

MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP
December 20, 2023



ADVENT

MIDWEEK 3

MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP
Wednesday, December 20, 2023

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

COMPLINE

7:00 p.m.



PRELUDE

Creator of the Stars of Night
Setting: Benjamin M. Culli CPH 2019

WELCOME

OPENING VERSE (Stand) LSB 253

CONFESSION LSB 254

ADVENT HYMN *Creator of the Stars of Night* LSB 351

- 1 Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting Light:
O Christ, Redeemer, save us all
And hear Thy servants when they call.
- 2 Thou, grieving that the ancient curse
Should doom to death a universe,
Hast found the healing, full of grace,
To cure and save our ruined race.
- 3 Thou cam'st the Bridegroom of the bride,
As drew the world to eventide,
The spotless Victim all divine
Proceeding from a virgin shrine.
- 4 At whose dread name, majestic now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
All things celestial Thee shall own,
And things terrestrial, Lord alone.

- 5 **O Thou, whose coming is with dread
To judge the living and the dead,
Preserve us from the ancient foe
While still we dwell on earth below.**
- 6 **To God the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
Praise, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally. Amen.**

FIRST READING (Be seated)

Numbers 5:1-7

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone who is leprous or has a discharge and everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead. You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.” And the people of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD said to Moses, so the people of Israel did.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORY (Stand)

LSB 255

Into Your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit.

You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 5th chapter
Glory to You, O Lord.

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and

wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON (Be seated)

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ.

Tonight’s sermon concludes our Advent study of Mark’s introduction of Jesus. In this task we’ve been guided by notes and ideas from Dr. David Lewis of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

Dr. Lewis points out that Mark shows Jesus coming to save us from our three greatest enemies: sin, death and the power of the devil. We see this in the fact that Jesus encountered people afflicted by each of these three powers early in his ministry and set them free.

Tonight we are considering Jesus’ salvation from the last of these – the power of death. The Gospel lesson just read shows this salvation clearly through the raising of Jairus’ daughter.

To fully understand what this salvation means, however, it’s important that we examine the details of the story. The details give us clues as to what’s really going on.

Some of the details may seem strange to us. In particular, we might wonder why the main story is interrupted by another story – one telling of a woman who had suffered for twelve years with discharges of blood? And why was the woman in that story trying to avoid Jesus knowing about her? We get the feeling that these details must convey certain messages. But what are they?

Dr. Lewis helps us with these questions. And he does so by bringing up an episode from his seminary days – days that I shared with him, as his classmate.

The episode happened in an Old Testament class taught by the now-sainted Dr. Horace Hummel. Dr. Hummel was one of those professors students tended to remember – with varying degrees of fondness. In his no-nonsense approach, Dr. Hummel—for better or worse, though really always for the better—regularly challenged his student’s views. In particular, he challenged the ideas that were often derived from what we call “pop-theology” and not serious study of God’s word.

For instance, there was one occasion when Dr. Hummel was teaching on the purity laws from Leviticus and Numbers. In these books God lists a number of things that make a person unclean, such as eating unclean meat and touching dead bodies. God also declares that certain conditions are signs of uncleanness, things such as skin disease or bodily emissions.

In attempting to make sense of these commands, various students in the class offered the view that these must have been associated with health and hygiene. The ancient world, they pointed out, did not enjoy the benefits of modern science, and so this was God’s way of protecting his people from diseases such as trichinosis, which comes from eating undercooked pork.

Dr. Hummel, however, was having none of this! “Well, you know,” he began (uttering the three words that become his trademark

saying) “I don’t recall that anyone came up with a cure for trichinosis in AD 30 after Jesus was resurrected and all foods were declared clean. Are you trying to tell me that God cared more about the health of his Old Testament people than about his New Testament people?”

He then pointed out how the scriptures don’t explain why certain animals or physical conditions were declared unclean. They were unclean simply because God said they were. Period.

But Dr. Hummel also pointed out how these purity laws were a reminder of something else. They were a reminder that creation had fallen as a result of human sin, and that everything in the world was now messed up. God was bringing help and blessing to his chosen people, but they still lived in a world corrupted by sin and were subject to death.

Things such as skin diseases and other physical ailments were thus likely declared unclean because they were associated with the fallen creation and the universal presence of death. They were reminders of death, and also how death had been imposed on them as a curse.

Understanding this connection between uncleanness and death helps us see what is going on today’s Gospel reading. Here we see the connection in both stories from the reading. Their details, in fact, serve to highlight the connection – giving us a greater appreciation of what God is doing through Jesus.

The reading begins by telling about Jairus, a synagogue ruler, who approaches Jesus with a request that Jesus heal his sick daughter. The story, however, is quickly interrupted by another story – one sandwiched between the first story’s beginning and end. This one involves a woman who has suffered greatly with a twelve-year discharge of blood. The woman has heard reports about Jesus and

believes he can save her from her condition. But for some reason (can you guess why?) she is afraid to come to him openly.

The woman therefore secretly touches his garment while shielded by the crowd. And this effort of hers does the trick. The woman is saved from her condition just as she had hoped.

But Jesus knows that someone has touched him. Because power has gone out from him. He stops and asks: "Who touched my garment?" The disciples try to point out that this is a ridiculous question given the crowd, but Jesus continues to ask: "Who touched me?"

The woman is afraid. Nevertheless, she comes forward and confesses. Jesus responds by saying to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction."

After this, story one picks up again. But now tragedy strikes. Word comes from Jairus's house that his daughter is dead.

