

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
of Stillwater, Minnesota  
December 7, 2025  
Second Sunday of Advent

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Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

At the heart of our Advent preparation stands John the Baptist, who calls us to repent and make a new beginning. As the darkness increases, we turn toward the approaching light of Christ. For Christians, he is the root of Jesse, the righteous judge who welcomes all, especially the poor and meek of the earth. We wait with hope for that day when the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and there will be no more hurt or destruction. From the Lord's table, we are sent in the spirit of John the Baptist to proclaim that in Christ the kingdom of God has come near.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.



## GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

Prelude

Advent Invocation

Give the king your justice, O God,  
**and your righteousness to the king's son.**

Let him defend the needy among the people,  
**rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**

Blessed are you, Lord God of hope,  
**you alone do wondrous deeds!**

Let us pray . . .

God of the wolf and the lamb,  
you bring down heaven to earth  
and reconcile the mighty and lowly to one another.  
Expand our hopes and our imaginations  
so that new dreams of peace and unity might arise.  
With hope, peace, joy, and love we pray.

**Amen.**

Gathering Song

ELW hymn 239

*"Hark, the Glad Sound!"*



Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Pages 640-641

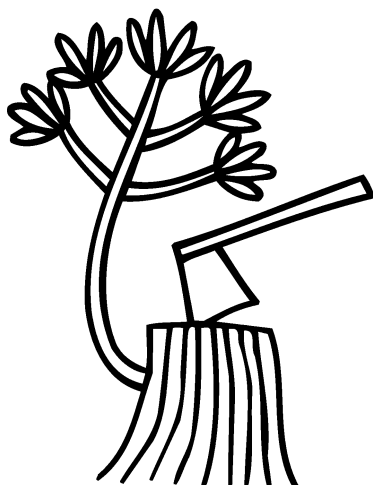
Isaiah 11:1-10

*Isaiah describes the coming of a future, ideal ruler who will renew David's royal line (the stump of Jesse). Gifted by the spirit of God, this ruler will reign with perfect justice. Enmity and danger will be restored to harmony and peaceful coexistence.*

*At the conclusion:*

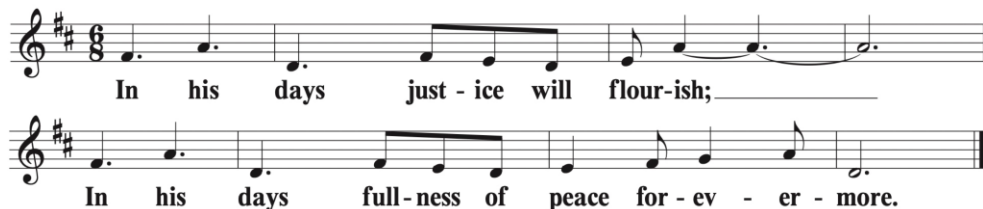
Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**



Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

*The refrain is sung first by a leader, then repeated by all and sung after each verse as indicated (R).*



<sup>1</sup> Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the king's son;

<sup>2</sup> **that he may rule your people righteously  
and the poor with justice;**

<sup>3</sup> that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> **Let him defend the needy among the people,  
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor. (R)**

<sup>5</sup> May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,  
from one generation to another.

<sup>6</sup> **Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,  
like showers that water the earth.**

<sup>7</sup> In his time may the righteous flourish;  
and let there be an abundance of peace  
till the moon shall be no more. (R)

<sup>18</sup> Blessed are you, LORD God, the God of Israel;  
you alone do wondrous deeds!

<sup>19</sup> **And blessed be your glorious name forever,  
and may all the earth be filled with your glory. (R)**



## Romans 15:4-13

*God's promise to include Gentiles within the circle of God's blessed people has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christians live out their unity by welcoming and encouraging each other just as Christ has welcomed them into God's family.*

*At the conclusion:*

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje



Gospel Acclamation

"We Are Waiting for Jesus"

1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
 2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Sun of jus - tice, shine up-on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.  
 Lov-ing Shep-herd, walk be-side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace. 5

Matthew 3:1-12

*Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.*

*The gospel is introduced:*

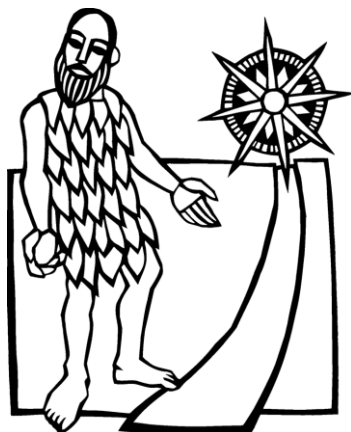
*The holy gospel according to Matthew.*

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the conclusion:*

*The gospel of the Lord.*

**Praise to you, O Christ.**



Sermon

Pastor Laurel Halvorson Bernard

*Silence for reflection follows the sermon.*

Hymn of the Day

ELW hymn 249

*"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"*

Prayers of Intercession

*After each prayer:*

*God of grace,*

**hear our prayer.**

*At the conclusion:*

*Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.*

**Amen.**

## Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.*

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

Offering      *"Angels from the Realms of Glory"*      Bell Choir

*ur offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.*



## Offering Prayer

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts,

**We lift them to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup  
we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.



