



MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP  
Wednesday, December 7, 2022

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

7:00 p.m.



WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP (*stand*)

The Spirit and the Church cry out:  
**Come, Lord Jesus!**

All those who await His appearance pray:  
**Come, Lord Jesus!**

The whole creation pleads:  
**Come, Lord Jesus!**

HYMN OF LIGHT    LSB 891

*O Light Whose Splendor*

- 1    **O Light whose splendor thrills and gladdens  
      With radiance brighter than the sun,  
      Pure gleam of God's unending glory,  
      O Jesus, blest Anointed One;**
- 2    **As twilight hovers near at sunset,  
      And lamps are lit, and children nod,  
      In evening hymns we lift our voices  
      To Father, Spirit, Son: one God.**
- 3    **In all life's brilliant timeless moments,  
      Let faithful voices sing Your praise,  
      O Son of God, our Life-bestower,  
      Whose glory lightens endless days.**

## *LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE*

We light the second candle on the Advent wreath to celebrate the renewal of our lives through faith in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul writes, “We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

**Holy Child of Bethlehem, be born in us today. For you were born among us to bring us new life.**

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

**Holy Child of Bethlehem, be born in us today. Renew our hearts and minds in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we might serve you by serving others.**

## *CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION*

Because Advent is a season of preparation, let us prepare our hearts by confessing our sins.

*We kneel*

Almighty God,

**we confess to you that we do not always live in the newness of life that is ours in Jesus. We fall back into our selfish ways and do not love others as we should. Instead of following your will, we seek to conform our lives to the world’s temptations. Have mercy on us and forgive us. Renew us and restore us.**

In His mercy, God sent his Son to be our Savior. Jesus took our sins onto himself and suffered and died on the cross for all of us. I therefore announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Help us, Lord, to live in newness of life. Lead us to seek your will, so that we might do what is good, acceptable and perfect in your sight.

*ADVENT HYMN LSB344 (stand)*

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

- 1 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!**
- 2 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.**
- 3 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.**
- 4 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.**
- 5 All praise, eternal Son, to Thee  
Whose advent sets Thy people free,  
Whom with the Father we adore  
And Holy Spirit evermore.**

*PRAYER OF THE DAY*

Almighty God, when the time was right, you fulfilled your promise and sent your Son to be our Savior. Even his holy name—Jesus—means that he came to save his people from their sins.

**Through faith in our crucified and risen Lord we have forgiveness for our sins and the gift of eternal life. We are buried with him in Baptism and raised to walk with him in newness of life.**

Help us in that new life to walk in love as Jesus did and to serve you by serving others. When we grow faint and weary in our walk of faith, lift us up and renew our strength in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Hear our prayer and accept our praise in Jesus' name. Amen.**

*OLD TESTAMENT READING (Be seated)*

Isaiah 40:21-31

Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,

and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,

and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;

who brings princes to nothing,

and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,

scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,

when he blows on them, and they wither,

and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me,

that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see:

who created these?

He who brings out their host by number,

calling them all by name,

by the greatness of his might,

and because he is strong in power

not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob,

and speak, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,

and my right is disregarded by my God”?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*NEW TESTAMENT READING*

Ephesians 1:7–10

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*GOSPEL VERSE (Stand)*

*LSB 361*

**O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Immanuel!**

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*SERMON (Be seated)*

Dear friends in Christ:

The Christmas season is known for its many wonderful songs and carols. And one of these is the great song "O Holy Night." Written in 1843 by French poet Placide Cappeau, the lyrics were translated into English a few years later by American pastor John Sullivan Dwight. The carol's initial popularity is often traced to its third stanza, cherished by abolitionists in the United States who were fighting for the freedom of African American slaves. Lines from that stanza read:

"Truly he taught us to love one another; His law is love and his gospel is peace; Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, And in his name all oppression shall cease ..."

Powerful lyrics indeed!

These days, I'm guessing the song is appreciated more for another reason. In its first stanza, the song speaks about the world being a very difficult and wearying place. It says:

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'Till he appeared, and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn ...”

