

+DIVINE SERVICE II+
OF THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT + 12 DECEMBER 2021



The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

A member congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

902 S. Maple

Inglewood, CA 90301-3824

tgsicms.org

The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

“A Church where God gives and we receive.”

- ❖ The Rev. Edward Killian, Pastor (mobile) 424.293.6588
- ❖ Ms. Moira Killian, Secretary (Office) 310.671-7644
 - ❖ Mr. Jay Rogers, Organist/Music Director
 - ❖ Mr. Leon Tarr, Congregational Chairman
 - ❖ Mr. Greg Griffin, Acolyte

Welcome to our Divine Service!

We are pleased that you are with us.

+Worship Notes+

*The entire service, including the **rubrics** of when to sit and when to kneel or stand, and what to say, is printed out in this folder so you may follow along.*

Welcome to weekly Divine Service at The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church! We are a congregation that confesses the Holy Bible as inerrant, that justification is by faith according to the Holy Bible and confessed in the 1580 Book of Concord. God bless you. **To all of you who are visiting** our service this morning, we extend a most cordial welcome in Jesus' name. Please introduce yourself to our pastor. It is our hope that you will feel at home in our midst and will be blessed by our message of Christ crucified and risen for the sins of the world. **If you are looking for a church home** and would like to know about our beliefs and practice, please see the pastor. He will be happy to visit with you at your convenience.

A Note From the Organist:

David Lasky is Director of Music at St. Cecilia's Church in Leominster, Mass. His "Advent Meditation" incorporates the traditional Advent hymns "Come Thou Long-expected Jesus" and "Savior of the Nations Come" along with a newer tune, "Ososo."

J. G. Walther was a cousin of J. S. Bach, and compiled an early history of music. This chorale setting features the melody in the pedal, a technique which Walther was especially fond of.

Confession and Absolution

Hymn of Invocation

354 Arise, O Christian People



1 A - rise, O Chris - tian peo - ple! Pre - pare your - selves to -
 2 Pre - pare the way be - fore Him; Pre - pare for Him the
 3 The hum - ble heart and low - ly God rais - es up on
 4 Pre - pare my heart, Lord Je - sus; Turn not from me a -



day; Pre - pare to greet the Sav - ior, Who takes your
 best. Cast out what would of - fend Him, This great, this
 high; Be - neath His feet in ter - ror The haugh - ty
 side, And help me to re - ceive You This bless - ed



sins a - way. To us by grace a - lone The
 heav'n - ly guest. Make straight, make plain the way: The
 soul shall lie. The heart sin - cere and right, That
 Ad - vent - tide. From stall and man - ger low Come



truth and light were giv - en; The prom - ised Lord from
 low - ly val - leys rais - ing, The heights of pride a -
 heeds God's in - vi - ta - tion And makes true prep - a -
 now to dwell with - in me; I'll sing Your prais - es



heav - en To all the world is shown.
 bas - ing, His path all e - ven lay.
 ra - tion— It is the Lord's de - light.
 glad - ly And forth Your glo - ry show.

Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Exhortation

LSB 167

- P** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
C **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Kneel/Stand

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Confession of Sins

LSB 167

- P** Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.
C **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Absolution

LSB 167

- P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Stand

Service of the Word

Introit

Psalm 85:1–2, 6, 8; antiphon: Philippians 4:4–5

Rejoice in the Lord | always;*
again I will | say, Rejoice.
Let your reasonableness be known to | everyone.*
The Lord | is at hand.
LORD, you were favorable | to your land;*
you restored the fortunes of | Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of your | people;*
you covered | all their sin.

Will you not revive | us again,*
that your people may re- | jice in you?

Let me hear what God the | LORD will speak,*

**for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back
to | folly.**

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;

as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Rejoice in the Lord | always;*

again I will | say, Rejoice.

Let your reasonableness be known to | everyone.*

The Lord | is at hand.

