we are also taught that you can’t trust others and you should always take care of yourself first. Jesus is telling us that if we have more than we need, to share it. But what is “more than we need” in a world that tells us there is not enough?

We always forget that with God there is not only more than enough, but that there is always more! There is a phrase: *Enough is as good as a feast*. We have enough! Share the feast!

Pastor Kay Johnson

Monday, December 13

Isaiah 11:1-9



- 11** A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
- 2** The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- 3** His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;
- 4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- 5** Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
- 6** The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.
- 7** The cow and the bear shall graze,

their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

- 8** The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

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

At first, I thought the root from the stump of Jesse could be David, as that was his youngest son who became king. That would qualify as a branch, and he was a good king. Still, he didn't necessarily bring peace to his kingdom. He did fight valiantly with Goliath and later protected his kingdom, but no person let alone animal stayed peaceful in his midst. I think this passage is more about Jesus himself. He created miracles wherever he went and brought peace, comfort and faith to his followers. One could argue that people had conflicts about Jesus, saying that he was not in fact the Son of God as he claimed, but around his immediate vicinity Jesus quelled crowds, fed them, and taught many the way of Christianity. Still, he left the world too soon for it to be entirely safe for people to live in. He left a world filled with war, sickness, poverty, and corruption on its soil. This is hardly a mountain where children can play with asps and stay unharmed. So was this passage wrong? I don't believe so. Sometimes the Bible can seem like a riddle, and I feel that this is one of those times. Though Jesus didn't bring world peace in his wake, he's changed countless lives for the better. Though we have many denominations, the Nicene Creed is still the same. "[We] believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth." And through that belief, we can work to make a better world for all to live in. Though no predator will graze with prey on a large scale, we can encourage small miracles every day by walking with Christ.

Delia Tedder

**Tuesday, December 14**

**Acts 28:23-31**

<sup>23</sup> After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. <sup>24</sup> Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. <sup>25</sup> So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

<sup>26</sup> 'Go to this people and say,  
You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

<sup>27</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them.'

<sup>28</sup> Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense<sup>[b]</sup> and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Today's news state we are having a shortage of everything from toys and clothing to electronics. Shop early or you will miss out. Is this what we think Christmas is all about in this time? Paul testified to the Kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets. He also referred to the book of Isaiah.

Advent season is time for us to reflect on the real reason we celebrate Christmas. The hymn Joy to the World says it best "Joy to the World the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.

Dottie Bowles

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let every heart prepare Him room this season of Love, Joy and Peace. Amen

**Wednesday, December 15**

**Micah 4:8-13**

<sup>8</sup> And you, O tower of the flock,  
hill of daughter Zion,  
to you it shall come,  
the former dominion shall come,  
the sovereignty of daughter Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> Now why do you cry aloud?  
Is there no king in you?  
Has your counselor perished,  
that pangs have seized you like a woman  
in labor?

<sup>10</sup> Writhe and groan,<sup>[a]</sup> O daughter Zion,  
like a woman in labor;  
for now you shall go forth from the city  
and camp in the open country;  
you shall go to Babylon.  
There you shall be rescued,  
there the LORD will redeem you  
from the hands of your enemies.

<sup>11</sup> Now many nations  
are assembled against you,  
saying, "Let her be profaned,  
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion."

<sup>12</sup> But they do not know  
the thoughts of the LORD;  
they do not understand his plan,  
that he has gathered them as sheaves to  
the threshing floor.

<sup>13</sup> Arise and thresh,  
O daughter Zion,  
for I will make your horn iron  
and your hoofs bronze;  
you shall beat in pieces many peoples,  
and shall<sup>[b]</sup> devote their gain to the LORD,  
their wealth to the Lord of the whole  
earth.

### **Tochter Zion**

Tochter Zion, freue dich  
Jauchze laut, Jerusalem!  
Sieh, dein König kommt zu dir  
Ja, er kommt, der Friedefürst  
Tochter Zion, freue dich  
Jauchze laut, Jerusalem!

Hosianna, Davids Sohn  
Sei gesegnet Deinem Volk!  
Gründe nun Dein ewig Reich  
Hosianna in der Höh  
Hosianna, Davids Sohn  
Sei gesegnet Deinem Volk!

(Tochter Zion, freue dich  
Hol ihn jubelnd zu dir ein!  
Sieh, er kommt demütiglich  
Reitet auf dem Eselein  
Tochter Zion, freue dich  
Hol ihn jubelnd zu dir ein!)

