

O LORD, HOW SHALL I MEET YOU?



A Daily Adventide Devotional

Compiled, produced, and published by *Christ Academy*
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

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Our devotion authors who have served Christ Academy over the years and continue to serve the Church today.

The Christ Academy Staff, Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt, Sem. Ethan Stoppenhagen and Sem. David Woelmer, for organizing and executing this project.



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Introduction

Since the beginning of Christ Academy as a high school academy in 1999, Christ Academy has continued to provide confessional catechesis, liturgical worship, and fun together at Concordia Theological Seminary. As more young men and women are reached each year, Christ Academy remains dedicated to providing opportunities for vocational discernment alongside fostering long-lasting friendships and memories. It is estimated that over fifty graduates of Christ Academy are serving in the Office of the Holy Ministry, while many more are attending one of the Concordia Universities or have become enrolled in seminary.

As attested by the multiple participants in this devotional, Christ Academy has had an immense impact in the formation of men and women for service in the world and especially in the church. We give thanks to God for the gifts He has given to His Church, especially the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christ Academy joyfully presents the third annual *Christ Academy Adventide Devotional*. Celebrating the advent of Christ our King this season, we pray that in these devotions you will see the Christ who comes and meets you in Word and Sacrament. Standing in the certainty of the forgiveness of our sins, we pray together “O Lord, How Shall We Meet You?”

Sem. Ethan Stoppenhagen and Sem. David Woelmer
Advent 2019

How to Use This devotional

This devotional is structured around the Propers of the Day for the Season of Advent. It follows Series A of the Three Year Lectionary as found in the *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*. The Propers are the portions of the Divine Service that change weekly. We formatted this devotion according to the Old Testament Lesson, Collect of the Day, Epistle Lesson, Hymn “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (*LSB* 334), Gospel Lesson, Hymn of the Day, and the Psalm. Each day will follow a different proper, as follows:

Sunday: Old Testament Lesson

Monday: Collect of the Day

Tuesday: Epistle Lesson

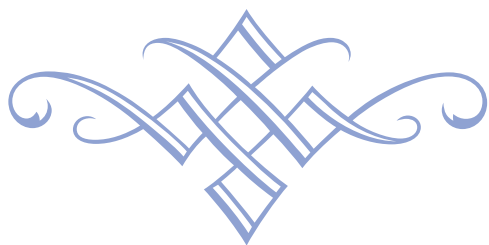
Wednesday: Stanza(s) of “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (*LSB* 334)

Thursday: Gospel Lesson

Friday: Hymn of the Day

Saturday: Psalm

These devotions will aid your continued meditation throughout the week as they reflect upon what was heard each previous Sunday in Advent. The theme comes from the hymn, “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (*LSB* 334).



FIRST
SUNDAY
IN
ADVENT



Sunday, December 1

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

As we embark on a new Church Year, this and every Advent is a great time to be reminded that our Lord is the Lord of every good gift. Often these gifts come in ways that we were not expecting. Usually, they come as things we do not deserve. Regardless, the Lord continues to gift you and me as we are carried along by His love and joy and grace. It is only through Him that "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

This and every Advent, our Lord's good gift to us is Himself. He gifts us with His presence, and in His presence we find the fullness of our joy. Our forefathers in the faith looked forward to the coming presence of the Lord with great joy. From Adam to Noah to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Moses and, in our text today, Isaiah—all of these dear brothers, as well as the countless host of others—look forward to the day in which the Lord would bring his presence into full fruition in the flesh.

This day will come to pass when our Lord was born in the flesh, "born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4–5). It is when the Son of God is born that the descendants of Jacob and we can truly walk in the light of the Lord, a place where He lights our paths with His all illuminating presence. Come soon, Lord Jesus

Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt
Director of Admission
Director of Christ Academy, 2016–present
Admission Counselor

Monday, December 2

Collect

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The power and anger of the Lord burns against those who do evil and those who threaten God's beloved children. "Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him" (Nahum 1:6).

For those who commit evil against the Lord, His power is truly something to be feared. Yet in this prayer, we ask that God would stir up His power against the perilous threats of our own sin and evil. This might cause us to tentatively and fearfully ask, "O Lord, how shall I meet you when you stir up your mighty power?" Will He stir up His power against our own sin and evil by breaking us to pieces as we truly deserve?

Despite what we deserve, Christ, in His infinite love, met us on earth not to destroy us, but to humbly meet us as a small child, meekly riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and allowing Himself to be humiliated on the cross to deliver us from the threatening perils of our sin. The power of God was made perfect in the weakness of Christ, who allowed Himself to be lifted up on the cross for our transgressions, receiving the wrath of God in our place. God stirred up His power and fully manifested it in the message of the cross which is "folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). We thank God that when He stirred up His mighty power and came to earth to deliver us from sin, He came "not in terrors, as the King of kings, but kind and good," humbly healing us with the power of His blood (*LSB* 878 v.3).

