

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
ADVENT 1 - RETURN TO THE PROMISE
Reverend John R. Hanson
Sunday, November 28, 2021, 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Janet Hanson

INTRODUCTION - The Advent readings speak of God's constantly coming reign and the need for us to be watchful to recognize it and receive it. The challenge, each year is to ensure that this season doesn't fall prey to "same-old-same-old" thinking, preaching, and worship. In tough times like these, we need the reminder that God is at work even in the most tragic places in our world, and our worship is an awesome opportunity to bring our hope to life again. May our Advent worship open our hearts and eyes to the signs of God's coming and fill our hearts with renewed hope in God's Reign.

THEME AND VERSE (lighting the first candle of Advent)

O Morning Star, splendor of light and bright Sun of righteousness, come and enlighten all who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death. O King of the nations, you alone can fulfill our desires and make opposing nations one, come and save the people you fashioned from clay. O Emmanuel, hope of the nations and our Savior, come and save us! Lord Jesus, come soon!

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. ²My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. ³Let none who look to you be put to shame. (Psalm 25:1-3a)

HYMN

"Come, Now is the Time to Worship"

***Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God. Come!***

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow;
Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly praise you now.

CCLI Song # 2430948 CCLI License # 1713417

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION God is good. **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Luke 21:25-36

Jesus teaches the disciples to be watchful for the signs of the coming destruction using the apocalyptic (end time) language of signs in the sky, dismay among the nations, and unusual behavior in nature. After these signs, people will see the Son of Man coming in splendor. So, be watchful, ready to read the signs and await God's promised redemption.

[Jesus said:] ²⁵"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will

faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly

I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather together to worship

in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us prepare for the Lord's coming by repenting of our sins.

Lord God, how long do we wait? You must hurry, O Lord, before we are distracted, before our attention is dissipated, before we are consumed with the worries of life. We need you to execute justice, and to bring righteousness to the land, because we are unwilling to act like your children. We are slow to strengthen our hearts, reluctant to let your love in us increase though it abounds for all. We hide our unready, unworthy sinfulness. Forgive us, Lord! Save us!

Lift up your heads, faithful people, for our redemption is drawing near. God fulfills the promises made through the prophets. God sends the Son for our salvation, and we are made right with God. For Christ's sake our sins are forgiven. Christ strengthen our hearts in holiness that we may be blameless before our God and Heavenly Father.

Together we declare, "The Lord is our righteousness!" Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! Amen.

HYMN

"Unto Thee, O Lord"

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;

O my God, I trust in thee,

Let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed;

Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed;

O my God, I trust in thee,

Let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Show me thy ways, thy ways, O Lord;
Teach me thy paths, thy paths, O Lord;
O my God, I trust in thee,
Let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

CCLI Song # 36011 CCLI License # 1713417

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

“Why Is It So Hard to Wait?”

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God of Peace, we seek your solitude in these darkening days. We seek a calm within us, an absence of conflict between people and nations. But more deeply, we seek your deep and abiding peace, your Shalom, that will come only through the work of your kingdom. Amen.

READING: Jeremiah 33:14-16

God promises to raise up a descendant of David to bring goodness, rightness, justice, and security to the land. "Righteousness" has to do with being faithful in relationship. God does act, punishing Israel for its sin and in having mercy, Jerusalem will have a new name— "The Lord is our righteousness" — proclaiming that the Lord is working salvation even now .

¹⁴The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and

he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

READING: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 *Timothy gave a report from the congregation at Thessalonica. Paul, overjoyed with them for their goodness, gives thanks, expresses his joy, and grants a blessing for the people of this growing church.*

⁹How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹²And

may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

HYMN

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

Green # 23

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
Oh, kindle, Lord most holy, your lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me.
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
Oh, love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
In love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race.

Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn your joys departed and tremble at your doom.
Despair not; he is near you, there standing at the door,
Who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more.

CCLI Song # 3717309 CCLI License # 1713417

SERMON - *Remember - remember - remember! Which came first? What's important? Why all the fuss? When we see our cares and concerns from our limited place in the realm of time and eternity, our priorities can easily overwhelm us! Fear not! Draw near!*

HYMN

"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"

Green # 29

"Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" So says our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow's load.
To God's people now proclaim of the peace that waits for them!
Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever!

Hark, the voice of one is crying in the desert far and near,
Calling us to new repentance since the kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey, now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet him and the hills bow down to greet him.

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign!
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token that the word is never broken.

CCLI Song # 4765271 CCLI License # 1713417

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

Lord, you gave your beloved son to ransom all people. You see our human fears and love us anyway. Guide us through this season. We come to your table, awaiting your presence amid all the shouting and blaming, and yet you make yourself known - in this meal, in the sacrifice of your son, in your Holy Spirit's constant presence. Rekindle your light in us, showing the power of your love to those who dwell in darkness. Amen.

BENEDICTION & SENDING

We don't have to wait. The God who was, who is, and who is to come is constant! If you doubt, look to the trees of the field, there is life in them. May God's blessings shine through us, our homes, our neighborhoods, our world. God remains with us to the end of the age.

We live as servants of God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we continue to experience the blessings of God as we leave this place. And may the light of his Son be our light in these darkest of days. And may the blessing of the Holy Spirit give us sight to see beyond our daily tasks to your everlasting hope. Amen?

Amen! We go in Christ's name, to love and serve the Lord!

Scripture portions are reprinted from Words for Worship, copyright 2018 Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission. Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Worship, as an action, continues to change.

Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.

Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

The coming of God's reign is a central focus of this week's readings. Through Jeremiah God promises a leader like David for God's people. In his prayer for the Thessalonian church, Paul asks them to place themselves under God's reign, and to grow in love, able to show how they have lived as Jesus did when he returns. Finally, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus calls for us to be watchful and aware of what is happening around us, and open to the signs of the coming of God's reign in the midst of great turmoil.

While it may be tempting to push all of these promises into some future event, the Lessons call us to be open to God's coming at all times – including in our lives. And, while it may be tempting to view God's promise as an escape from the world's turmoil, the readings this week call for us to recognize God's presence – God's coming – in the midst of the world's suffering and struggle.

The call, then, is to learn to be those who live with a constant sense of God's presence regardless of our circumstances, and who cooperate with God's work of goodness, and love.

Advent reminds us that in the midst of our daily struggles and victories, there is another reality at work, one that, if we remain aware and connected to it, will fill every detail of our lives with greater meaning & purpose. As we enter this season, we are called to watch, and to look for the signs of God's reign around us, and then to co-operate with those signs, calling them into the light, and offering our love and strength to make God's reign even more visible in our families, churches, and communities.

This means living as those who submit to Christ as the embodiment of God's Reign as promised to David. It means constantly seeking for God's grace, strength, guidance, and love to empower us to stay faithful. It means supporting and strengthening one another in the community of faith. And it means keeping our hearts faithful and pure as we watch for the constant signs of God's coming within our daily routines. A key feature of this Advent hope is to release the dream that we will be evacuated from the earth's suffering but recognize that God's desire is to work in and through us in the midst of turmoil and struggle. As we respond to this call, we become a sign of God's Advent to others, leading them into the hope we have in Christ.

John van de Laar at sacredise.com