

Every Heart Prepare



MIDWEEK OF ADVENT 3

Vespers

Crèche

“Prepare!” is often the watchword of the season as the world gets ready for another celebration of Christmas. An integral part of any preparation is decoration. We see decorations everywhere this time of year. The world may not comprehend the real meaning of Christmas, but even secular preparations use many of the same decorations beloved by Christians—an appropriation we shouldn’t mind at all, because these decorations point us to Christ. This year, as we look forward again to the coming of the Messiah, we take a fresh look at how the adornments of the season draw our eyes to Jesus, that we may more richly behold the love, peace, joy, and hope He comes to bring as this beauty is set before us.

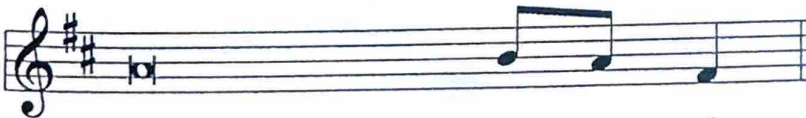
Tonight, we focus on the crèche—those miniature models of the nativity scene that abound each December. Unlike lights and evergreens, the symbols that aided our meditation these last two weeks, the crèche is distinctly Christian. In it, we behold Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, the angels, the stable animals, and, at the center, baby Jesus. Some places introduce the characters in chronological order; others put them all out at once. Either way, the crèche represents a crucial, historical event: God taking on human form and human nature so that He could take our place and redeem us from all sin. We behold it with fresh eyes this evening.

Opening Sentences

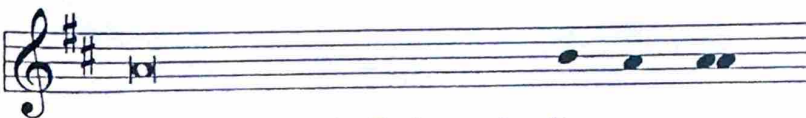
Psalm 51:15; 70:1



L O Lord, o - pen my lips,



C and my mouth will de - clare Your praise.



L Make haste, O God, to de - liv - er me;



C make haste to help me, O Lord.



C Glo-ry be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and will be for-ev-er. A - men.



Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Psalmody

Psalm

Psalm 89:1-8; antiphon: v. 8



O LORD God of hosts,

who is mighty as You are, | O LORD,*

with Your faithfulness all a- | round You?

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, for- | ever;*

with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all gener- |
ations.

For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up for- | ever;*

in the heavens You will establish Your | faithfulness."

You have said, "I have made a covenant with My | chosen one;*

I have sworn to David My | servant:

"I will establish your offspring for- | ever;*

and build your throne for all gener- | ations."

Let the heavens praise Your wonders, | O LORD,*

Your faithfulness in the assembly of the | holy ones!

For who in the skies can be compared | to the LORD?*

Who among the heavenly beings is | like the LORD,

a God greatly to be feared in the council of the | holy ones,*

and awesome above all who are a- | round Him?

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*

and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.
O LORD God of hosts,
who is mighty as You are, | O LORD,*
with Your faithfulness all a- | round You?

354 Arise, O Christian People

1 Arise, O Christian people!
Prepare yourselves today;
Prepare to greet the Savior,
Who takes your sins away.
To us by grace alone
The truth and light were given;
The promised Lord from heaven
To all the world is shown.

4 Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus;
Turn not from me aside,
And help me to receive You
This blessed Adventtide.
From stall and manger low
Come now to dwell within me;
I'll sing Your praises gladly
And forth Your glory show.

Text: Valentin Thilo, 1607-62; tr. Arthur T. Russell, 1806-74, alt.
Text: Public domain

Readings

First Reading

1 John 1:1-4

P A reading from First John, the first chapter.

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship

with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

Matthew 1:18–25

P A reading from St. Matthew, the first chapter.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

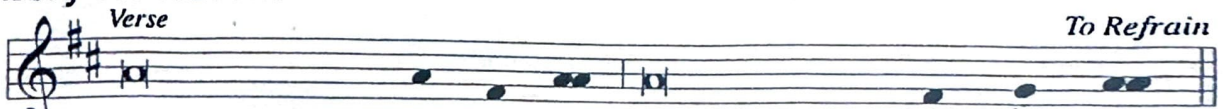
²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Responsory for Advent



- L** 1 Behold, the days
are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise
up for David a right-teous Branch.
- 2 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will
dwell se - cure - ly.
- 3 Glory be to the
Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it.