Kyrie

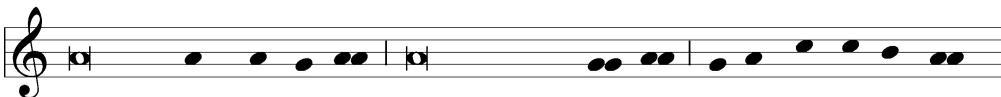
LSB 168



A In peace let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



A For the peace from a-bove and for our sal-va-tion let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



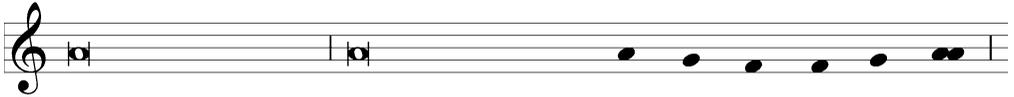
A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



and for the uni - ty of all let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



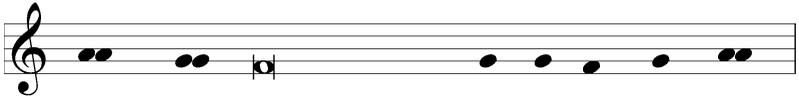
A For this holy house and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise



let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



A Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



C A - men.

This Is the Feast is omitted during Advent

Salutation and Collect of the Day



P The Lord be with you.



C And al - so with you.

P Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



C A - - men.

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's
hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the
LORD;

make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made
low;

the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,



and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual

Psalm 80:1-2

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, | shine forth.*

Stir up your might and come to | save us!

Give ear, O Shepherd of | Israel,*

you who lead Joseph | like a flock!

Epistle

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

¹This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Alleluia and Verse

LSB 173

C Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 11:2-11

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the eleventh chapter.



C Glo - ry to You, O Lord.

²When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What



did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.



C Praise to You, O Christ.



Nicene Creed

**☐ I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;**

**who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;**

**and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.**

**And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.**

**And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.**

**And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.**

Sit



Hymn of the Day

347 Comfort, Comfort Ye My People



1 "Com - fort, com - fort ye My peo - ple, Speak ye peace," thus
2 Yea, her sins our God will par - don, Blot - ting out each
3 Hark, the her - ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert
4 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed; Make the rough - er



saith our God; "Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, Mourn - ing
dark mis - deed; All that well de - served His an - ger He no
far and near, Call - ing sin - ners to re - pen - tance, Since the
plac - es plain. Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be -



'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem
more will see or heed. She hath suf - fered man - y a day,
King - dom now is here. O that warn - ing cry o - bey!
fits His ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry of the Lord



Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her
Now her griefs have passed a - way; God will change her
Now pre - pare for God a way; Let the val - leys
Now o'er earth is shed a - broad, And all flesh shall



sins I cov - er And her war - fare now is o - ver."
pin - ing sad - ness In - to ev - er - spring - ing glad - ness.
rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.
see the to - ken That His Word is nev - er bro - ken.

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Sermon

Pastor Edward Killian

Stand

Prayer of the Church

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



me? I will of-fer the sac-ri - fice of thanks - giv - ing and will



call on the name of the Lord. I will take the cup of sal-



va-tion and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my



vows to the Lord now in the pres - ence of all His peo - ple, in the



courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Je-ru - sa - lem.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface

LSB 177



P The Lord be with you.



G And al-so with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Proper Preface (Abbreviated)

LSB 177

P It is truly good, right, and salutary . . . evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus

LSB 178

C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of

pow'r and might: Heav'n and earth are full of Your

glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed is He who comes in the name

**For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Pax Domini

LSB 180



P The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.



C A - men.

Agnus Dei

LSB 180



C Lamb of God, You take a - way the sin of the world;



have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, You take a - way the



sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of



God, You take a - way the sin of the world;



grant us peace, grant us peace.