Hosianna, Davids Sohn  
Sei begrüßet, König mild!  
Ewig steht Dein Friedensthron  
Du des ewgen Vaters Kind  
Hosianna, Davids Sohn  
Sei begrüßet, König mild!

### **Daughter of Zion**

Rejoice, daughter of Zion  
Cry for joy, Jerusalem!  
Behold, thy King cometh to thee  
Yea, He cometh, Prince of Peace  
Rejoice, daughter of Zion  
Cry for joy, Jerusalem!

Hosanna, Son of David  
Be a blessing unto thy people!  
Come and establish thine eternal Reign  
Hosanna in the highest sphere  
Hosanna, Son of David  
Be a blessing unto thy people!

Rejoice, daughter of Zion  
Receive Him with praise!  
Lo, He cometh lowly and meek  
Riding on an ass's colt  
Rejoice, daughter of Zion  
Receive Him with praise!

Hosanna, Son of David  
Be greeted, graceful King!  
Thy throne of peace shall stand eternally  
Thou, the eternal Father's child  
Hosanna, Son of David  
Be greeted, graceful King!



Thursday, December 16

Psalm 80



<sup>1</sup> Give ear, O  
Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead  
Joseph like a flock!  
You who are  
enthroned upon the  
cherubim, shine  
forth

<sup>2</sup> before Ephraim  
and Benjamin and  
Manasseh.  
Stir up your might,  
and come to save  
us!

<sup>3</sup> Restore us, O  
God;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

<sup>4</sup> O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry with your  
people's prayers?

<sup>5</sup> You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink in full  
measure.

<sup>6</sup> You make us the scorn<sup>[a]</sup> of our neighbors;  
our enemies laugh among themselves.

<sup>7</sup> Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

<sup>8</sup> You brought a vine out of Egypt;  
you drove out the nations and planted it.

<sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground for it;

it took deep root and filled the land.

<sup>10</sup> The mountains were covered with its  
shade,

the mighty cedars with its branches;

<sup>11</sup> it sent out its branches to the sea,  
and its shoots to the River.

<sup>12</sup> Why then have you broken down its walls,  
so that all who pass along the way pluck  
its fruit?

<sup>13</sup> The boar from the forest ravages it,  
and all that move in the field feed on it.

<sup>14</sup> Turn again, O God of hosts;  
look down from heaven, and see;  
have regard for this vine,

<sup>15</sup> the stock that your right hand planted.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> They have burned it with fire, they have  
cut it down;<sup>[c]</sup>

may they perish at the rebuke of your  
countenance.

<sup>17</sup> But let your hand be upon the one at your  
right hand,  
the one whom you made strong for  
yourself.

<sup>18</sup> Then we will never turn back from you;  
give us life, and we will call on your  
name.

<sup>19</sup> Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

# Dear Lord and Father of Mankind



1. Dear Lord and Fa - ther of man - kind, for -
2. In sim - ple trust like theirs who heard, be -
3. O sab - bath rest by Ga - li - lee, O
4. Drop thy still dews of qui - et - ness, till
5. Breathe through the heats of our de - sire thy



give our foo - lish ways; re - clothe us in our  
side the Sy - rian sea, the gra - cious cal - ling  
calm of hills a - bove, where Je - sus knelt to  
all our stri - vings cease; take from our souls the  
cool - ness and thy balm; let sense be dumb, let



right - ful mind, in pu - rer lives thy  
of the Lord, let us, like them, with -  
share with thee the si - lence of e -  
strain and stress, and let our or - dered  
flesh re - tire; speak through the earth - quake,



ser - vice find, in dee - per re - verence, praise.  
out a word, rise up and fol - low thee.  
ter - ni - ty, in - ter - pre - ted by love!  
lives con - fess the beau - ty of thy peace.  
wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm.

Friday, December 17

Isaiah 42:10-18



<sup>10</sup> Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise from the end of the earth!  
Let the sea roar<sup>[a]</sup> and all that fills it,  
the coastlands and their inhabitants.  
<sup>11</sup> Let the desert and its towns lift up their  
voice,  
the villages that Kedar inhabits;  
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,  
let them shout from the tops of the  
mountains.  
<sup>12</sup> Let them give glory to the LORD,  
and declare his praise in the coastlands.  
<sup>13</sup> The LORD goes forth like a soldier,  
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;  
he cries out, he shouts aloud,  
he shows himself mighty against his foes.  
<sup>14</sup> For a long time I have held my peace,  
I have kept still and restrained myself;

now I will cry out like a woman in labor,  
I will gasp and pant.

