

SINGING GOD'S WORD

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2020

**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
MARSHFIELD, WI**

INTRO TO SINGING IN THE BIBLE

Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! - Psalm 105:2

Have you ever noticed how much singing we do at Church? During a typical Sunday service, not only do we sing several hymns, most of the liturgy, especially the Communion liturgy, is sung. We may be doing less of it because of Covid, but it is still there. If you check out Divine Service Setting 3 (Page 5 and 15 in the old hymnals), there is a musical setting for just about everything except the confession, readings, and sermon. And even some of the readings can be chanted if the Pastor chose.

Why do we sing so much? One reason is practical. We remember words so much better when they are sung. Even dementia patients who cannot remember their own name will remember the words to their favorite hymns. The second reason is because singing and worship are tied together. Singing is mentioned time and time again in the Bible. The Israelites sang anytime something momentous happened. David sang (many of the Psalms, which were meant to be sung, were written by him). The angels sang. Mary sang. Simeon sang. Jesus sang. There is even an obscure verse in Zephaniah 3:17 that mentions God the Father singing.

The first words of man recorded in the Bible (and the only words from before the fall), may also have been sung. In Genesis 2:23 Adam exclaims: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Some even theorize that man was meant to sing everything before the fall happened.

Singing is an emotional experience. It requires something more of you than just speaking. It is also a collective activity. It brings people together with one voice. It is a way to teach and a way to praise.

One danger of singing, however, is that we pay more attention to the music than to the words. It is with that in mind that this devotional book was created. Use it to slow down and pay attention to the words and what is being conveyed. Read the Scripture that inspired the writer. (If you look in the hymnal, you can find Scripture notations for every hymn at the bottom of the page). We even wrote a short devotional thought on each hymn.

The Church has a rich musical tradition. Our prayer this Advent is that we all learn to appreciate it more.

How to use this Devotional

The weekends are focused on Divine Service. Read the lectionary readings on Saturday and attend service on Sunday. Pay attention to the words in the hymns.

Each week there are two hymns. Read the lyrics, the associated readings, and the devotion. Find an audio version of the hymn to listen to or if you are musical, play or sing it.

Wednesday features a midweek theme. This will be some instance of singing in the Bible. Read the associated readings. It will also be the basis for the Advent service on Wednesdays.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Lectionary Readings for November 8

Amos 5:18-24

Psalm 70

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Matthew 25:1-13 (*Ten Virgins*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9 AND TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Matthew 25:1-13 (*Ten Virgins*)

Isaiah 62:1-12 (*Zions's Coming Salvation*)

Revelation 19:6-9 (*The Marriage Supper of the Lamb*)

Revelation 7:9-17 (*A Great Multitude*)

Hymn: LSB 516 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

1 "Wake, awake, for night is flying,"
The watchmen on the heights are crying;
 "Awake, Jerusalem, arise!"
Midnight hears the welcome voices
 And at the thrilling cry rejoices:
 "Oh, where are ye, ye virgins wise?
 The Bridegroom comes, awake!
 Your lamps with gladness take!
 Alleluia!
With bridal care Yourselves prepare
To meet the Bridegroom, who is near."

2 Zion hears the watchmen singing,
And all her heart with joy is springing;
 She wakes, she rises from her gloom.
For her Lord comes down all-glorious,
The strong in grace, in truth victorious;
 Her star is ris'n, her light is come.
 Now come, Thou Blessèd One,
 Lord Jesus, God's own Son,
 Hail! Hosanna!
We enter all The wedding hall
To eat the Supper at Thy call.

3 Now let all the heav'ns adore Thee,
Let saints and angels sing before Thee
 With harp and cymbals' clearest tone.
 Of one pearl each shining portal,
Where, joining with the choir immortal,
We gather round Thy radiant throne.
 No eye has seen the light,
 No ear has heard the might
 Of Thy glory;
 Therefore will we Eternally
Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!

It has been quite a long year. No doubt the watch has been long for many of us on the walls during 2020. Who would have thought on January 1st that this is how the year would have gone? At times it has been exhausting as we went from month to month. The time seemed to drag on and the waiting created a lot of anxiety. Hope begins to wane...then falter...then...

“Wake! Awake! For the night is flying!”

The cry that alerts our dulled eyes and deafening ears. The long-awaited time has come! Hope springs eternal from our hearts as we hear those who guard the Church. The daylight comes! The Son has arrived!

The author for our hymn devotion today, Pastor Philipp Nicolai, wrote this hymn during the plague that happened in his lifetime. During the winter that the plague hit, this Lutheran Pastor averaged 30 funerals a week, over 1,000 funerals he would officiate total throughout that winter.

What might drive us to despair and desolation drew Rev. Nicolai instead to the hope of the promise of Jesus Christ. He saw through it all the darkness breaking and the light of Christ shining bright.

