

— A REAL —
CHRISTMAS

A REAL CHRISTMAS WILL LIFT UP THE LOWLY

Fourth Sunday in Advent

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

December 22, 2024

SERIES THEME: A REAL CHRISTMAS

A parent says, "I want to give my kids a real Christmas." What do you think that parent means? Perhaps they are thinking of a trimming a freshly cut tree or finding the perfect presents or spending the holidays with extended family. Perhaps they are thinking about all those things. "Then it will be a real Christmas!" Certainly, all those are wonderful things. However, none of them are what makes Christmas real. The sad truth is Christmas is the most beloved holiday of so many, yet so few know what Christmas is really about. If you want a real Christmas, then you need to observe Advent. Advent is Latin for "coming." In the season of Advent, Christians observe the connection between the first time the Son of God came into our world as the Savior and the second time he will come as the Judge. Advent prepares our minds and hearts, so that we might soon celebrate a real Christmas.

THEME OF THE DAY: A REAL CHRISTMAS WILL LIFT UP THE LOWLY

By this time of the holiday season, people are often weighted down. They feel guilty about presents that are not perfect, or parties that did not go as planned, or year-end projects that did not get completed. To top it all off, now is when it dawns on people how little attention they have given to the spiritual preparation Advent invites. If that is how we feel, perhaps the frenzy of December has done us a favor. We have been stretched to our limits. We have been made painfully aware of our shortcomings. We have been humbled. Perfect! For being made aware of our weakness does not disqualify us from God's care. It does the opposite. IT is what prepares us for the work he does best. He is a God who lifts up the lowly.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Timothy Richert

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Two (page 172 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 333 O Little Town of Bethlehem

sts. 1–2

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

CW 172

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 213

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful and answer me.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins, and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Micah 5:2–5a

The lowly little town of Bethlehem would be lifted up. There a special son would be born who would bring spiritual peace to the ends of the earth.

²But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel.
His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity.

³Therefore the LORD will give them up,
until the time when the woman who is in labor bears a child.
Then the remaining survivors from his brothers will return to the people of Israel.

⁴He will stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

They will dwell securely, for at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.

⁵This one will be their peace.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day: 85A- In front of hymnal: LORD, in Your Mercy, Hear My Prayer

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:5–10

We could not possibly raise ourselves up to God. So, the Son of God obeyed the law for us and by his sacrifice has made us holy. Christ has lifted up the lowly.

⁵Therefore when he entered the world, Christ said:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but you prepared a body for me.

⁶You were not pleased
with burnt offerings and sin offerings.

⁷Then I said, "Here I am.
I have come to do your will, God.
In the scroll of the book it is written about me."

⁸First he said:

Sacrifices and offerings that were offered according to the law,
both burnt offerings and sin offerings,
you did not desire,
and you were not pleased with them.

⁹Then he said:

Here I am.
I have come to do your will.

He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will, we have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 1:23

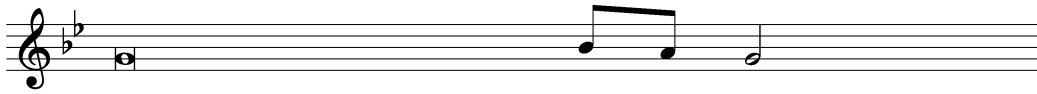


Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Tone



The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,



and they will call him Im - man - u - el.

Refrain

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Gospel

Luke 1:39–55

In Spirit-wrought humility, Mary knew she needed a Savior. God lifts her up, making her the mother of that Savior.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹In those days Mary got up and hurried to the hill country, to a town of Judah. ⁴⁰She entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹Just as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²She called out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴In fact, just now, as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy! ⁴⁵Blessed is she who believed, because the promises spoken to her from the Lord will be fulfilled!"

Mary's Song

⁴⁶Then Mary said,

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,

⁴⁸because he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones.
He has lifted up the lowly.
⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.
⁵⁴He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy,
⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 327 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Sermon

Stand

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Eternal Father, throughout the centuries you repeated and affirmed your promise to send the offspring of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Through your prophets of old, you continually directed the eyes of your people to the advent of their Savior.

We praise you, O Lord, for keeping your promise and sending your Son to destroy the works of the devil.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our King, use your mighty Word to shatter our pride and to rouse us from spiritual slumber and apathy.

Move us to take to heart the words of John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful, and give hope to the despairing. In these days before Christmas, spare us from the stress of deadlines and the frenzy of commercialism.

Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.

Direct our eyes not only to the manger but also to the skies, where we will see your Son coming again, not as a lowly child but as the Lord of lords.

Lift up our hearts in joyful anticipation of that day.

Hold in your care, Lord, those who are experiencing physical and emotional pain and all who are afflicted by disease or facing death. [Especially bless... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Pour out your compassion on the grieving and comfort the mourners who miss someone they loved.

Move us to pray for these brothers and sisters and to help when we can.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, in your grace, in your power, and in your glory.

Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 328 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Hymn: 315 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

Sunday: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship and Communion

Christmas Eve: 5:30 PM Worship

Christmas Day: 10:30 AM Worship

New Year's Eve: 6:30 PM Joint Worship Service at Bethel

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Given to the Lord: Attendance: Worship 68, Offerings: Operating: Needed 3,138.30, Given \$1,296.30. **To God be the glory!**

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