



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Second Sunday in Advent

December 8, 2024



A Real Christmas

A Real Christmas Is Rooted in Repentance

The closer we get to Christmas, the greater the pressure. There is so much work to be done! We want our houses to look good for out-of-town guests. We want to impress people with the thoughtfulness of our gifts. What a welcome relief, therefore, to hear what is required to *really* be ready for Christmas: only repentance. You see, repentance is the opposite of work. It is the candid and honest admission of our sin combined with the joyful trust that everything needed to bring us close to God has already been done by Christ.

At this frenetic time of year, the call to repent is not another demand to do something more. It is gracious invitation to set down our work to make way for Christ's work. Rooted in that repentant rest, we can fully enjoy a real Christmas.

First Reading³

Malachi 3:1-7b

The Lord announces to suffering believers in the Old Testament God's special message of New Testament hope and comfort. The Lord promises a herald to proclaim his coming. Let hearts be prepared; the Desire of Nations is about to come to his temple with judgment and the refiner's fire. Though no one can stand before his righteousness, yet there is righteousness for the purified and acceptance for those who heed the messenger's call for preparation. Christ's first coming is then connected in prophetic perspective to His second and final coming on the Last Day. "The messenger of the covenant" is coming to eternally restore the righteousness of the Lord.

Second Reading³

Philippians 1:3-11

In spite of fierce opposition to both the message and messenger, Paul expresses joy and complete confidence in the power of the Word. For the gospel in Word and sacrament comes to us to fill in the valleys of our depression with the fruit of his righteousness, leveling the mountains of our disobedience with the insight of his law, making a highway for our God straight to our hearts. Thus is prepared a clear, level and straight path from grace to glory when he comes again.

Gospel³

Luke 3:1-6

The careful precision of Luke demands the preacher's journey back in time to see the historical setting of this account and thus acknowledge once again the providential hand of the Lord. "When the time had fully come," the Christ's great forerunner, the promised messenger of preparation, John the Baptizer appeared. As Malachi predicted and as Paul encouraged, John was a faithful preacher of repentance by which the people of God were truly prepared in head and heart.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 66 C

"Let All the Earth Sing Out"

The Church sings Psalm 66 in services that include joyful praise of God for his amazing saving activity. Sometimes the psalm addresses God, and sometimes it addresses the people praising God. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 66 is a psalm of thanksgiving for common blessings that God often gives us. Daily he delivers and protects his people from their enemies, as he did at the Red Sea. By enumerating these blessings, the Church of Christ summons all people to faith."

Gospel Acclamation Luke 3:4,6

“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. And all people will see God’s salvation.” John the Baptist was the one prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 40, “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord.’” John came to do one thing: to point to Christ. He prepared the way for his King by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming, give us strength in our conflicts, and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day 316 “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” (Charles Coffin, 1676-1749)

The call to repentance – to prepare for Christ to enter our hearts (v2) – is only accomplished by the work of the King himself (vv3-4). We rejoice that Christ has entered our hearts through faith (vv3,5) and praise our Triune God because his advent has won our freedom from sin (v5).

Church Year Season³ Advent

Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh as a baby in Bethlehem, his return in judgment on the Last Day, and his present coming to us in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in a single word that defines Advent worship: “Come!” Throughout the prayers, hymns, and readings that single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus!

Colors & Symbolism Blue

The traditional color for Advent is purple. Advent is a penitential season of preparation for Christmas; thus the color purple which symbolizes sorrow and repentance (along with royalty). Since another theme of Advent is hope and anticipation, the color blue (the sky) has come to be used in many churches to symbolize the believer’s hope and expectation of Jesus’ Second Coming.

Traditions The Advent Wreath

A tradition of the Advent season is the lighting of candles on a wreath. Each light reminds us of Jesus, the Light of the world (John 8:12). Each Sunday we light an additional candle, providing a visual countdown to the celebration of Christ’s birth. On Christmas Eve we light the center candle, remembering Jesus’ nativity and the light and life that he brings (John 1:4,9).

Nain Paraments Advent

Superfrontal: “Come Lord Jesus” is the Advent (meaning “coming” or “arrival”) prayer of Christians who await Christ’s promised return (Revelation 22:7,12,20) on the Last Day (Revelation 22:17,20), and who desire to eagerly receive Jesus now in the Gospel. The stars are representative of the Church’s anticipation of Jesus’ return when he will “appear in the sky...with great power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The stars also remind us of God’s creative work. They especially remind us of Jesus, the bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16) and Light of the World (John 8:12) who came to save us from the darkness of sin and death.

Lectern antependium: Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16).

Pulpit antependium: Alpha (Α) and Omega (Ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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