Drawing from images in Scripture such as the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25, the Salvation of God’s people in Isaiah 62, The Final Marriage Feast of the Lamb in Revelation 19, and the Great Multitude of Believers in Revelation 7, this hymn points to the final hope and climax of this creation: The return of Jesus Christ.

His Hymn, LSB #516 “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying” is a joyful hymn. Through its music and meter we see the return of Christ now through faith.

Perhaps Rev. Nicolai pictured the 1,000 members that he loved that he buried that fateful winter long ago in his final stanza: “Now let all the heav’ns adore thee/Let saints and angels sing before Thee/With harp and cymbals’ clearest tone./Of one pearl each shining portal/Where, joining with the choir immortal,/we gather round Thy radiant throne./No eye has seen the light,/no ear has heard the might of Thy glory;/ Therefore will we Eternally Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!”



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Midweek Theme “Psalms”

The book of Psalms is considered the prayerbook and the songbook of the Bible. Psalms are meant to be sung. While the original music has been lost, our hymnals have set them to chant tones. We will often chant them during the Divine Service. Find the chant tones in the Hymnal.

Here are just a few of the Psalms that specifically mention singing.

Psalm 95 (*Let Us Sing Songs of Praise*)
Psalm 100 (*His Steadfast Love Endures Forever*)
Psalm 150 (*Let Everything Praise the Lord*)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12 AND FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Acts 1:6-11 (*The Ascension*)
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (*The Coming of the Lord*)
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (*Lord's Supper*)
Luke 2:8-15 (*The Shepherds and the Angels*)

Hymn: 621 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
For with blessing in His hand
Christ our God to earth descending
Comes our homage to demand.

2 King of kings yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords in human vesture,
In the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heav'nly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way
As the Light of Light, descending
From the realms of endless day,
Comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish
As the darkness clears away.

4 At His feet the six-winged seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence
As with ceaseless voice they cry:
“Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, Lord Most High!”

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We are given a heavenly vision in our hymn and readings today. In Revelation, we are told that when 6th seal breaks, there is silence in heaven for half an hour. This hymn catches us into the gravity of that silence.

The Scriptures today give us the reason for that silence: The Triumph of Christ. All stop and stare in wonder at this marvel of the Son of God, His Ascension that we read of to the Highest Heaven to sit upon the throne of God. He takes the scepter and throne.

Before him are the angels and archangels. They cry out just like they did in Luke 2 on the night he was born and just like the Seraphim do in Isaiah 6 before the throne.

And we are caught into this as well. In 1 Thessalonians 4, we are reminded of the return of this same Jesus who will give the command to his angels and gather us together to meet the Lord in the air.

Until that day, we gain a foretaste. Paul in 1 Corinthians give us the hope of this salvation come to us now on earth in the body and the blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Before this mighty Christ, before all the angels of heaven, and before all the kings on earth who must throw down their crowns and scepters before him—there is nothing that can be said, no words that can do justice to this moment. Let all mortal flesh keep silence and with fear and trembling stand.

The moment is grave and serious, it commands the silence beforehand.

But then the darkness clears away. In the body and the blood, he will give to all the faithful His own self for heavenly food.

Already this Jesus comes down and says, “Take and Eat, this is my body. Take and drink this is my blood.”

And from our mouths ascending we cry with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven: “Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Lord Most High!”



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14 AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Lectionary Readings for November 15

Zephaniah 1:7-16

Psalm 90:1-12

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Matthew 25:14-30 (*Parable of the Talents*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16 AND TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Luke 21:25-36 (*Signs of the End Times*)

Matthew 25:31-46 (*The Sheep and the Goats*)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (*Believers Who Have Died*)

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 (*The Resurrection Body*)

Hymn: 508 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near

1 The day is surely drawing near
When Jesus, God's anointed,
In all His power shall appear
As judge whom God appointed.
Then fright shall banish idle mirth,
And flames on flames shall ravage earth
As Scripture long has warned us.

2 The final trumpet then shall sound
And all the earth be shaken,
And all who rest beneath the ground
Shall from their sleep awaken.
But all who live will in that hour,
By God's almighty, boundless pow'r,
Be changed at His commanding.

3 The books are opened then to all,
A record truly telling
What each has done, both great and small,
When he on earth was dwelling,
And ev'ry heart be clearly seen,
And all be known as they have been
In thoughts and words and actions.

4 Then woe to those who scorned the Lord
And sought but carnal pleasures,
Who here despised His precious Word
And loved their earthly treasures!
With shame and trembling they will stand
And at the judge's stern command
To Satan be delivered.

5 My Savior paid the debt I owe
And for my sin was smitten;
Within the Book of Life I know
My name has now been written.
I will not doubt, for I am free,
And Satan cannot threaten me;
There is no condemnation!

6 May Christ our intercessor be
And through His blood and merit
Read from His book that we are free
With all who life inherit.
Then we shall see Him face to face,
With all His saints in that blest place
Which He has purchased for us.

7 O Jesus Christ, do not delay,
But hasten our salvation;
We often tremble on our way
In fear and tribulation.
O hear and grant our fervent plea:
Come, mighty judge, and set us free
From death and ev'ry evil.

Memento Mori. “Remember the Day of Death.” That was a Latin phrase used to remind people not of their death for death’s sake, but to remind them to prepare for it. That is what the hymn “The Day is Surely Drawing Near” also seeks to do. That is what Christ says to his disciples during his final week before his crucifixion as well. Prepare! Memento Mori!

In Luke 21:25-36 and in Matthew 25:31-46 Christ describes “The Day” that Scripture long has said was coming. The Day of the Lord. The final day. A day sin and evil must be answered for and will be dealt with. Prepare! Memento Mori!

A day of darkness as the prophets say. A day that no one escapes. A day when the earth shakes to its foundation. A day when God’s long-suffering ends. A day of God’s vindication. Prepare! Memento Mori!

The jokes and idle mirth come to an end. A day when all mocking and unbelief shall vanish. A day that reveals Jesus Christ in all his glory as he comes to make the End. Prepare! Memento Mori!

Glimpses of this day have appeared across time. Moments where The Day has appeared in human history. Noah’s flood, the Babylonian exile. Moments where God’s just wrath which breaks out against all sin and evil. We see signs now with societal collapse, wars and destruction, and economic woes that all mark birth pains. Prepare! Memento Mori!

Jesus tells us these things to prepare us and to help us remember. So after saying all these things, he gathers them at table. Take Eat. Take Drink. This is my body. This is my blood. Shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in Memento of me!

Prepare! Memento Mori. Partake of the Sacraments now. There you will encounter Christ who has already endured the day of death. The death of ruin. The day where sin is answered for. You encounter a Christ who suffered the Day of the Lord for you and who will bring you to the other side. “May Christ our intercessor be and through His blood and merit read from His book that we are free!”

Remember and prepare now for that! That Day is surely drawing near!

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Midweek Theme “Singing in Revelation”

There is a lot of singing mentioned in Revelation, largely in regards to the worship of God. Singing and worship are often connected in the Bible. Here are several passages in Revelation that mention singing.

Revelation 14:1-5

Revelation 4:6-11

Revelation 7:9-12

Revelation 15:1-4

One hymn we sing in Church a lot, This is the Feast, is based off of two passages in Revelation: 5:9-14 and 19:5-9.

This is the Feast (LSB 155)

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Power, riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

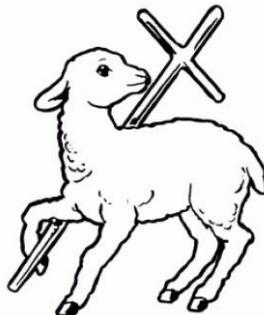
Sing with all the people of God and join in the hymn of all creation.

Blessing and honor and glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia.

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AND FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Genesis 2 (*The Creation of Man and Woman*)
Isaiah 11:1-16 (*The Righteous Reign of the Branch*)

Hymn: 342 What Hope! An Eden Prophesied

- 1 What hope! An Eden prophesied
Where tame live with the wild;
The lamb and lion side by side,
Led by a little child!

- 2 A shoot will sprout from Jesse's stem,
A branch from David's line,
A Prince of Peace in Bethlehem:
The fruit of God's design.

- 3 As banner of God's love unfurled,
Christ came to suffer loss,
That by His death a dying world
Would rally to the cross.

- 4 Come, Jesus, come, Messiah Lord,
Lost Paradise restore;
Lead past the angel's flaming sword—
Come, open heaven's door.

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After all that has happened this year hope burns brighter than ever. The words of Scripture and our Lord Jesus Christ form this hope.

Hymn 342 draws from images in Genesis 2 and Isaiah 11 to bring this hope to life.

Eden, a word that means “God’s delight”, pictures us back in paradise with God. A place where tame creatures live with wild ferocious beasts and all is well. No violence. No blood shed. No death. A child leads a lion and lamb through fields and forests.

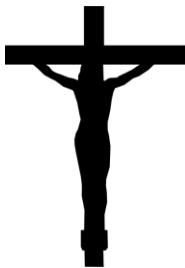
What is the cause of this peace? What is source of this Edenic hope? Verse 2 tells us why. The tree of David's royal line has new life shooting upwards through the long dead stump. The promise that through David, God would send a Savior looked bleak as that line of Kings seemed broken through the violence and sin of the ages.

But it has endured and now through Christ, the line of David stands firm as a beacon to the nations. All this is by God's eternal design.

And though this year has seemed to sap the strength and hope from us, we shall hear the sound of trumpets. We shall see the banners of God's love unfurled before the fury of the enemy. The loss Christ has suffered is a call to the nations long led by death and long haunted by a world torn by violence and sin.

The cross shines as a bright light. The death of Christ a rally cry to all who remain to gather for a last stand before a ruthless enemy. A rallying cry that gives us hope because by the tree of death has Christ overcome death.