As we know, the world's sin and error definitely take a toll. Together they make us weary and cause us to pine for an end. The song touches our heart as it recognizes these feelings.

But even more, the song moves our hearts by placing before us the great hope given by Christ's appearing.

And by the way, this song doesn't stand alone in its recognition of a weary world. Other carols do too. One of these is Edmund Sears' “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” written in 1849. In its second stanza, it describes the song of the Christmas angels by saying:

“Still through the cloven skies they come With peaceful wings unfurled, And still their heav'nly music floats O'er all the weary world ...”

So with a cue from our carols, let me ask you: Are you weary? Are you exhausted? Are you fatigued? Will the song of the angels this Christmas float across a weary you?

Maybe you are fatigued physically. Or, maybe your fatigue is more mental or emotional. Per-

haps you find yourself in a place best described as “the middle of in-between,” waiting for resolution or reconciliation or vindication or at least a change—but with none of it seemingly in sight.

What has you weary? Are you weary of circumstances, your age, your illness, your relationships, your job? In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins says to Gandalf: “I am old, Gandalf. I don't look it, but I am beginning to feel it in my heart of hearts. Well-preserved indeed! Why, I feel all thin, sort of

stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right. I need a change, or something."

What about you? Do you feel stretched thin? Are you winded or exhausted from a pace that has you spent, physically and emotionally? Have you just about given up hope that we can solve any of our big problems: the economy, war, sickness, tribalism, racism, crime, shootings and killings? Is it all too much—this marathon our life has become?

There are many ways one can go when wearied by life. But many of those ways are not so good.

Isaiah calls us to turn to the Lord. He reminds us that God is in control. More than that, he tells us that with the Lord's strength we can soar like an eagle. What a promise! What a hope!

Still, weariness is hard to overcome. And one of the main reasons for this is that weary people are often difficult people. And that includes us. In our fatigue we quickly begin to despair, complain and blame.

Regarding that complaining and blaming, sometimes it's on point. How does the old proverb go? "It's hard to soar like an eagle when you're surrounded by turkeys."

But other times our blaming is misguided. When we get weary, we may not accurately see what's going on around us. Our weariness blinds us to the truth before our eyes.

In each of us there is a struggle between weariness and being strong in the Lord. It is an aspect of the saint-and-sinner paradox which makes up the life of every Christian. American poet Carl Sandburg put it this way when he said: "There is an eagle in me that wants to soar, and there is a hippopotamus in me that wants to wallow in the mud."

Today's text from Isaiah is for the wallowing hippo in each of us. "Weary" is all over this text.

Isaiah first uses the word to say that God does NOT faint or grow weary. And that is good news! For God is the one running the

universe. Unlike you and me, he does not fatigue in his long marathon of responsibility.

Isaiah's words remind us that God never feels (how did Bilbo say it?) "all thin, sort of stretched, like butter that has been scraped over too much bread." Instead, God gives "power to the faint" and increases the strength of those with no strength left. In the long history of God and humanity, God has always been strength for the weary – a second and a third wind for those who are ready to fall.

Isaiah spoke his words of comfort to a people weary of the long wait for a Messiah and to a people who were losing their sense of being God's chosen. Isaiah's comfort speech was for those who forgot the chapter in their history titled "the Exodus" and for those who would spend decades as exiles in a strange land.

Today, Isaiah's comfort reaches us in those times when we want to follow Jesus but find our-selves weak and weary instead.

Notice that Isaiah doesn't reach us by bellowing like some NFL line coach: "Brace up! Lean into it! Dig deep! Don't go soft on me now!" Isaiah doesn't even say, "Be strong!" or "Be courageous!"

Instead, Isaiah brings to remembrance the God who has always been there for the weary. "Have you not known?" he asks. "Have you not heard?" Or to put it another way, "Don't you remember? Have you forgotten?"

Isaiah is a remembrancer. Yes, that's a word! Historically, kings had remembrancers in their court to remind the king of significant past events or commitments, lest the kingdom suffer from forgetting.

What we have in our text, then, is a remembrancer speech – a speech that comforts and turns us from our weariness to remember a tireless, all-wise and all-powerful God. Isaiah has us remember who God is and what God is like: "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength" (verses 28-29).