Chris Warneke

Christ Academy College, 2017 and 2018
Christ Academy High School Proctor, 2018

Tuesday, December 3

Romans 13:11-14

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

In Romans 13:12, St. Paul wrote, “The night is far gone; the day is at hand.” What he said then holds even truer now: we are closer to the Lord’s return than ever before. We draw closer to the day when the Son of Man will appear for all to see. For now, the Lord waits. He waits according to His wisdom and will.

We do well to remember: mortals are always in a hurry. We want it now. Adam and Eve heard the promise of the Savior and expected Him to come at the birth of Cain. Yet the Lord waited millennia before He was born in Bethlehem.

The Lord teaches us to wait. For there is much to be done today. Your teachers need you to complete those last assignments before break. Your parents need you to pick up your sister. As you wait for the Lord, don’t look past what must be completed today.

Your Lord may come tonight or in 2,000 years. But you have nothing to fear. You know that Jesus has already been judged for your sin. You know that He has already suffered the sentence of death and hell for you on the cross. Therefore, you have nothing to fear. For Jesus’ sake, God will judge you innocent. He will welcome you into heaven and eternal life in eternal light. So you wait for His coming. You wait knowing that the night is far gone and the day is at hand

Rev. Timothy D. Storck
Trinity Lutheran Church
Fort Morgan, Colorado

Christ Academy High School, 1999
Christ Academy Germany, 2002
Christ Academy Proctor, 2002–2003
Christ Academy Assistant Student Director, 2003
Christ Academy Student Director, 2004–2005

Wednesday, December 4

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334) stanzas 1-2

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

*Your Zion strews before You Green boughs and fairest palms;
And I too will adore You With joyous songs and psalms.
My heart shall bloom forever For You with praises new
And from Your name shall never Withhold the honor due.*

The season of Advent declares that Jesus will come soon. The Jesus who comes in glory is indeed a fearful judge, but Christians rejoice to see Him coming, their Savior and Lord. Thus Christians prepare for His coming, like the wise virgins of the parable in Matthew 25. Paul Gerhardt testifies to this reality in the first verse of his Advent hymn, asking how he should meet the Lord when He comes, this long-awaited Lord who is a delight to His people. This Lord lights the lamp of faith within the hearts of believers to humbly do what the Lord desires for His people, found in the good and holy Law.

The imagery of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem appears in the second verse, as Gerhardt calls us to praise the coming Savior with “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16). It is the name of Jesus that is to be honored and adored, just as the people of Jerusalem honored and adored Jesus with their palm branches. Jesus' name, “the Lord saves,” announces the reason for His incarnation. Jesus came to this earth to save us, to bring us back to the Lord most holy. He is worthy of all honor because He is the lamb who has been slain, buying us by His blood. His resurrection proclaims His victory over death itself. Praise, honor, and adoration be to this Savior, who comes to bring us to the full joys of an eternal life with Him!

Isaiah Armbrecht
Seminary I

Christ Academy High School, 2013, 2014 and 2015
Christ Academy College, 2017 and 2018

Thursday, December 5

Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

*“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

“O Lord,” we cry in LSB 334, stanza 1, “how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?” Palms are strewn before Him, garments placed into the dusty earth, and offerings of Hosannas rise like sweet incense into the air. “Behold, your king is coming to you,” but he desires no palms, neither does he demand garments to pad his way or Hosannas to tickle his ears (Matt. 21:5). This king is unlike any other. He comes not in pomp, but in humility. He comes as the hope of the world, and as the believing heart’s delight. He comes as the beast of burden who rides upon a beast of burden. He comes as the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world.

How shall we meet the Lamb, the King, the Lord as He comes? Meet him with open heart, that His lamp may be placed within your breast. Meet Him with open arms to receive that which He has strewn before you along the way—body and blood, salvific waters of the Jordan, and holy words of absolution far surpassing any mortal Hosanna. Meet Him with the faithfulness of His guardian. Meet Him with the passive faith of His mother: “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Meet him with Amens, for the victory to which this King goes is one in which you partake. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matt. 21:9). And blessed are those who follow after Him.

Rev. Eamonn M. Ferguson

Christ Academy High School, 2007

Christ Academy Assistant Student Director, 2013 and 2014

Christ Academy Student Director, 2014 and 2015

Friday, December 6

“Savior Of The Nations, Come” (LSB 332)

*Savior of the nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here Your home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.
Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh — Woman's offspring pure and fresh.
Here a maid was found with child, Yet remained a virgin mild.
In her womb this truth was shown: God was there upon His throne.
Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and kingly hall;
God of God, yet fully man, His heroic course began.
God the Father was His source, Back to God He ran His course.
Into hell His road went down, Back then to His throne and crown.
For You are the Father's Son Who in flesh the vict'ry won.
By Your mighty pow'r make whole All our ills of flesh and soul.
From the manger newborn light Shines in glory through the night.
Darkness there no more resides; In this light faith now abides.
Glory to the Father sing, Glory to the Son, our king,
Glory to the Spirit be Now and through eternity.*

“Marvel now, O heav'n and earth” (LSB 332 st.1). We pause our bustling lives to marvel at the miracle of the incarnation in a hymn as pure and fresh today as it was 17 centuries ago. Ambrose's majestic verse renders Christ as an epic hero. Although existing before all eternity, this hero began a course for us men and for our salvation nine months before first breathing earthly air. He reigns from the most peculiar throne: a virgin's womb. The Father's Son folds Himself up small to meet us where we are weakest: in utero. He who hovered over the face of the waters now dwells with us in embryonic fluid.