And at the foot of the cross that we rally to we cry out, "Come! Jesus come! Messiah Lord, paradise restore! Lead past the angel's flaming sword—Come open heaven's door!"



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21 AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Lectionary Readings for November 22

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Psalm 95:1-7a

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Matthew 25:31-46 (*The Final Judgement*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23 AND TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Romans 13:8-14 (*Fulfilling the Law Through Love*)

Revelation 22:6-21 (*Jesus is Coming*)

1 Corinthians 2:6-9 (*Wisdom of God*)

John 1:1-5 (*The Word Became Flesh*)

John 3:16-21 (*God So Loved the World*)

Hymn: 337 The Night Will Soon Be Ending

- 1 The night will soon be ending;
 The dawn cannot be far.
 Let songs of praise ascending
 Now greet the Morning Star!
All you whom darkness frightens
 With guilt or grief or pain,
God's radiant Star now brightens
 And bids you sing again.
- 2 The One whom angels tended
 Comes near, a child, to serve;
Thus God, the judge offended,
 Bears all our sins deserve.
 The guilty need not cower,
 For God has reconciled
Through His redemptive power
 All those who trust this child.
- 3 The earth in sure rotation
 Will soon bring morning bright,
 So run where God's salvation
 Glow in a stable's light.
 As old as sin's perversion
 Is mercy's vast design:
God brings a new creation—
 This child its seal and sign.
- 4 Yet nights will bring their sadness
 And rob our hearts of peace,
 And sin in all its madness
 Around us may increase.
 But now one Star is beaming
Whose rays have pierced the night:
God comes for our redeeming
 From sin's oppressive might.
- 5 God dwells with us in darkness
 And makes the night as day;
 Yet we resist the brightness
 And turn from God away.
 But grace does not forsake us,
 However far we run.
God claims us still as children
 Through Mary's infant Son.

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

The year 2020 has certainly held its share of darkness for many people. We have watched and experienced suffering, anger, illness, loss, and fear. But there is good news! The darkness did not win because we know the One who has the Power to overcome it.

Jesus, the Word made flesh, is our Light and our Salvation. He defeats the darkness, but even more than that, He dwells with us - He stays with us, He sits with us, He cares for us every single moment we experience pain or suffering. As the fifth stanza of this hymn so beautifully declares, "God dwells with us in darkness and makes the night as day;"

Jesus is the Light of the world. He is with you today, tomorrow, and forever. Celebrate that you are a dearly loved child of God.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Thanksgiving Lectionary Readings

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Psalm 67

Philippians 4:6-20

1 Timothy 2:1-4

Luke 17:11-19

Attend Thanksgiving Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26 AND FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (*Parable of the Weeds*)

Revelation 22:7, 12, 20 (*Jesus Coming Soon*)

Isaiah 9:3 (*Joy at the Harvest*)

Hymn: 892 Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

1 Come, ye thankful people, come;
Raise the song of harvest home.
All be safely gathered in
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied.
Come to God's own temple, come;
Raise the song of harvest home.

2 All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown.
First the blade and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear.
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord, our God, shall come
And shall take His harvest home,
From His field shall in that day
All offenses purge away,
Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore.

4 Even so, Lord, quickly come
To Thy final harvest home;
Gather Thou Thy people in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin,
There, forever purified,
In Thy garner to abide:
Come with all Thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious harvest home.

Text: Public domain

“At that time I will tell the harvesters: ‘First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” - Matthew 13:30

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.” - Matthew 13:43

This hymn, written in 1844 by Henry Alford, was based on Psalm 100:4 which says, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”

Verse one of this well-known hymn clearly encourages us to give thanks to God, our Maker for the earthly harvest and for the countless blessings He provides. It is good and right for us to thank and praise the Lord every day.

The remaining verses are based on Jesus' Parable of the Weeds found in Matthew 13 and shine a light on another harvest. We celebrate knowing that when this harvest comes, Jesus will tell the harvesters (angels) to gather the wheat (us, His children) and bring it (us) into His barn (heaven).

Whether an earthly or heavenly harvest, we give thanks to the Lord our God for He is good and His love for us endures forever! Amen.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Lectionary Readings for November 29

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm 80:1-7

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 11:1-10 (*Triumphal Entry*)

Mark 13:24-37 (*The Coming of the Son of Man*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30 AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Psalm 98 (*Make a Joyful Noise*)

Romans 5:12-21 (*Death in Adam, Life in Christ*)

Revelation 22:1-5 (*The River of Life*)

Hymn: 387 Joy to the World

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

Text: Public domain

Perhaps one of my favorite things about the Advent Season is the dual meaning behind the readings, the hymns and the season itself!

Advent comes from the Latin word “to come, arrive.” We usually associate it with the birth of Jesus Christ. And rightly so. We remember his coming into the flesh as the babe in Bethlehem.