<sup>15</sup> I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
and dry up all their herbage;  
I will turn the rivers into islands,  
and dry up the pools.

<sup>16</sup> I will lead the blind  
by a road they do not know,  
by paths they have not known  
I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into  
light,

the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I will do,  
and I will not forsake them.

<sup>17</sup> They shall be turned back and utterly put  
to shame—

those who trust in carved images,  
who say to cast images,  
“You are our gods.”

<sup>18</sup> Listen, you that are deaf;  
and you that are blind, look up and see!

# Jesus, Lover of My Soul



Je - sus, lov - er of my soul, let me to thy  
Oth - er ref - uge have I none; hangs my help-less  
Plen teous grace with thee is found, grace to cov - er



bo - som fly, while the near - er wa - ters roll,  
soul on thee; leave, ah! leave me not a - lone,  
all my sin; let the heal - ing streams a - bound;



while the tem-pest still is high; hide me, O my Sav ior, hide,  
still sup-port and com-fort me. All my trust on thee is stayed,  
make and keep me pure with-in. Thou of life the foun tain art;



till the storm of life is past; safe in - to the  
all my help from thee I bring; cov - er my de -  
free - ly let me take of thee; spring thou up with -



ha - ven guide, O re - ceive my soul at last!  
fense-less head with the shad - ow of thy wing.  
in my heart, rise to all e - ter - ni - ty.

**Saturday, December 18**

**Isaiah 66:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> Before she was in labor  
she gave birth;

before her pain came upon her  
she delivered a son.

<sup>8</sup> Who has heard of such a thing?  
Who has seen such things?

Shall a land be born in one day?

Shall a nation be delivered in one moment?

Yet as soon as Zion was in labor  
she delivered her children.

<sup>9</sup> Shall I open the womb and not deliver?  
says the LORD;

shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb?  
says your God.

<sup>10</sup> Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;

rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her—

<sup>11</sup> that you may nurse and be satisfied  
from her consoling breast;

that you may drink deeply with delight  
from her glorious bosom.

# Praise to the Lord, the Almighty



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - migh - ty, the King of cre -  
 2 Praise to the Lord, a - bove all things so won-drou - sly  
 3 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -  
 4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a -



a - tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is your  
 reig - ning; shel-tering you un - der his wings, and so  
 fend you; sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall  
 dore him! All that has life and breath, come now with



health and sal - va - tion! Come, all who hear;  
 gent - ly sus - tain - ing! Have you not seen  
 dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new  
 prai - ses be - fore him. Let the A - men



now to his tem - ple draw near,  
 all that is need - ful has been  
 what the Al - migh - ty can do,  
 sound from his pe - ople a - gain;



join me in glad a - do - ra - tion.  
 sent by his gra - ious or - dain - ing?  
 if with his love he be - friends you.  
 glad - ly for - e - ver a - dore him.

Sunday, December 19

Luke 1:46-55



<sup>46</sup> And Mary<sup>[a]</sup> said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

## The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

The “Magnificat” – named from the Latin Vulgate translation of the opening verse (*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*) is one of the most well-known and frequently used songs of Scripture in Christian worship. It is a fixture of the daily cycle of prayers of the Church sung during vespers in the West (e.g. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pp. 314-315) and matins in the East.

Mary’s song is similar in tone and content to the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), which in rabbinical tradition is a model of authentic, interior prayer of the heart. Mary’s song builds on Hannah’s and develops it with the added potency of the occasion as well as the vocalist. Hannah sings as mother of a prophet, Mary sings as the Mother of God (a common rendering of *Theotokos*, literally “God-bearer,” adopted by the Church in 431 AD as the foremost title for Mary). The song of Mary conveys the longing of the entire Old Testament with renewed power even while inaugurating its fulfillment.

Mary announces that her whole being is for the glorification of God. She desires nothing for herself. As God needs nothing, the glory she offers is returned to her as all generations call her blessed. Her song teaches us the rhythm of faith: magnifying God and being magnified by God is the key to understanding her life. The enduring power of Mary’s song comes from standing at the intersection longing and fulfillment. This intersection, marked by her lyrics at a specific moment in history, reverberate through time as we too stand at the crossroads of Advent looking back at the birth of Christ and forward to his making himself known in us. It is crucial to note that Mary’s being blessed by “all generations” has nothing to do with what the Church has historically identified as vainglory. Mary’s example stands in opposition to all who seek after glory, covet good reputations and fame, or strive after legacies. Those who desire to be well regarded are the very ones whose hearts are scattered, brought down, and sent away empty.