This is no cosmic accident. In birth, the most commonplace of miracles, the Father's Son makes the birth canal the pure and kingly hall by which He will save the nations. Christ, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages, gave Himself a birthday in order to bring us back to His kingdom of light. “Darkness there no more resides” (stanza 7).

This Advent, we ask “O Lord, how shall we meet You?” We cannot meet Him of our own reason or strength, because our sin prevents us from coming to Him. Without any merit or worthiness in us, the Savior of the nations meets us first within the womb and comes to us as a baby wrapped in human flesh and blood as God of God, yet fully man. In the Word made flesh, we have no shortage of reasons to marvel now and through eternity.

Cambria Stame

Phoebe Academy High School, 2015
Phoebe School Assistant Proctor, 2018
Phoebe School Head Proctor, 2019

Saturday, December 7

Psalm 122

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!*

*Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together,
to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.*

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you!
Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!"
For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!"
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously wrote, "A psalm that we cannot utter as a prayer, that makes us falter and horrifies us, is a hint to us that here Someone else is praying, not we."¹ As psalm that calls for vengeance, that demands action of God or that protests God's judgment against our impeccable character, makes us realize we are not the ones praying the psalms, but Jesus Christ. Only in Him can we rightly understand their meaning.

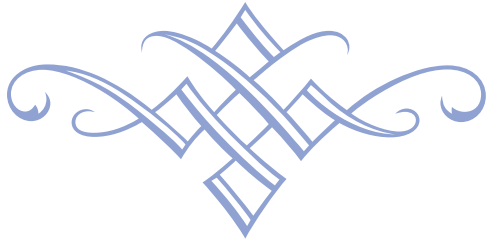
The words of Psalm 122:1 decorate the doors of many sanctuaries. Indeed, how joyful it is when we gather with fellow Christians to receive God's gifts! But we cannot approach the "house of the Lord" on our own: we are sinners and it is holy. "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?" from LSB 334, then, is the proper question to ask, especially in this season as we prepare for Christmas.

Palm Sunday faintly echoes throughout this hymn. We stand with the crowds pondering how to greet Christ. With joyful singing, of course, but also with repentance. He alone is worthy to go up to the house of the Lord to establish peace between God and man. Through His sacrifice we may follow Him to receive His gifts and sing His praise every Sunday. For this reason, we may say with Christ in the words of the psalm, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go up to the house of the Lord!'"

Christian Schultz
Seminary IV

Christ Academy High School, 2012
Christ Academy College, 2013 and 2015

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1954), 45.



SECOND
SUNDAY
IN
ADVENT



Sunday, December 8

Isaiah 11:1-10

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

*And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.*

*The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.*

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

*In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—
of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*

How Shall God meet us?

Isaiah 11:1 teaches us of the shoot who will come from the stump of Jesse. In verse 2 we hear that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him. This Spirit is, of course, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. For this reason the Spirit is said to belong to the Lord, and also rests upon the shoot of Jesse. The ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity as well as the mystery of the incarnation is taught in the first two verses of this text.

The delight of this shoot will be the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what His eyes see or decide disputes by what His ears hear. Meaning, He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10). Surely this shoot is not coming into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:17). We who are wolves, leopards, lions, and bears are joined by our common humanity to the Lamb of God, the young scapegoat, the fattened calf (Isaiah 11:6) who is slaughtered for the feast of the prodigal son (Luke 15:23).

This shoot of Jesse is none other than our Lord and God, the friend of sinners, Jesus Christ. His laying down His life is ours, His rising again is ours, and His righteousness is ours. He gives us all these things continually in His Word, in Holy Baptism, and in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. This is how God shall meet us this Advent and until the final advent. These means of grace stand as a signal for all the peoples (Isaiah 11:10). The war between God and man is over, and He offers us divine life forevermore.

Joseph Greenmyer

Christ Academy College, 2017 and 2018

Christ Academy: Timothy School Proctor, 2018 and 2019

Monday, December 9

Collect

“Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”

If you leave a car sitting all winter, you run the risk of it not starting up when spring comes. If you leave a bowl of soup out all day without keeping up the temperature and stirring it once in a while, you run the risk of it turning bad. Our hearts have that same problem. A heart left unstirred in the cold winter of sin runs the risk of becoming stagnant in the things of this world. Our hearts need to be constantly stirred up by the fire of God’s Word. But for what purpose? A working car is not for looking at, but for driving somewhere. A hot bowl of soup is meant to be eaten. And our hearts? Our hearts, properly stirred up by the Holy Spirit, are meant to receive Christ. The stirring up of our hearts makes ready the way for Christ, to come into them as a gift and devoid of our works. And indeed, He does come to our hearts this Advent.