But if one stops to think about it for a moment when you sing the hymns, read the Scriptures, and listen to the sermons, the babe in Bethlehem is just a launching pad to what we really want to get to: The Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

Joy to the World is such a hymn. Written by Isaac Watts in the early 1700’s. We sing it during Christmas, but Watts meant it as a hymn proclaiming the events and mood of Jesus Christ’s second coming. When you realize this, it changes the meaning of the hymn entirely.

“Joy to the World the Lord is come!” This is something that will be shouted in joy when the Lord Jesus comes again. You will sing a glad song when he returns. Isaac Watts pulls themes from Psalm 98 when it says that we and all creation should make a joyful noise to God.

When Jesus comes again, the images of Romans 5:12-21 will be realized. The blessing of Christ will undo the effects of the curse as far as the curse is found! Death through Adam, but life in Christ.

The final image that Watts pulls together is from the final chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22:1-5. There upon the throne sits the Lamb, who makes all things new, who rules the world with truth and grace.

Sing this song with great joy and gladness, sing it as you remember the birth of Christ, sing it as you look forward to singing it on the day when Jesus Christ the Lord returns.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Midweek Theme “Zechariah's song”

Luke 1:5-25, 57-66

When Zechariah was told by an angel that his wife would conceive and bear a son, Zechariah did not believe him. Because of this, Zechariah was unable to talk until his son was born. After the birth, Zechariah names his son John just as the angel had told him to, and his tongue was loosened. He then sang these words recorded in Luke 1:67-79.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in
the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy
prophets from of old, that we should be saved
from our enemies and from the hand of all
who hate us; to show the mercy promised to
our fathers and to remember his
holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our
father Abraham, to grant us that we, being
delivered from the hand of our enemies,

might serve him without fear, in holiness and
righteousness before him all our days. And
you, child, will be called the prophet of the
Most High; for you will go before the Lord to
prepare his ways, to give knowledge of
salvation to his people in the forgiveness of
their sins, because of the tender mercy of our
God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from
on high to give light to those who sit in
darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide
our feet into the way of peace.”

John would grow up to become the man known as John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

Luke 19:28-40 (*Triumphal Entry*)

Philippians 2:1-11 (*Christ's Humility*)

Ephesians 4:17-32 (*The New Life*)

Daniel 7:13-14 (*The Son of Man is Given Dominion*)

Hymn: 331 The Advent of Our King

1 The advent of our King
Our prayers must now employ,
And we must hymns of welcome sing
In strains of holy joy.

2 The everlasting Son
Incarnate deigns to be,
Himself a servant's form puts on
To set His servants free.

3 O Zion's daughter, rise
To meet your lowly King,
Nor let your faithless heart despise
The peace He comes to bring.

4 As judge, on clouds of light,
He soon will come again
And His true members all unite
With Him in heav'n to reign.

5 Before the dawning day
Let sin's dark deeds be gone,
The sinful self be put away,
The new self now put on.

6 All glory to the Son,
Who comes to set us free,
With Father, Spirit, ever one
Through all eternity.

Text: Public domain

A mark of a good hymn is the ability to speak of both the work of Christ and the person of Christ.

The work of Christ points us to Jesus Christ's task for which he came: to suffer, die, pay for sins, submit to the Father, etc.

The person of Christ focuses on who Jesus is, his titles: King, Messiah, Savior, etc.

The Advent of our King wraps up these key themes beautifully.

It draws from many key Scriptural descriptions of Jesus Christ. The author of the text, Charles Coffin, drew from the image of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday from Luke 19:28-40. We sing in verse 1 & 3 in strains of holy joy to meet our lowly king. Otherwise the very stones would cry out!

Verse 2 draws from the beloved passage of Philippians 2:5-11 where Jesus forsakes equality with the Father and puts on a servant form to free his fellow servants.

Verse 4 picks up on the famous passage of Daniel where one who is the Son of Man receives from the throne of the Ancient of Days the right to judge and rule.

Verse 5 picks up on Ephesians 4:22-24 where Paul exhorts us to put away sins dark deeds and put on the new self that is in the likeness and image of God.

Woven into this hymn is the work of Christ as the incarnate Son of God who comes to be obedient to death, to form for himself a new people who are set free. Tethered together to them are all these titles at work with Christ's work: King, everlasting Son, Prince of Peace, Judge, Son of God.

The hymn concludes with a beautiful doxology to the Triune God: "All glory to the Son, who comes to set us free, With Father, Spirit, ever one through all eternity."

Thanks be to God for the person and work of Jesus Christ and all that he does for you!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 AND SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

Lectionary Readings for December 6

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85

2 Peter 3:8-14

Mark 1:1-8 (*John the Baptist Prepares the Way*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7 AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

John 1:6-31 (*John the Baptist*)

Matthew 3:1-12, 11:9-14 (*John the Baptist*)

Luke 1:26-45 (*Birth of John the Baptist foretold*)

Malachi 4:1-6 (*The Day of the Lord*)

Hymn: 346 When All the World Was Cursed

1 When all the world was cursed
By Moses' condemnation,
Saint John the Baptist came
With words of consolation.
With true forerunner's zeal
The greater One he named,
And Him, as yet unknown,
As Savior he proclaimed.

2 Before he yet was born,
He leaped in joyful meeting,
Confessing Him as Lord
Whose mother he was greeting.
By Jordan's rolling stream,
A new Elijah bold,
He testified of Him
Of whom the prophets told:

3 Behold the Lamb of God
That bears the world's transgression,
Whose sacrifice removes
The devil's dread oppression
Behold the Lamb of God,
Who takes away our sin,
Who for our peace and joy
Will full atonement win.

4 O grant, dear Lord of love,
That we receive, rejoicing,
The word proclaimed by John,
Our true repentance voicing,
That gladly we may walk
Upon our Savior's way
Until we live with Him
In His eternal day.

One Sunday every Advent we read the story of John the Baptist. Often his story is skipped over in the general Christmas narrative. Rarely do you find it included in the Children's Program or in nativity readings. Yet he acts as an important witness, to his mother, Elizabeth, to Mary, the mother of Jesus, to those who came out to see and be baptized by him in the Jordan river, and eventually, through the written word, to us.

His story is laid out in the first three stanzas of this week's hymn. In stanza 2 it talks of his leaping for joy when he first encountered the Messiah while both were still in their mothers' wombs. It was this reaction that served as witness to both women that the child Mary was carrying was not just an ordinary baby.

He continued to testify as he was older, fulfilling the prophecy found in Malachi 4:5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." Jesus himself declared John to be the Elijah prophesied to come (see Matthew 11).

John's response to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3 also brings to mind Malachi 4. "The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." Yet we do not have to fear that day, as John also testifies. As stanza 3 puts John's words: Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away our sin.

John does his job. He points to Jesus. He acts as witness to those along the Jordan and also to us. As a true prophet, he points not to himself, but to the "greater One." The One who would die on a cross, bearing our sins. The same One who John recognized through the Holy Spirit when he was still a child in his mother's womb.

Stanza 4 finishes the hymn with a prayer. A prayer that we may take John's words to heart and "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That we may walk in the straight paths to one day enjoy eternity with our Savior.

Just like John's life, this hymn, while seemingly about John, is actually about Jesus. It's about how Jesus came, as a human baby, to take on our sins and win our full atonement, saving us from the condemnation of the Law. Just like John, we should strive to live our lives in a way that points others to our Savior.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

Midweek Theme “Mary’s Song”

Luke 1:39-55

Shortly after Mary found out from the Angel Gabriel that she would give birth to the Christ, she hurried off to visit her cousin Elizabeth. After greeting each other, Mary is recorded to have sung what we now call the Magnificat. It is usually sung as part of a Vespers or Evening Prayer Service. Various versions can be found in the hymnal.

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his
servant. For behold, from now on all
generations will call me blessed; for he who is
mighty has done great things for me, and holy
is his name. And his mercy is for those who
fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of
their hearts; he has brought down the mighty
from their thrones and exalted those of humble
estate; he has filled the hungry with good
things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

Luke 1:68-71 (*Zechariah's Prophecy*)

Isaiah 61:1 (*The Year of the Lord's Favor*)

Psalm 107:10-22 (*The Prisoners*)

Hymn: 375 Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising

1 Come, your hearts and voices raising,
Christ the Lord with gladness praising;
Loudly sing His love amazing,
Worthy folk of Christendom.

2 Christ, from heav'n to us descending
And in love our race befriending;
In our need His help extending,
Saved us from the wily foe.

3 Jacob's star in all its splendor
Beams with comfort sweet and tender,
Forcing Satan to surrender,
Breaking all the pow'rs of hell.

4 From the bondage that oppressed us,
From sin's fetters that possessed us,
From the grief that sore distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free.

5 Oh, the joy beyond expressing
When by faith we grasp this blessing,
And to You we come confessing
That Your love has set us free.

6 Gracious Child, we pray, O hear us,
From Your lowly manger cheer us,
Gently lead us and be near us
Till we join Your choir above.

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Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. (Psalm 107:10-11).

This is us prior to being brought to faith. The Bible does not mince words when it comes to our sinful condition. It is these words that make their way into our hymn today. Verse 4 puts it like this: From the bondage that oppressed us/From sin's fetters that possessed us/From the grief that sore distressed us.

This brings to mind Romans 6: "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" We are in bondage to our sinful nature. How are we ever to be free?

Despite the grave imagery, our hymn today is actually, like most Advent hymns, rather hopeful. The reason for this hope is given throughout. In Verse 2 it talks about Christ descending and "In our need His help extending." We are definitely in need. The imagery in Psalm 107 casts us as prisoners. A prisoner can't do anything to help himself. A prisoner needs an advocate, someone to plead their case.