We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.  
We look with hope for his coming.

**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

O Lamb of God you take - a - way; you take a-way the  
sin - of the world. Have mer-cy on us now - we pray; have mer-cy on us  
now - and al-ways. Re - joice! Re-joice! O Lamb - of God, grant  
us your peace, oh grant - - us peace.

## Communion

*We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.*

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:*

*The body of Christ, given for you.*

*The blood of Christ, shed for you.*

*and each person may respond:*

**Amen.**



*"Lost in the Night"*

Prayer After Communion

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

Announcements

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

Sending Song

ELW Hymn 264

*"Prepare the Royal Highway"*

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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## DAILY PRAYER

### Prayer of Confession



Merciful God, I confess that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done and by what I have left undone.

*Here you may confess sins that are known and burden you.*

I repent of all my sins, known and unknown. I am truly sorry, and I pray for forgiveness. I firmly intend to amend my life, and to seek help in mending what is broken. I ask for strength to turn from sin and to serve you in newness of life. Amen.

*Here, you can affirm that you are forgiven by making the sign of the cross, holding a palm cross, or meditating on a devotional image.*

## CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY

### Forgiveness through Baptism



A prayer of confession (see ELW page 95) echoes the preaching of John the Baptist: “Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your

Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.” The passage from Isaiah today describes the gifts of the Spirit that is echoed in prayer at every baptism (see ELW page 231). We ask God for the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, the fear of the Lord, and joy in God's presence.

## **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

### **Trusting the Promise**



Contrary to popular assumption, Martin Luther did not abolish individual confession and forgiveness before a priest. Luther sought instead to reform it by emphasizing the promise of forgiveness rather than the burden of guilt. Luther teaches in the Small Catechism: "Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God himself and by no means doubt but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven."

## **UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

### **Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, died 397**

**Sunday, December 7, 2025**

Ambrose was a governor of northern Italy and a catechumen when he was elected bishop of Milan. He was baptized, ordained, and consecrated a bishop all on the same day. While bishop, he gave away his wealth and lived in simplicity. He was a famous preacher and is largely responsible for the conversion of Augustine. He is also well known for writing hymns. On one occasion, Ambrose led people in a hymn he wrote while the church in which they were secluded was threatened by attack from Gothic soldiers. The soldiers turned away, unwilling to attack a congregation that was singing a hymn. Ambrose is credited with authorship of three hymns in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, including “Savior of the Nations, Come” (ELW 263).

### **Lucy, martyr, died 304**

**Saturday, December 13, 2025**

Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian. Apparently, she had decided to devote her life to God and her possessions to the poor. Beyond that, however, little is known for certain about Lucy. However, her celebration became particularly important in Sweden and Norway, perhaps because the feast of Lucia (the name means “light”) originally fell on the shortest day of the year. A tradition arose of a girl in the household, wearing a crown of candles, bringing saffron rolls to her family early in the morning on the day of Lucia.

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

### **Turning and Mending (Again)**

Being on the receiving end of sharp language can be heartbreaking. Indeed, words can wound—or worse. John the Baptizer, a key figure in our Advent narratives, finds himself at odds with other religious leaders of the time, and uses the tool he has (language) to call attention to their broken relationship. It's unclear what exactly led to this prickly, pointed exchange between John and the Pharisees and Sadducees, but there is a growing chasm between them.

“Prepare the way of the Lord,” John cries out in the wilderness, echoing the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah cried out in his own day centuries prior, testifying to God’s desire to mend the world (though the world seemed to be at an end). Perhaps John repeats Isaiah’s plea in order to remind the people of his day of God’s intent for all things: for the world to be mended, healed, made right; for the reign of heaven to be revealed on earth, here and now. Often, however, mending brokenness requires honesty first about the wounds that have been inflicted and the death that has been wrought. With John’s painful honesty, his strained relationship with other leaders of his time takes a step toward healing, toward justice, so that a new beginning might take hold. This is a starting point, as difficult as it may be.

Every Advent, as the church year begins again, we hear the familiar call: Repent. Turn back to God. Repentance is no easy thing, but thankfully, God draws us back to this imperative, year after year, day after day, hour after hour. With infinite mercy, once again God invites us to turn toward healing, toward justice, toward the righting of the world, one relationship at a time.