Yet again, however, our stirred-up hearts don’t stop there. Our stirred-up hearts desire that which is godly. And so, having received Christ in our hearts as a gift, we seek to be not only of good heart but also of pure mind. And that pure mind, the mind which is yours in Christ Jesus, is focused. It is focused on serving the Lord who has come to you and given you a new heart, and it is focused on serving your neighbor whom the same Lord has given you to love. Thanks be to God for these renewed hearts and minds. May He continue to come and give us these gifts this Advent and always.

Sawyer Meyers
Seminary IV

Christ Academy, 2012–2013
Christ Academy High School Head Proctor 2014–2015
Christ Academy College Student 2013–2016
Christ Academy Assistant Student Director 2016–2017
Christ Academy Student Director 2017–2018

Tuesday, December 10

Romans 15:4-13

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

*“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”*

And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

And again,

*“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”*

And again Isaiah says,

*“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Faith in Christ is your peace with God. And God's peace brings men together. For example, when a Jew and a Gentile both confess Christ, they have peace with each other.

Plus, faith in Christ, apart from works of the Law, has always been the means to receive eternal salvation—whether for Jew or Gentile, Old Testament or New. Dispensationalists formally reject this combination, which helps explain their strange fascination with today's "State of Israel."

But we find in Scripture that faith in Christ crucified unlocks the truth about God (that He is trustworthy), and my neighbor (that he is loveable). Take these two things and combine them!

If you could fully depend on the mercies of your Savior, release your cares to Him, and fall upon the appeals of the Scripture, there would be no end to your endurance unto death. You would discover joy and glorify God continually. You would spontaneously seek peace with your enemies, and instead of using classmates and teachers as the brunt of your secret joking, you would extend your reverence also to them, as your siblings loved by Jesus.

What I am getting at is how you will apply your hope in God to your outlook on other people. Learn God's Word and learn about the people around you. You are put here for these things and to combine them as best you can. Be strengthened in faith toward Him and in fervent love toward one another.

Rev. Collin Duling
Pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, California

Christ Academy High School, 2003–2005
Christ Academy High School Assistant Director, 2013

Wednesday, December 11

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334) stanza 3

*I lay in fetters, groaning; You came to set me free.
I stood, my shame bemoaning; You came to honor me.
A glorious crown you give me, A treasure safe on high.
That will not fail or leave me as earthly riches fly.*

The chains of sin bind and leave us alone, isolated, and separated from God. We “lay in fetters” and “stand in shame” before God and our family in Christ (LSB 334, st. 3). Our miserable condition leaves us only able to groan and bemoan to ourselves. We turn inwards and remain enslaved, bound, and trapped. O Lord, is this how I shall meet you?

Our mortal lives are impermanent and fast fleeting. Death remains ever present. As Psalm 116:3 says, “the snares of death encompassed me.” In great distress and anguish, we are stripped of our confidence and bound to death’s demands. O Lord, is this how I shall meet you?

Yes, the Lord meets you in this way. Yes, you lay bound in fetters and stand cowardly in shame. Crying out, “O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!” the Lord indeed delivers your soul and meets you in humility and with salvation at hand. The Lord meets you to set you free and honor you. Even better, the Lord meets you to give you a crown. This crown is a treasure which will never fail or leave us; a crown of life everlasting.

Christ comes to give rest for your soul. Christ is near to meet you with the crown of life. When Christ laid in the fetters of death on the cross and stood in shame before the whole world, His crown of thorns gave you the crown of life. Christ stood faithful unto death. This crown, unlike our earthly riches, will remain a treasure kept safe and undefiled for you. O Lord, is this how I shall meet you?

David Woelmer
Seminary I

Christ Academy Student, 2013–2015
Christ Academy Proctor, 2019
Christ Academy Assistant Student Director, 2019–2020

Thursday, December 12

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight."*

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

After Herod slaughtered the male boys two years old or under, a voice in Ramah, near Bethlehem, was heard as the prophet Jeremiah foretold. Rachel refused to be comforted. Her children were no more (Matt. 2:17–18). These mourning mothers were left desolate. Furthermore, the true heir of the throne, the Son of David, fled to Egypt. Judea had become a wilderness.

Nevertheless, another voice was heard in the wilderness. It was the voice of comfort as the prophet Isaiah declared, “Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight” (Matt. 3:3). The Spirit was poured out from on high and the wilderness became fruitful (Is. 32:15). The waters broke forth in the wilderness, bringing gladness to the dry land (Is. 35:1, 6). Yahweh made a way in the wilderness (Is. 43:19).