In Verse 3 it talks about the Star of Jacob which brings to mind the Christmas star that led the magi, the prophecy in Numbers 24:17 about a star that would come out of Jacob, and the fact that Jesus is referred to as the light of the world. This light will break the power of hell.

Verse 4 concludes it's description of our bondage and distress with the happy words: "We, the captives, now are free." And how are we freed? The conclusion of verse 5 states it is the love of Christ that has set us free. It is a blessing received, not by anything we have done, but by what Jesus has done for us.

He came to earth as a baby, lived a sinless life, and yet was numbered with the transgressors. He accepted the punishment of death for our sins so that we could be set free. For as Romans 6:7 states: "one who has died has been set free from sin." We receive this blessing through our baptism. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4).

And what should be our response to this great love? For that we go back to Verse 1: "Come, your hearts and voices raising." We should do exactly as we are doing in this hymn and sing of his love and share the good news. And this we keep on doing until we join the choir above.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 AND SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

Lectionary Readings for December 13

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28 (*The Testimony of John the Baptist*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14 AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

Luke 4:16-21 (*Scripture Fulfilled*)

Isaiah 40:3, 61:1-2 (*Year of the Lord's Favor*)

Matthew 21:1-11 (*Triumphal Entry*)

Hymn: 349 Hark the Glad Sound

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
And ev'ry voice a song. | 3 He comes the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of His grace
To enrich the humble poor. |
| 2 He comes the pris'ners to release,
In Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield. | 4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim,
And heav'n's eternal arches ring
With Thy belovèd name. |

Text: Public domain

Hark the glad sound! Hear the good news! Prepare your hearts - the Savior of the world has come. He has made a way for you.

Who is this Savior? He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. "At the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10-11

Yet, this Savior, who is Almighty and just, is also gentle and kind. He demonstrated humility when He chose a donkey for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He entered this earth as a lowly baby born in a manger in Bethlehem.

Jesus, our Savior, fully God and fully man, has power over all creation, yet He comes to the broken hearted and cures our bleeding souls. He shows grace (undeserved love) and mercy (withholding deserved punishment) like no one or nothing else.

He is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise. “Let ev’ry heart prepare a throne And ev’ry voice a song.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

Midweek Theme “Angels Singing”

Job 38:4-7

Isaiah 6:2-3

Luke 2:8-14

Angels show up singing a few times in the Bible. We have already seen it in Revelation. They also appear to be mentioned in Job 38 in regards to singing at creation. Then again in Isaiah 6 (which is one of the texts the hymn Holy, Holy, Holy and the Sanctus are based on). And of course, there is the familiar narrative of angels singing to the shepherds about the birth of Jesus.

It is this last instance that enters into a lot of our hymns and songs, especially as we enter the Christmas season. Here are just a handful:

LSB 368: Angels We Have Heard on High

LSB 379: O Come, All Ye Faithful

LSB 380: Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

LSB 388: Go Tell it on the Mountain

They are always seen to be praising and worshipping God, something we still do through singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16).



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17 AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

Luke 2:8-17 (*Shepherd's and Angels*)

John 1:4-5, 9, 14 (*The Light*)

Luke 2:25-38 (*Jesus Presented at the Temple*)

Matthew 2:1-11 (*The Magi*)

Hymn: 367 Angels from the Realms of Glory

1 Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth. Refrain

ref Come and worship, come and worship;
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

2 Shepherds in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
Yonder shines the Infant Light. Refrain

3 Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star. Refrain

4 Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear. Refrain

5 All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the_ternal Three in One. Refrain

Text: Public domain

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. - Luke 2:8-11

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, Luke 2:15-17

What if you had been a shepherd out in the fields near Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born? How would you react to the angel's message? There is no doubt that fear would try to step in, but then the angel calms your fears and tells you (before telling anyone else) that the Savior of the world has been born in Bethlehem.

Would you do what the shepherds did? Would you drop everything and go (in a hurry) to worship Jesus? And then, once you have seen Jesus, the Savior, would you tell everyone you could about Him?

Let's think about a modern day comparison. How often do you drop everything to go and worship the One who gave His life for you? How many people have heard about or experienced Jesus' Love overflowing through your words and actions? God help us to follow in the footsteps of the shepherds. Let us come and worship Christ, the newborn King!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 AND SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Lectionary Readings for December 20

2 Samuel 7:1-11

Psalm 89:1-5, 19-29

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38 (*Birth of Jesus Foretold*)

Attend Divine Service and receive Holy Communion. Make note of the Hymns.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21 AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

Matthew 2:1-12 (*The Magi*)

Ephesians 1:3-14 (*Spiritual Blessings in Christ*)

John 18:36-37 (*Jesus' Kingdom*)

John 1:29 (*Lamb of God*)

Matthew 3:13-17 (*Baptism of Jesus*)

John 2:1-11 (*Wedding at Cana*)

Hymn: 399 The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

1 The star proclaims the King is here;
But, Herod, why this senseless fear?
For He who offers heav'nly birth
Seeks not the kingdoms of this earth.