In the Byzantine Rite of the Church, the liturgical rite that guides my own worship life as a cantor, the Magnificat is sung at matins one verse at a time with this refrain in fulfillment of Mary’s prophetic recognition that as Christians we follow her rhythm of faith and laud her blessedness: “Greater in honor than the Cherubim, and in glory greater beyond compare than the Seraphim; you without corruption gave birth to God the Word, and are truly Theotokos. You do we magnify.” Isaiah and Ezekiel report seeing the cherubim and seraphim in the heavenly throne room, yet even these are surpassed by Mary for hearing and receiving the words of the angel, believing and submitting to the Word conceived in her womb, and giving us the model to follow. This Christmas, may we receive and submit to the Word that conceives Christ in us as well.

Eric Ryniker



**Monday, December 20**

**Psalm 113**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD;  
praise the name of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed be the name of the LORD  
from this time on and forevermore.

<sup>3</sup> From the rising of the sun to its setting  
the name of the LORD is to be praised.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens.

<sup>5</sup> Who is like the LORD our God,  
who is seated on high,

<sup>6</sup> who looks far down  
on the heavens and the earth?

<sup>7</sup> He raises the poor from the dust,  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

<sup>8</sup> to make them sit with princes,  
with the princes of his people.

<sup>9</sup> He gives the barren woman a home,  
making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the LORD!

## Of the Father's Love Begotten



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten,  
 2 O that birth for - e - ver bles - sed,  
 3 Let the heights of heaven a - dore him;  
 4 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther,



ere the worlds be - gan to be,  
 when a vir - gin, blest with grace,  
 an - gel hosts his prai - ses sing:  
 and, O Ho - ly Ghost, to thee,



he is Al - pha and O - me - ga  
 by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,  
 powers, do - mi - nions, bow be - fore him,  
 hymn and chant and high thanks - gi - ving



he the source, the en - ding he,  
 bore the Sa - vior of our race;  
 and ex - tol our God and King;  
 and un - wea - ried prai - ses be:



of the things that are, that have been, and that fu - ture  
 and the babe, the world's Re dee - mer, first re-vealed his  
 let no tongue on earth be si - lent, ev - ery voice in  
 ho - nor, glo - ry, and do - mi - nion, and e - ter - nal



years shall see e - ver-more and e - ver-more!  
 sa - cred face, e - ver-more and e - ver-more!  
 con - cert ring, e - ver-more and e - ver-more!  
 vic - to - ry, e - ver-more and e - ver-more!

**Tuesday, December 21**

**Romans 8:18-30**

<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in<sup>[a]</sup> hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes<sup>[b]</sup> for what is seen? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes<sup>[c]</sup> with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And God,<sup>[d]</sup> who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit<sup>[e]</sup> intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.<sup>[f]</sup>

<sup>28</sup> We know that all things work together for good<sup>[g]</sup> for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.<sup>[h]</sup> <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### Thoughts on Romans 8:18-30

Paul begins this passage by referring to the sufferings of the present time, which cannot compare to the glory to be revealed by comparing the glory of God to the pain of childbirth... and we are the first fruits of this labor... waiting to be adopted and the GOOD NEWS is that through HOPE we are adopted and with Hope wait in patience...

The Spirit knows us, helps us, and intercedes for us in our weakness according to the will of God.

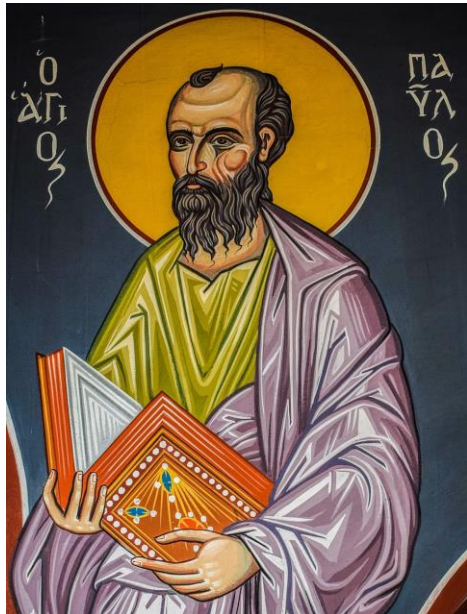
“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” We have assurance that as his chosen, we are to be called; justified; and glorified to be members of his Holy Family.