And here we expect the story to end. Why should Jesus be troubled with this any longer? Death, after all, is ultimate. There is no coming back from dying.

Yet Jesus responds by saying to Jairus: "Stop being afraid! Only believe!"

Jesus' words here seem odd, and maybe even callous. Why would the man be afraid? Isn't this a time for compassion, not a sermon?

But then we come to the climax of the story, and we understand. Jesus arrives at Jairus's home, enters the room where the girl is lying dead, takes her hand, and says to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And the girl is resurrected to life.

With this great miracle Jesus shows the full extent of his power. What's more, the details of the story help bring out the full meaning of what his power accomplishes.

The story, which is actually two stories – right? – both show the proper response to the in-breaking of God's reign in Jesus. The proper response is to believe in his power and understand his mission of healing. Both stories declare: "Stop being afraid! Only believe!"

Then there is this too: both stories highlight the cleansing that comes through Jesus.

The woman in the middle story was afraid to come to Jesus openly because she was unclean according to the law. When she touched his garments, she would have been even more afraid, since that meant she had sinned by making him unclean too.

But Jesus wasn't angry with the woman for this. And that's because to him the purity regulations no longer applied. He was the Holy One – as evidenced by God's voice at his baptism, and as identified even by the unclean spirit in Capernaum. Jesus possessed a holiness that could not be defiled.

What's more, his holiness drove out impurity from others. It did so for someone who merely touched his garment, and who did so without permission. Recall that this is not the first time this happened in Mark's Gospel. Back in chapter one a leper approached Jesus—breaking the law in doing so – and said to him: "If you are willing, you can cleanse me." Jesus then reached out and touched the man, saying: "I am willing. Be clean!"

As Mark's Gospel shows, Jesus brings cleaning wherever he goes. We could even call him "Mr. Clean," for he cannot be made impure, and he cleanses everyone with whom he comes in contact.

If impurity in the Old Testament truly is best understood in terms of the fall of creation and the presence of death, then Jesus cleans people from even the ultimate impurity. That's what the resurrection of Jairus's daughter shows. Jesus' authority extends even to death itself. Notice

how he grabbed the girl's hand before he raised her. He was not concerned with the impurity that the old law proclaimed. He can't be defiled.

Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, has authority even over death.

And yet consider this great paradox. At the conclusion of the Gospel we find that our Lord Jesus Christ himself dies. And not only this, but he dies by crucifixion. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," right? Jesus will die a cursed death, and then his body will be transferred to a tomb where his dead body will lie in an unclean place.

The one with authority over death dies... the Holy One of God becomes unclean... what's going on? Jesus explains this in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many."

Why did the one with authority over death die? Why did the Holy One of God subject himself to impurity? This was done in order to save us from the power of death. It took place so that Jesus can tell us, even in the midst of this fallen world and present evil age: "Stop being afraid! Only believe!"

This Advent season, as we ponder both Christ's birth as a child and his coming again in glory, let us recall that he comes to save us from our greatest enemies, and this includes death. He has authority over death and has overcome it on our behalf. Through

his death he has saved us from our death; and through his resurrection he has opened to us the way of heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, is coming again soon. And on that day, he will banish death and purify his creation forever. Knowing this, may the Lord God our heavenly Father still our fears, strengthen our faith, and preserve us in hope, as we joyfully await the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection to glory on the last day. In the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

ADVENT HYMN (Stand) Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

LSB 347

- 1 **“Comfort, comfort ye My people,
 Speak ye peace,” thus saith our God;
 “Comfort those who sit in darkness,
 Mourning ‘neath their sorrows’ load.
 Speak ye to Jerusalem
 Of the peace that waits for them;
 Tell her that her sins I cover
 And her warfare now is over.”**

- 2 **Yea, her sins our God will pardon,
 Blotting out each dark misdeed;
 All that well deserved His anger
 He no more will see or heed.
 She hath suffered many_a day,
 Now her griefs have passed away;
 God will change her pining sadness
 Into ever-springing gladness.**

- 3 **Hark, the herald’s voice is crying
 In the desert far and near,
 Calling sinners to repentance,
 Since the Kingdom now is here.
 O that warning cry obey!
 Now prepare for God a way;**

**Let the valleys rise to meet Him
And the hills bow down to greet Him.**

- 4 Make ye straight what long was crooked;
Make the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble,
As befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
Now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken.**

OFFERING (Be seated)

THE PRAYERS (Kneel)

LSB 256-257

NUNC DIMITTIS

LSB 258

Guide us waking, O Lord,
and guard us sleeping
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep we may rest in peace.

**Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled.
My own eyes have seen the salvation
which You have prepared in the sight of ev'ry
people:
a light to reveal You to the nations
and the glory of Your people Israel.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.
Guide us waking, O Lord,
and guard us sleeping
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep we may rest in peace.**

BENEDICTION

LSB 259

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Comfort , Comfort Ye My People

Setting: John Leavitt CPH 2004

Those serving:

Greeter: Bob Juenger

Reader: Dan Buuck

AV/Streaming: Richard Irwin

Acknowledgments

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ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT ST. PAUL'S

2023

WORSHIP SCHEDULE



MIDWEEK
December 6, 10,

ADVENT SERVICES
10 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Worship – Sunday, December 24

- 10:00 a.m. Regular Communion Service
- 5:00 p.m. Candlelight service for families
- 7:30 p.m. Pre-service Music
- 8:00 p.m. Candlelight service with Holy Communion

Christmas Day Worship – Monday, December 25

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