And another voice from heaven was heard, in Matthew 3:17: “This is my beloved Son.” He is the babe of Bethlehem, the boy of joy, and the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the man of sorrow and the stone rejected by the builders. Yet, from this stone, God will raise up sons for Abraham, sons of the promise, and sons of the resurrection. Their sorrows will become His. Their sins will become His. Their death will become His. Yet His joy, His righteousness, and His life will become theirs by faith. The barren one will break forth into singing and the children of the desolate one will be multiplied (Is. 54:1). Through water, Word, and Spirit, many will be adopted as sons of God, offspring of Abraham, and heirs of eternal life.

Rev. Brian L. Kachelmeier
Pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Los Alamos, New Mexico

Student Worker in the Admissions Office, 2004–2005
Assistant Christ Academy Director, 2004
Christ Academy Director, 2005

Friday, December 13

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry.” (LSB 344)

*On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings Glad tidings of the King of kings!*

*Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin; Make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare For Christ to come and enter there.*

*We hail Thee as our Savior, Lord, Our refuge and our great reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away Like flow’rs that wither and decay.*

*Lay on the sick Thy healing hand And make the fallen strong to stand;
Show us the glory of Thy face Till beauty springs in ev’ry place.*

*All praise, eternal Son, to Thee Whose advent sets Thy people free.
Whom with the Father we adore And Holy Spirit evermore.*

Four hundred years. God had not sent a prophet in 400 years. It was silent chaos. There were no prophets speaking the Word of God, telling the people God’s will or teaching them where they should focus their attention to find salvation. No one knew what to do. In 167 B.C., when the altar was defiled, the Maccabees buried it “until the coming of a prophet” who could tell them what to do (1 Macc 4:46). In 37 B.C., a false king named Herod was placed on the Davidic throne by a pagan government. Eventually, there was even a whole contingent who denied the resurrection (Mark 12:18). No prophets were speaking. It was silent chaos.

After 400 years of silent chaos, God spoke. God spoke as a voice cried in the wilderness: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God” and “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Matt. 3:2; Is. 40:3; John 1:29). Finally, a prophet had come into the world.

Unlike the Intertestamental Church, you have not been left without prophets. Though your pastor stands in the Office of Christ, he follows the example of John the Baptist. Your pastor calls you to repentance and points you to the Lamb of God who is made present on the altar. “O Lord how shall I meet you?” you ask in the hymn? This is where you meet Him. You meet Him where the Lamb of God is made present on the altar. You meet Him as you receive in the bread that which was pierced with nails, and in the wine that which flowed from His side.

Ian Kinney
Vicar

Christ Academy High School, 2013
Christ Academy High School Proctor, 2015–2017
Christ Academy High School Assistant Student Director, 2017–2018

Saturday, December 14

Psalm 72:1-7

*Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!
May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!*

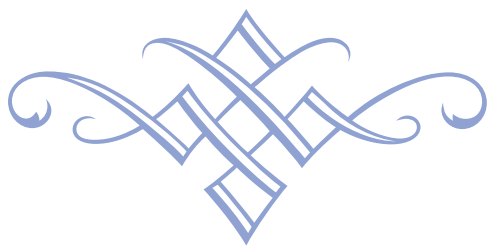
Have you ever, while watching a late night crime drama or televised court case, found yourself taking on the role of judge and jury? We immediately take sides, condemn the bad guy and flippantly chuckle about how they should “rot in jail” in between bites of popcorn. But how do we judge ourselves? We look at these others and think “At least I’m not as bad as that guy. I would never do that.” But if we could truly examine ourselves we would see our own sin and realize that we all deserve punishment as equally as that murderer on the screen.

God judges in a different way. His judgement is not passive or flippant but He steps into our sin with us and pulls us out of it. He has come to us in prison and flings wide the bars, casting off our chains and refastening them to His own hands. He has judged us righteous so that we may experience the justice that sets us free. He will not condemn us or forsake us. There is no plot twist or cliff hanger waiting for us at the end for he has already told us the whole story. Through Christ’s precious blood, we have been washed clean and can stand before God, both judge and jury, and plead “not guilty”. We have been made righteous, not through any work of our own but through God, who alone does wondrous things.

Dear Heavenly Father, You are the great judge who, in your kindness, declared us righteous and innocent. Through Your precious Son, we have been redeemed and made new so that we may live with You in Heaven. We praise You for this gracious gift and ask that You keep our hearts set on You. We ask all this through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son. Amen.

Anna Barger
Deaconess Student

Christ Academy College, 2016
Christ Academy Assistant Student Director, 2018–2020



THIRD
SUNDAY
IN
ADVENT



Sunday, December 15

Isaiah 35:1-10

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.*

*Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”*

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.*

*And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.*

*No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

This text from Isaiah is a text that describes the whole of the Christian life under the cross. We walk through a hot and dry desert, without water or sustenance, and we are fatigued and weak. However, within this desert there is an oasis with flowing streams and green grass all around. This oasis is a divine oasis; that is, an oasis that only God Himself could place in this dry desert.

What is this oasis? His divine presence with His people, calling the hungry and the thirsty to “Come! Take and eat!” and “Come! Take and drink!” And the ransomed of YHWH will obtain gladness and joy (35:10).