C This is the name

by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

338 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

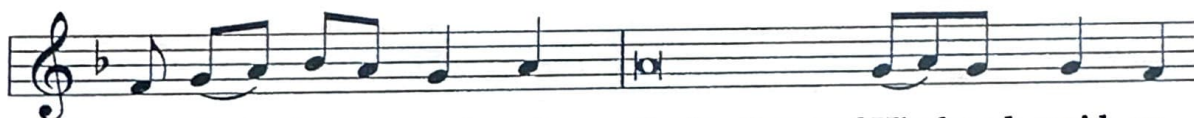
Sermon

Canticle

Magnificat



C My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior;



I for He has regarded the lowliness of His hand-maiden.



II For behold, from this day all generations will call me blessed.



I For the Mighty One has done great things to me, and holy is His name



II and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.



I He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the



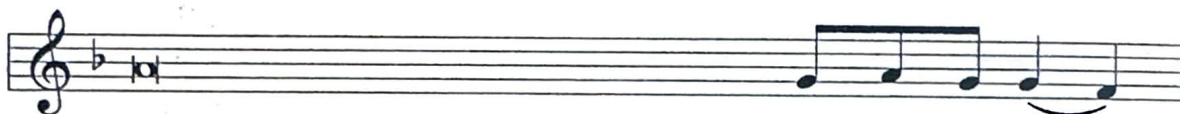
imagination of their hearts. **II** He has cast down the



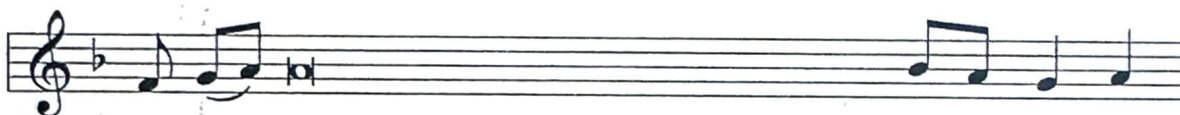
might-y from their thrones and has ex - alt - ed the low - ly.



I He has filled the hun - gry with good things,



and the rich He has sent emp - ty a - way.



II He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mer - cy



as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for-ev-er.



C Glo-ry be to the Fa-ther and to the Son and to the Ho - ly Spir-it;



as it was in the be-gin - ning, is now, and will be for-ev - er. A-men.

Offering

Prayer

Kyrie



C Lord, have mer-cy; Christ, have mer-cy; Lord, have mer-cy.

Lord's Prayer

C Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Collects



L O Lord, hear my prayer.



C And let my cry come to You.

- P** For eyes to behold the Father's hand in all creation, let us pray to the Lord:
- C** Lord, have mercy.
- P** For awareness of beauty and the living traditions of the church that bring Christ to our eyes through arts and crafts, let us pray to the Lord:
- C** Lord, have mercy.
- P** That we may see the signs of Christ's return even as we celebrate His birth, and encourage one another all the more as we see the Day drawing near, let us pray to the Lord:
- C** Lord, have mercy.

P That we may be living testimonies of new life in Christ through our loving service to our neighbor—both in word and in deed—let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may be thankful for the bountiful harvest we enjoy amid the many festivities of this season, and be generous to the poor, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may love one another as God so loved us, forgive one another, and work together in the unity we have in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may not be lured into temptation or despair or be distracted by the false Christmases around us, but always hold the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

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.

P Almighty, ever-living, and everlasting God, our help in ages past and hope for years to come, You sent Your Son into our flesh to live among us in our world and to walk with us in our times and places so that we would be saved from all sins in every time and place. As we survey anew Jesus' journey from the manger to the cross, grant that we may draw great comfort and confidence in the reality of Your birth, that faith may again be kindled in our hearts; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C Amen.

P O Most High, our rock and our salvation, You have never abandoned us but have always come to the aid of Your people. Grant that the eyes of our hearts would see You just as Your people of old saw Your Son when He came to this world, walked and taught among us, and gave His life for us. Give us such faith that we may trust all that our fathers and mothers of old saw, touched, and heard—just as it has been revealed to us through Your Word. For Your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and comes to us even now by

Your Spirit's power; through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C Amen.

Additional Collects of Intercession and Thanksgiving

P O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus



L Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.

Benediction



P The grace of our Lord ✠ Je - sus Christ and the love of God



and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with you all.



C A - men.

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!

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

Text: Latin, c. 12th cent.; Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710, Köln; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-66, alt.
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Wednesday, December 17, 2025
Immanuel Lutheran Church & School
Okawville, Illinois 62271
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Pastor
Organist
Acolyte

Eric Wood
Sharon Krueger
Sadie Bergmann

Choir Rehearsal immediately after the service tonight.

Christmas Eve Service: Children started practicing for the Christmas Eve Service on November 30th during Sunday School time. Practice will continue on Sundays during December.

The VFW and ILS are interested in hosting a blood drive at ILS and needs to conduct a interest survey, if you are interested in donating blood please add your name, email and phone # to the list on the small table in the Narthex.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (Luke 2:1-20)