2 The eastern sages saw from far
And followed on His guiding star;
And, led by light, to light they trod
And by their gifts confessed their God.

3 Within the Jordan's sacred flood
The heav'nly Lamb in meekness stood
That He, of whom no sin was known,
Might cleanse His people from their own.

4 And oh, what miracle divine,
When water reddened into wine!
He spoke the word, and forth it flowed
In streams that nature ne'er bestowed.

5 For this Thy glad epiphany
All glory, Jesus, be to Thee,
Whom with the Father we adore,
And Holy Spirit evermore.

Text: Public domain

“The star proclaims the King is here.”

The hymn for the beginning of this week is actually an Epiphany hymn. We don't celebrate Epiphany until twelve days after Christmas, but the themes are woven tightly into the whole Advent and Christmas season. In Advent we look forward to the coming of the King. At Christmas we celebrate His coming. And at Epiphany we celebrate this coming being revealed to the world.

We know the story. The Magi saw the star and followed it. “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” they ask. You have to wonder what they expected to find. Were they surprised to find the King in a small town, with poor parents? Their reaction, however, was better than Herod's. While the Magi “by their gifts confessed their God,” Herod chose to try to kill this newborn king in fear of losing his power.

This is what the Israelites had come to hope for in their Messiah. They thought he was going to overthrow the Romans and set-up a prosperous Israelite kingdom. However, as we see in our hymn and in our readings, that is not what Jesus came to do. “For He who offers heav'nly birth / Seeks not the kingdoms of this earth.” The Kingdom of God is not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual one. As Luther puts it in the Small Catechism: “God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.”

This leads us into the next two stanzas of our hymn. Stanzas 3 and 4 parallel how Christ is revealed to us. Stanza 3 covers his Baptism. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John the Baptist cries after baptizing Jesus in the Jordan. Through his baptism Jesus is once again revealed to the world as the Holy Spirit descends and the Father claims Jesus as His Son. It is through *our* Baptism that we are washed clean, receive the Holy Spirit, and are adopted into the family of God.

Stanza 4 references Jesus' first miracle at the Wedding at Cana. This is sometimes the reading during the first Sunday after the Epiphany. It is hard to read this account and not think about Communion, the marriage feast of the Lamb! In Holy Communion we see Jesus, in with and under the bread and the wine. In this meal we receive forgiveness of sins and a foretaste of the feast that we will enjoy eternally in the Kingdom.

Praise God that Jesus has been revealed to us Gentiles!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23:

Midweek Theme “Song of Simeon”

Luke 2:22-35

After Jesus was born, his parents brought him to the temple to be presented to the LORD, as was required by the law. At the temple was a man names Simeon, who had been told “he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” He recognized Jesus as the Messiah and spoke these word:

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

It is these words we still sing after receiving Holy Communion, for in Communion we too see Jesus, who died for our salvation. We too can depart in peace knowing our sins have been forgiven through His body and blood. We call this canticle the Nunc Dimittis (now you dismiss). Several versions can be found in the hymnal.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

Isaiah 7:10-14 (*The Sign of Immanuel*)

Isaiah 11:1-5, 10-11 (*The Righteous Branch*)

Matthew 1:23 (*The Virgin will Conceive*)

Hymn: 357 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear. Refrain

ref Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

2 O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go. Refrain

3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the Law
In cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain

4 O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Refrain

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

6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. Refrain

7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace. Refrain

Text: Public domain

O Come, O Come Emmanuel. We cry those same words every time we sit down to a meal: "Come Lord Jesus!" It is a cry of longing. It is also a dangerous cry.

"He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked." (Isaiah 11:4b)

This is part of the description given about the Branch of Jesse's tree. He will slay the wicked, and the truth is, we are all wicked. We are all sinners. Romans 3:23 states: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Yet our final hymn this Advent season is not one of fear. This season (and its culmination on Christmas Day) is one of hope.

Israel mourns until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Give us victory over the grave. Rejoice! Disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Bid Thou our sad divisions cease and be Thyself our King of Peace. Rejoice!

So if God with us is a terrifying thing, why are we hopeful? The answer comes in stanza 4:

Free them from Satan's tyranny That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Those who trust in God. Who trust that the babe in the manger, the son of the virgin, is truly Immanuel, God with us. The promised Seed, who would grow up, die on the cross for our sins, crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3), and rise again on the third day. It is through that faith, that trust, given to us by the grace of God, that we can cry O Come, O Come Emmanuel with hope rather than fear.

We long for the day when Immanuel, the Wisdom from on high, the Lord of might, the Branch of Jesse, the Key of David, the Dayspring, the Desire of nations, returns to make all things new. This is the whole point of Advent. In remembering the first coming of Jesus, we also look forward to His promised second coming.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." - Revelation 21:1-4