Advent is a time for us to prepare for YHWH to be present with His people, though not like He was in the tabernacle or temple. No, His presence with His people will be incarnational. YHWH will condescend to His people and take on human flesh. Dear Christians, salvation is here in the babe lying in the manger. In Christ’s death and resurrection, we see the glory of YHWH on full display. Even after His ascension, the glory of YHWH is still seen in Baptism and in Holy Communion. His Word and His Sacraments are what make up this divine oasis, His Church. Then, when we leave this valley of tears, we will be forever in His presence in heaven. Amen.

Josh Benish
Seminary I

Christ Academy, 2013 and 2014
Christ Academy College, 2017

Monday, December 16

Collect of the Day

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.

Prayer and meditation on God's Word is the way in which our spirituality exist. As we continue to prepare for the coming of Christ and ponder His incarnation, we pray about everything that is going on in the day-to-day of our lives. We can rest in the assurance that our heavenly Father hears His baptized children and cares for even the smallest worries and anxieties we face. He speaks to us through the Scriptures, His own Word, where He shines the light of Christ into our darkened, sinful lives.

Christ came into this world to save it from the chains of sin that bind it. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He was born to die that we might live. On the last day, He will come to raise us from the dead just like He Himself rose from the dead. Where Christ is there is light, for He is the light of the world. "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12). This light is a light that darkness cannot overcome. Our God has come and won the battle. Let us then daily hear God's Word and joyfully pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Claire Burgdorf

Phoebe Academy College Student, 2015 and 2016

Tuesday, December 17

James 5:7–11

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Have you ever had so much fun that you lost all sense of time? Perhaps during an exciting sporting event or while reading that book that you just can't put down. It is said that time flies when you're having fun.

On the other hand, maybe you've experienced times where you heard every tick of the clock, and the day seems never ending. Maybe during a conflict with friends, the loss of a loved one, or when you were ill. You were undoubtedly eager for the time of suffering to end. Yet time seemed to stand still.

As James wrote his epistle, Christians were experiencing conflict between their new life in Christ and the culture. They were eager for the time of suffering to end with the return of the Lord. James encouraged them to “be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8). Joined to Christ in Baptism, James encouraged them to fix—to fasten—their hearts securely to Christ for the stormy times to come.

We, too, face storms that seem unending, and, like the saints before us, are encouraged to trust in His word; He will return. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3). Bear patiently and hold fast to Christ, when time flies or when it stands still, for Christ is at hand. Come, Lord Jesus!

Deaconess Amy Rast
Associate Director of Deaconess Formation

Wednesday, December 18

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334) stanza 4

*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.*

All you need is love, right? But this isn't the touchy-feely love you have for your boyfriend or girlfriend, and it's not the Grandma-knows-everything-I-need love that you feel when that extra piece of pie magically appears on the table in front of you. This love is so much more powerful than that.

This love brings God Almighty down to become truly human and redeem us from our sinful condition.

This love causes kings to descend from their thrones and travel thousands of miles to worship an infant boy.

This love casts out fear and demons, takes on sin and sickness, and sends political leaders into turmoil.

This love, crucified, stretches out His arms to embrace the entirety of our fallen race.

This love causes earthquakes, opens graves, and gives new life.

This love is Christ for you.

Yet this love is often hard to see when it comes, for most often Christ's power is found in His weakness. His strength is humility. He sleeps in a feed trough. He sits with the poor and oppressed. He hides under simple bread and wine. He dwells in simple people like you and me.

All you need is Christ's love. How will you meet that love today?

Lord Jesus Christ, out of love you became man and died to redeem the world. Fix in us that love, so that we may turn to our neighbor and be as Christ to them. In your blessed name we pray. Amen.

Ethan Stoppenhagen
Seminary II

Christ Academy Assistant Student Director
Christ Academy High School, 2015
Christ Academy High School, 2017–2018

Thursday, December 19

Matthew 11:2-15

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 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. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

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? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” From a prison cell, that was John’s question. Even the great one among those born of women struggled with doubts and disappointments! Perhaps he wanted Jesus to get on with it—wield the ax, winnow the grain, burn the chaff (Matt. 3: 12).

In times of weakness, we may also ask, “Is Jesus really the one? Is Christianity the right way? Or should I be looking for someone or something else that perhaps works a little better?” How easily doubts creep into our fallen minds when things don’t go the way we planned or hoped or expected. We also have great Advent expectations about Jesus. Sometimes we’re not satisfied with Jesus. He doesn’t act like we expect. We want a messiah of our own making. We expect Christ to fit our agendas. With disappointment, we say with John, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

Jesus’ works of mercy, healing, and forgiveness weren’t the apocalyptic acts of judgment John must have expected. But Jesus didn’t scold John. He had John’s disciples go back and report six miracles that Jesus was performing, taking John back to Isaiah 35 and 61—now being fulfilled. For the moment, Jesus left out “the day of vengeance of our God” (Is. 61:2). But Jesus Himself would bear the vengeance, the wrath of God, the judgment. Instead of coming to judge, He came to be judged in our place. The axe was swung at the root of the Branch of Jesse. The winnowing fork threshed the Son of God. He was treated as chaff to be burned.