This passage gives us Hope that the sins of the world as far back as Adam and Eve in Genesis will be redeemed and re-created to fulfill GOD’s plans.

Caroline Nentwich

Wednesday, December 22

Ephesians 2:11-22



<sup>11</sup> So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,<sup>[a]</sup> called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. <sup>15</sup> He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both groups to God in one body<sup>[b]</sup> through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>17</sup> So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>21</sup> In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually<sup>[e]</sup> into a dwelling place for God.

# The Church's One Foundation



1 The Church's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ her  
 2 E - lect from ev - ery na - tion, yet one o'er all the  
 3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der we see her sore op -  
 4 'Mid toil and tri - bu - la - tion, and tu - mult of her  
 5 Yet she on earth hath u - nion with God, the Three in



Lord; she is his new cre - a - tion, by wa - ter and the  
 earth, her char - ter of sal - va - tion: one Lord, one faith, one  
 pressed, by schisms rent a - sun - der, by he - re - sies dis -  
 war, she waits the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for - e - ver -  
 One, and my - stic sweet com - mu - nion With those whose rest is



word: from heaven he came and sought her to be his ho - ly  
 birth; one ho - ly name she bles - ses, par - takes one ho - ly  
 tressed: yet saints their watch are keep - ing, their cry goes up, "How  
 more, till with the vi - sion glo - rious her long - ing eyes are  
 won: O hap - py ones and ho - ly! Lord, give us grace that



bride;	with	his	own	blood	he
food,	and	to	one	hope	she
long?"	and	soon	the	night	of
blest,	and	the	great	Church	vic -
we,	like	them,	the	meek	and



bought	her,	and	for	her	life	he	died.
pres	-	ses	with	ev -	ery	grace	en -
weep	-	ing	shall	be	the	morn	of
to	-	rious	shall	be	the	Church	at
low	-	ly,	on	high	may	dwell	with
						thee.	

**Thursday, December 23**

**Micah 4:1-6**

**4** In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised up above the hills.

Peoples shall stream to it,

<sup>2</sup> and many nations shall come and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more;

<sup>4</sup> but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,  
and no one shall make them afraid;  
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

<sup>5</sup> For all the peoples walk,  
each in the name of its god,  
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God  
forever and ever.

<sup>6</sup> In that day, says the LORD,  
I will assemble the lame  
and gather those who have been driven away,  
and those whom I have afflicted.

## REFLECTION ON MICAH 4:1-6

*“... and no one shall make them afraid ...”*

Some years ago I read a short article written by a doctor describing how our nerves take messages to our brains. The part that has stayed in my mind is that a nerve can carry only one message at a time. It got me to thinking about how that principle applies in so many circumstances of our lives, actually in all circumstances.

My favorite Bible verse is Mark 5:36. It is the embodiment of what I just said about a nerve being able to carry only one message at a time. It says: *But Jesus, having heard the word spoken, says to the ruler of the synagogue, “Fear not; only believe.”*

Other translations say it differently:

- *Don't yield to fear. All you need to do is keep on believing.* ~The Passion Translation
- *Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.* ~New American Standard Bible
- *Don't worry. Just have faith.* ~Contemporary English Version
- *Don't be afraid, just keep trusting.* ~Complete Jewish Bible
- *Do not be seized with alarm and struck with fear; only keep on believing.* ~Amplified Bible
- *It's alright. Don't be afraid; just believe.* ~The Voice

The great killer of growth in our lives is fear. Lewis Howes says, “The three biggest fears in life are: the fear of success, the fear of failure, and the fear of judgment.” We fear so many things, especially judgment. We fear what others think of us ... of not having enough money ... of being overweight ... of being stupid ... of not being worthy of love ... of being embarrassed ... of being crazy.

But remember, a nerve can carry only one message at a time. Jesus tells us that fear and faith cannot coexist. We operate from either one or the other. Faith has conquered fear! Only believe!

Pastor Kay Johnson

**Friday, December 24**

**Luke 2:1-20**



<sup>2</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,<sup>[b]</sup> praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

LUKE 2: 1-20

The baby that was born on this historic day was the gift to all of us who believe in an everlasting life. This event transformed the world and gave each of us hope. As we celebrate Christmas let us be thankful for all the gifts our Lord has bestowed upon us. Let us be joyful and remember to be faithful Christians all our lives and love all of the creatures that our Lord has provided for us. Our Church is our last solace for peace in our lives and let fall down on our knees and thank our Lord. May we all have a Merry Christmas.

Ron Stinson