More than this, though, Isaiah turns us to the God who offers divine strength to replace our weariness. There is a wonderful exchange here that many of us have experienced personally. The exchange is your weakness for the Lord's strength. Isaiah puts it this way: "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (verses 29-31).

Who doesn't want to soar like an eagle? I remember as a child my friends and I would jump our bikes off curbs, just to get a little air time. And then we'd build ramps to get a little more.

As I recall, the episodes usually didn't end very well. But we would try again just the same.

Jesus says: "They shall mount up on wings like eagles." Like eagles! The image presents an eagle ascending well beyond expected boundaries. I understand eagles can do this – flying at altitudes of 10,000-15,000 feet.

And by the way, Isaiah's image of an ascending eagle wasn't a new one. When God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, he said, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4). In using this image, Isaiah was doing more remembrancing – bringing to mind how God has a history of taking the weary and putting them into eagle-like flight.

For us, on this side of Jesus' cross and resurrection, God has exchanged our long weariness of "sin and error" for a new and thrilling hope. This hope rejoices in the strength of Christ to overcome sin and death... and a very weary world too. This is the God we know. And this is the God we trust.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul remembered how in his weakest moments God's strength had come through for him. "When I am weak," he wrote, "then I am strong" (2 Corinthians

12:20). Those are the word of someone acquainted with the Lord’s great exchange – that of our weariness for his strength.

One of the most popular and replicated statues of Jesus in our day is the one done by Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen titled “Christus Consolator (Christ the Consoler).” I’m familiar with it because there is one that stands at the front entrance of Johns Hopkins hospital. Maybe you’ve seen that one yourself.

In these often-life-sized figures, Christ’s hands are scarred by crucifixion nails and yet ex-tended in warm and gentle welcome. Standing before this image of Christ, one can hear the echo of his invitation in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Rest for the weary. Strength in our struggles. “A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn...”

This is our confidence. And in it we pray: “Jesus, be born in us today.” Amen.

*MAGNIFICAT (Stand)      LSB 933*

*My Soul Rejoices*

- 1    My soul rejoices,  
      My spirit voices—  
Sing the greatness of the Lord!  
      For God my Savior  
      Has shown me favor—  
Sing the greatness of the Lord!  
      With praise and blessing,  
      Join in confessing  
      God, who is solely  
      Mighty and holy—  
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!  
      His mercy surely  
      Shall rest securely  
      On all who fear Him,  
      Love and revere Him—  
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!**

2 His arm now baring,  
His strength declaring—  
Sing the greatness of the Lord!  
The proud He scatters,  
Their rule He shatters—  
Sing the greatness of the Lord!  
Oppression halted;  
The meek exalted.  
Full are the hungry;  
Empty, the wealthy—  
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!  
Here is the token  
All that was spoken  
To Abr'ham's offspring  
God is fulfilling—  
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!

*THE PRAYERS AND CONCLUDING LITURGY (Kneel)* p. 249-252

In peace let us pray to the Lord:  
**Lord, have mercy.**

*COLLECT FOR PEACE*

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

*LORD'S PRAYER*

*LSB 251*

Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we are bold to  
pray:

**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.**

*BENEDICAMUS*

*LSB 252*

Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*BENEDICTION*

*LSB 252*

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the ✠Son, and  
the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.  
**Amen.**

*ADVENT HYMN (Stand) LSB338*

*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

- 1 Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art,**

**Dear desire of ev'ry nation,  
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.**

- 2 Born Thy people to deliver;  
Born a child and yet a king!  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all-sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.**

**THOSE SERVING:**

Greeter: Rich Kauzlarich

Lay Reader: Anne Kauzlarich

**MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES**  
December 7, 14, 21 at 7:00 p.m.



**Christmas Eve Worship - Saturday December 24**

5:00 p.m. Candlelight service for families

8:00 p.m. Candlelight service with Holy Communion

**Christmas Day Worship - Sunday, December 25**

10:00 a.m. Celebration of Christ's Birth  
with Holy Communion

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**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
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A member congregation of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod