

December 17, 2023  
3rd Sunday of Advent

A stylized illustration of a nativity scene. In the foreground, the silhouettes of two figures, likely Mary and Joseph, are shown in profile against a blue and purple night sky. One figure holds a staff. In the background, a bright yellow star with multiple points shines in the sky, and a white silhouette of a town or village is visible on a hillside. The overall color palette is dominated by shades of blue, purple, and white.

**THEY MADE**  
*widely*  
**KNOWN**



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✠ Opening Prayer ✠

Hymn: TLH #72

"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"

**P** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen!

**P** Pastor

**C** Congregation

**Confession of Our Sins**

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*We come before God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.*

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**P** God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

**C** If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**P** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**C** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**P** Let us pray.

**C** Almighty God, merciful Father, we are sinful by nature, and have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. But we are sorry for our transgressions and pray You, of Your bountiful mercy, to be gracious and merciful unto us. Forgive us for Jesus' sake, renew us by Your Spirit, and lead us in the way everlasting. Amen.

**Absolution from Our God**

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*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)*

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**P** Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. We are forgiven. With boldness and confidence we may approach the throne to find grace to help in time of need. In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

**Response: TLH #644**

"Praise God, from Whom..."

**C**       ♩ **Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;**  
              **Praise Him, all creatures here below;**  
              **Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host:**  
              **Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

## The Introit

Ps. 85:1-2, 6, 8; Phil. 4:4-5

*A collection of passages that set the tone for the service.*

- P** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
- C** **Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.**
- P** Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- C** **You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.**
- P** Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?
- C** **Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.**
- P** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
- C** **As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

## The Gloria Patri

TLH 98:3, 5

*Latin for "Glory be to the Father."*

**C** ♪ **O ye heights of heaven, adore Him;  
Angel hosts, His praises sing;  
Powers, dominions, bow before Him  
And extol our God and King. Let no tongue on earth be  
silent, Every voice in concert ring Evermore and evermore.**

**Christ, to Thee, with God the Father,  
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee  
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving  
And unending praises be, Honor, glory, and dominion,  
And eternal victory Evermore and evermore.**

## Collect Prayer of the Day

*A prayer to God that collects together the thoughts and theme of the day.*

- P** Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

## **Zechariah 3:1-10**

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. <sup>4</sup> And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." <sup>5</sup> And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by. <sup>6</sup> And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, <sup>7</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. <sup>8</sup> Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. <sup>9</sup> For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. <sup>10</sup> In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."

## **1 Corinthians 4:1-5**

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time,

before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

## Confession of Faith

*The Apostles' Creed*

### I BELIEVE...

**in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;**

**And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Hymn: TLH #645**

*"Behold, a Branch is Growing"*

## Matthew 11:2-10

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." <sup>7</sup> As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup> What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those



who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup> What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

### **“What Are You Looking For?”**

- I. Are you looking for answers?
- II. Are you looking for action?
- III. Are you looking for purpose?



### **Look to Jesus!**



#### **The Offertory**

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*In this prayer we offer our hearts, asking God for the best gift, the Holy Spirit.*

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- C** ♪ **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. Uphold with Your Spirit free.**

✠ **The Offering of Thankful Hearts** ✠

**Hymn: TLH #272:1-3, 5**      *“When All the World was Cursed”*

✠ **The General Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer** ✠

✠ **Order of Holy Communion** ✠

**The Preface** *To the tune of “Angels We Have Heard on High”*

- P** ♪ *May the good Lord be with you.  
Lift your hearts to God in praise.*
- C** ♪ **May the Lord be with you too.  
To the Lord our hearts we raise.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

*In the Word of God made flesh—  
Great and wondrous mystery—  
Now we see with vision fresh  
God's abundant majesty.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

*Therefore with the church on earth  
And the hosts of heav'n above  
Let us praise His name, whose birth  
Brings to us eternal love.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

✠ **The Words of Institution** ✠

**Words of Institution**      *To the tune of "From Heaven Above"*

**C**    ♪ *The night Lord Jesus was betrayed  
He took the bread, and when He'd prayed,  
He broke and gave them of the bread  
And unto His disciples said:*

**P** "Take, eat. This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

**C**    ♪ *Then, when the sacred meal was o'er,  
Our blessed Savior spoke once more:  
He offered thanks, and lifted up,  
To give to all, the blessed cup:*

**P** "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

**Agnus Dei**      *To the tune of "From Heaven Above"*

**C**    ♪ *O Lamb of God, You take away  
The sin of all; now hear us pray,  
And grant us from our sin release:  
Have mercy on us! Grant us peace!*

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## **Communion Today is for Members Only Please**

We don't judge anyone's faith, but we do stand up for our own. The Bible teaches what we call "Close Communion," that is, God wants you to commune only with those people with whom you are agreed in ALL the Bible's teachings. This belief is based upon 1 Corinthians 1:10 & 11:26-30, among other Bible passages. Therefore, if you are a guest with us today, and BEFORE you come up to commune with us, please speak with our Pastor to find out about communing with us in the future!

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### **✠ The Distribution of the Lord's Supper ✠**

#### **Thanksgiving**

*To the tune of "God Rest You Merry..."*

**🎵 Oh, thank the Lord and sing His praise,**

**What He has done proclaim!**

**Let all who seek the Lord rejoice**

**And proudly bear His name**

**Who leads His thankful people forth**

**His promises to claim.**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy!**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!**

**Lord, let Your servant go in peace,**

**Your word has been fulfilled.**

**My eyes have seen the saving work**

**Which for the world You willed:**

**The glory of Your chosen race**

**as Light for all revealed.**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!**

**Oh, praise to God the Father, and praise to God the Son.**

**and praise to God the Spirit,**

**Most blessed Three in One,**

**as 'twas, is now, and e'er shall be**

**While endless ages run!**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy!**

**Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!**



## The Benediction

To the tune of "Angels We Have Heard"

**P** ♪ May the good Lord bless and keep,  
Cause His face on you to shine,  
Look on you with favor deep,  
Granting you His peace divine.

**G** ♪ **Gloria in excelsis Deo!**  
**Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

## Hymn: TLH #52

"Almighty Father, Bless the Word"

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**2024 CLC Mission Helper Trip** – Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 CLC Mission Helper Trip to Africa. Mission Helpers will be privileged to help spread the Gospel to children in either Kenya/Uganda, Tanzania, or Zambia for about three weeks. The application deadline is January 16th. Find more information and apply online at [www.mht.lutheranmissions.org](http://www.mht.lutheranmissions.org).

**Immanuel Lutheran College** presented its Christmas Choral Service, "The King in the Cradle," this past Friday, December 15, 2023. The service was both live-streamed and recorded. The stream will be accessible on Youtube, which you can access at [youtube.com/ilcvideos](https://youtube.com/ilcvideos) and [ilc.edu/tv](http://ilc.edu/tv). Please consider taking the time to be edified by this choral presentation!

**Praise the Lord** for the safe return of Missionary Ohlmann from his travels! If you haven't read them yet, you can read all about his travels at [missionaryohlmann.blogspot.com](http://missionaryohlmann.blogspot.com).

**Kansas City Worship** will be held today at 5:30 pm in Independence, MO. Our service will be located at:

Staybridge Suites  
19400 East 39th Place,  
Independence, MO 64057

**Christmas Eve** will be celebrated earlier in the day than usual. Our Christmas Eve service this year will be held at **4:00 pm.** We will also be having our usual Sunday morning service that day.

**CLC Call News** – Pastor Michael Wilke of Gethsemane Lutheran of Saginaw, MI, **has returned** the calls from Calvary Lutheran of Marquette, MI and St. Peter's Lutheran of Iron River, MI. <> Pastor David Pfeiffer of Holy Trinity Lutheran in West Columbia, SC **has returned** the call from Immanuel Lutheran in Mankato, MN. <> Jennifer Wiese, teacher at Luther Memorial School in Fond du Lac, WI **is resigning** at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.



### **The Advent Wreath**

The advent wreath is rich in symbolism, and as such it aids our worship as it reinforces our hope in the ultimate coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath is covered with evergreen. Just as the species of tree is always green, so our hope for eternity is always alive because it rests upon the living Christ. The wreath is also in the form of a circle, which has no beginning and no end. What better way to picture that our life with God is everlasting.

The lighted candles are symbolic of the light of Christ and His Gospel, which alone can lift us out of our sin and spiritual darkness. The 4 candles surrounding the center candle remind us of the 4000 years of waiting for Christ by the Old Testament world. Each of the candles has been assigned a special name with special significance.

**The Prophecy Candle** is the 1<sup>st</sup> candle lit the first week in Advent. It is symbolic of the long years of waiting during which the prophets, inspired of God, kept alive the hope that the son of God was coming to redeem His people from their sins.

**The Bethlehem Candle** is the 2<sup>nd</sup> candle lit. It symbolizes the preparations being made for the coming of the Christ-child. The prophecy in Micah 5:2 that foretold Jesus' birthplace at Bethlehem may seem to be a minor revelation, but it shows how God prepared even the least detail for the coming of Christ.

**The Shepherds' Candle** is the 3<sup>rd</sup> candle lit and reminds us of our responsibility to share the Savior and His promises. The shepherds left their task and went with haste to see the Christ-child, then they returned to tell others about the good news of the Savior.

**The Angel's Candle** is lit the 4<sup>th</sup> week of Advent. It reminds us of the activity of the angels before and after Jesus' birth, bearing messages, ministering, protecting, praising; they will be with Jesus at His final coming on Judgment Day, to gather the nations.

**The Christ Candle** is the center candle lit at the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Its white color symbolizes the perfect and holy life our Savior led on our behalf. With His death on the cross, the LORD now counts that white robe of Christ's righteousness to each one of us. God's great gift – His Son Jesus!

## Daily Bible Readings for Home Devotions

December 18 – 23, 2023

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*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

-Psalm 119:105

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**Mon Isaiah 40:1-2** The Lord has double comfort, double forgiveness, for His people suffering exile in a foreign land. This shows both their great need and His great compassion.

**Tues Isaiah 40:3-5** The Lord is going to come to take His exiled people back home. A voice in the wilderness urges all to get rid of anything that might hinder His coming and make a road for Him in the desert.

**Wed Isaiah 40:6-8** The comfort which the Lord brings is not based on earthly situations, which change and fade like grass and flowers. No, His comfort is based on the eternal truths of God's Word.

**Thurs Isaiah 40:9-10** Here is comfort that is worth proclaiming: “Here is your God!” He is stronger than any trouble, even death and hell. That He is “your” God means salvation for you!

**Fri Romans 2:12-16** When Jesus comes again to judge, the secrets of people's hearts will be revealed. Then the righteousness which Christ has brought to us will be revealed as our greatest treasure.

**Sat Matthew 3:1-12** John calls on all to repent and receive God's forgiveness in Christ. Matthew sees this as the greatest fulfillment of God's promised comfort in Isaiah 40, the paving of the way of the Lord in the wilderness.