That’s a great comfort for you who struggle with the same frailties as John. Jesus is not the Messiah we’d expect. He came in a virgin’s womb, in a manger, on a cross, in a tomb! Blessed is the one who is not offended or disappointed by Jesus! The vengeance and wrath and judgment and divine retribution will come—for all who stubbornly reject Jesus. But in the meantime, God is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish.

O Lord, how shall I meet You? With disappointment? Certainly not—but with awe and amazement, like those in the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany accounts. Zechariah wasn’t disappointed, even though he doubted God’s Word for a time; neither were Mary, the angels, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, nor the magi disappointed; and...neither was John disappointed. Even at his beheading, death was but the gate to life immortal! How did John meet Jesus? With rejoicing—with exceeding great joy!

Rev. James Fundum
Concordia Theological Seminary Admission Counselor

Friday, December 20

Hymn of the Day: “Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding” (LSB, 345)

*Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! "Christ is near," we hear it say.
"Cast away the works of darkness, All you children of the day!"*

*Startled at the solemn warning, Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, its sun, all sloth dispelling, Shines upon the morning skies.*

*See, the Lamb, so long expected, Comes with pardon down from heav'n.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow, One and all, to be forgiv'n:*

*So, when next He comes in glory And the world is wrapped in fear,
He will shield us with His mercy And with words of love draw near.*

*Honor, glory, might, dominion to the Father and the Son
With the ever-living Spirit While eternal ages run!*

The last phrase in the first stanza of this hymn is a beautiful, poetic stroke: “Cast away the works of darkness, All you children of the day!” And this Advent hymn doesn’t stand alone in giving us this comforting picture. Luther reflects upon similar imagery in an Easter hymn, “Christ is Himself the joy of all, The sun that warms and lights us. Now His grace to us imparts Eternal sunshine to our hearts; The night of sin is ended. Alleluia!” (LSB 458 st. 6). Christ is our very daytime, our very sun. What an image to ponder throughout the Church Year!

This expression “children of the day” is truly a wonderful way of considering our new lives in Christ, as the baptized. It expresses the otherworldly life that is now ours—a life in which the sun does not set, in which fears and darkness no longer have power to overcome us. Because Christ, the light of the world which no darkness can overcome, is with us to banish the dark things.

As we still dwell in this world, this is a comforting reality the hymnist gives us to ponder. The darkness encroaches upon us more and more in this season of the year. Our society spirals more rapidly into endless night. Yet, Christ who has come to dwell in our midst disperses the deepening shadows. And when He comes in His glory He shall vanquish the night for good and usher the children of the day into the eternal day of His kingdom, which has no end.

Rev. Matthias Wollberg
Pastor of Saint Peter Lutheran Church in Riceville, Iowa

Christ Academy High School Student
Christ Academy College Student
Christ Academy High School Proctor, 2014 and 2015
Christ Academy High School Assistant Student Director, 2016
Christ Academy High School Student Director, 2017

Saturday, December 21

Psalm 146

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Put not your trust in princes,

in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;

on that very day his plans perish.

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD his God,

who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them,

who keeps faith forever;

who executes justice for the oppressed,

who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;

the LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD watches over the sojourners;

he upholds the widow and the fatherless,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The LORD will reign forever,

your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the LORD!

Antiphon verse: “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” Verse 5

In this season of Advent, we solemnly prepare for the Lord Jesus to enter our human flesh, born as a baby. He truly meets us where we are in our sin and degradation, in order to eventually bring it to the cross.

The third week of Advent begins with a pink color instead of the blue or purple that we’ve seen before. This week is a small reprieve from the melancholy we have been in. This Sunday, we rejoice a little extra because of this baby Jesus coming to be born among us.

The Psalm tells how our Lord comes near to us to meet us. It is a laundry list really: He created the world, He feeds us, He sets the prisoners free, He lifts up those who are low, He brings righteousness, He ruins the plans of the wicked—just to name a few! All of this our God does for us! He comes near to us in the form of a baby so that we may call on Him in hope, trusting that, as He always has before, He will meet us, bringing help and deliverance from sin, death, and the devil!

Prayer: Dear Lord, we give You thanks that daily we meet You through Your Word and the forgiveness of our sins! Amen

Brittni Brown

Deaconess Student Director, 2015–2016



FOURTH
SUNDAY
IN
ADVENT



Sunday, December 22

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334) stanzas 5-6

*Sin's debt, that fearful burden, Cannot His love erase;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon And cover by His grace.
He comes, for you procuring The peace of sin forgiv'n,
His children thus securing Eternal life in heav'n.*

*He comes to judge the nations, A terror to His foes,
A light of consolations And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing. O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Your beams so cheering, And guide us safely home.*

Paul Gerhardt takes the text of the triumphal entry of Christ the King into Jerusalem and juxtaposes it with triumphal and joyous music. But in the verses we're looking at today, this makes no sense. He begins with “Sin's debt, that fearful burden,” and “He comes to judge the nations, A terror to His foes.”

These words should strike absolute fear in us. We are, as St. Paul describes himself in 1 Timothy 1, insolent opponents and blasphemers. We quarrel with God and deserve nothing but temporal death and eternal damnation. Christ's entry into Jerusalem is one of a king who has conquered our city and has come to lord it over us as He enacts His reign!

But if we look at verse 4, these other two verses make sense. Gerhard as translated by Catherine Winkworth writes “Love caused Your incarnation; Love brought You down to me.” It was not our works that brought Him down to us, only His “love beyond all telling.” And it is in this context that we can continue with these joyful and triumphant lyrics.

Christ has come as the conquering hero, yes, but He has not come to conquer you. In love He has come to conquer your debt to sin, your liberty from the tyrant nations, and from the devil.

He comes to give the peace of sins forgiven. In this we rejoice, as His children who have been given eternal life in heaven. Now our conquering king is like the glorious sun.

Aaron Nielsen

Christ Academy, 2006, 2009
Christ Academy College, 2011

Monday, December 23

Psalm 24

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,
for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.
Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.
He will receive blessing from the Lord
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.
Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!
Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory!*

The earth was created perfect by God, and has been given to us as a gift to care for. It is because of the fall that our time on this earth is limited and the harmony has been disrupted. We became infected by sin. We turned away from the Father, and it is only through the Holy Spirit that we are brought back. Through the Son, we are covered and made holy once again. It is thanks to God's mercy that we are able to enter through heaven's gates and not suffer the torments we deserve in hell.

This wonderful gift of rebirth—the breath of life breathed into our dead souls—is a cause to rejoice! Each morning that we wake up is a miracle; each day that we are able to spend with our blessed families is truly a gift from God! Blessed be the King of glory!

Arianna Scheltens

Phoebe Academy High School, 2017–2018

Christ Academy College, 2018–2019

Christ Academy: Phoebe School Proctor, 2019

Tuesday, December 24

Matthew 1:18-25

Now 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. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But 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. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

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

Reading this passage offers us a very peculiar situation. Mary is pregnant, though she has not had sexual relations with her future husband, Joseph. It would be easy to jump to the conclusion that she already had sexual relations. Today it might be culturally acceptable, but in the Jewish world it was a very serious sin (Deut. 22:20–24).

Joseph, as a just man, could have secretly divorced Mary to spare her from public humiliation. But the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Do not fear." Angels do this occasionally in the Bible. Not only would it be shocking to see an angel, but we also need to hear the words, "Do not fear." Sometimes in our life, we don't know what tomorrow will bring. We might be fearful of public humiliation because of what we have done or because we wish to protect someone else.

The angel of the Lord says, "Do not be afraid." Luther says we pray to God and to let God worry. Our life is trusting in God and His Word, that we should not fear "the tomorrow," but fear, love, and trust in God above all things. And so the angel of the Lord said that Joseph should take Mary as a wife, for she will bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means God with us. Jesus is our savior, for He will save us from our sins. We trust in God from whom all good comes in Christ.

Rev. John Dreyer
Concordia Theological Seminary Admission Counselor

Director of Christ Academy, 2007 and 2013
Christ Academy (Various Teaching Positions), 2001–Present
Admission Counselor, 2001–2008; 2011–Present
Director of Admission, 2013–2017

The 3 Year Lectionary: Series A

Advent to Epiphany

SEASON	DATE	FESTIVAL	GOSPEL
ADVENT	Dec. 1	First Sunday in Advent	Matthew 21:1–11 or Matthew 24:36–44
	Dec. 8	Second Sunday in Advent	Matthew 3:1–12
	Dec. 15	Third Sunday in Advent	Matthew 11:2–15
	Dec. 22	Fourth Sunday in Advent	Matthew 1:18–25
CHRISTMAS	Dec. 24 Eve	The Nativity of Our Lord	Matthew 1:18–25
	Dec. 24 Midnight	The Nativity of Our Lord	Luke 2:1–14 (15–20)
	Dec. 25 Dawn	The Nativity of Our Lord	Luke 2:(1–14) 15–20
	Dec. 25	The Nativity of Our Lord	John 1:1–14 (15–18)
	Dec. 29	First Sunday after Christmas	Matthew 2:13–23
	Dec. 31	Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus	Luke 12:35–40
	Jan. 1	Circumcision and Name of Jesus	Luke 2:21
EPIPHANY	Jan. 6	The Epiphany of Our Lord	Matthew 2:1–12

Upcoming Christ Academy Events

Christ Academy: Confirmation Retreat

February 21–23, 2020 and October 2–4, 2020

Christ Academy: Timothy School & Phoebe School

June 14–27, 2020

Christ Academy: College

October 30–November 1, 2020

Applications are available now

Timothy School:

www.ctsfw.edu/TimothySchool



Phoebe School:

www.ctsfw.edu/PhoebeSchool



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