Sit

Distribution

Distribution Hymn

617 O Lord, We Praise Thee



1 O Lord, we praise Thee, bless Thee, and a - dore Thee,
 2 Thy ho - ly bod - y in - to death was giv - en,
 3 May God be - stow on us His grace and fa - vor



In thanks - giv - ing bow be - fore Thee. Thou with Thy
 Life to win for us in heav - en. No great - er
 That we fol - low Christ our Sav - ior And live to -



bod - y and Thy blood didst nour - ish Our weak souls that
 love than this to Thee could bind us; May this feast there -
 geth - er here in love and u - nion Nor de - spise this



they may flour - ish: O Lord, have mer - cy!
 of re - mind us! O Lord, have mer - cy!
 blest Com - mu - nion! O Lord, have mer - cy!



May Thy bod - y, Lord, born of Mar - y, That our
 Lord, Thy kind - ness did so con - strain Thee That Thy
 Let not Thy good Spir - it for - sake us; Grant that



sins and sor - rows did car - ry, And Thy blood for us plead
 blood should bless and sus - tain me. All our debt Thou hast paid;
 heav'n - ly - mind - ed He make us; Give Thy Church, Lord, to see



In all tri - al, fear, and need: O Lord, have mer - cy!
 Peace with God once more is made: O Lord, have mer - cy!
 Days of peace and u - ni - ty: O Lord, have mer - cy!

Tune: Public domain

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Distribution Hymn

632 O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee



1 O Je - sus, bless - ed Lord, to Thee My heart - felt
2 Break forth, my soul, for joy and say: What wealth is
thanks for - ev - er be, Who hast so lov - ing -
come to me this day! My Sav - ior dwells with -
ly be - stowed On me Thy bod - y and Thy blood.
in my heart: How blessed am I! How good Thou art!

Tune and text: Public domain

Distribution Hymn

740 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb, Ev - er glad at
2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my
3 Who so hap - py as I am, E - ven now the
heart I am; For my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,
staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,
Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,
Knows my need and well pro - vides me, Loves me ev - 'ry
In - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; When I thirst, He
By His an - gel host at - tend - ed, He shall fold me
day the same, E - ven calls me by my name.
bids me go Where the qui - et wa - ters flow.
to His breast, There with - in His arms to rest.

Text and tune: Public domain

Thank the Lord

LSB 181

C Thank the Lord and sing His praise; tell ev-'ry-one what
He has done. Let ev-'ry-one who seeks the Lord re-
joice and proud-ly bear His name. He re-calls His prom-is-
es and leads His peo-ple forth in joy with shouts of thanks -
giv-ing. Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia.

Post-Communion Collect

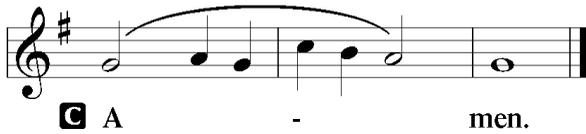
P Let us pray.
We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C A - men.

Benediction

LSB 183

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you
and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.



Hymn to Depart

352 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord



1 Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has tru - ly
 2 What the Fa - thers most de - sired, What the proph - ets'
 3 A - bram's prom - ised great re - ward, Zi - on's help - er,
 4 As Your com - ing was in peace, Qui - et, full of



kept His word And at last to us did send
 heart in - spired, What they longed for man - ya year,
 Ja - cob's Lord— Him of two - fold race be - hold—
 gen - tle - ness, Let the same mind dwell in me



Christ, the sin - ner's help and friend.
 Stands ful - filled in glo - ry here.
 Tru - ly came, as long fore - told.
 Which is Yours e - ter - nal - ly.

5 Bruise for me the serpent's head
 That, set free from doubt and dread,
 I may cling to You in faith,
 Safely kept through life and death.

6 Then when You will come again
 As the glorious king to reign,
 I with joy will see Your face,
 Freely ransomed by Your grace.

Tune and text: Public domain

Arise, O Christian People

J. G. Walther (1684-1748)

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✚ THIS WEEK'S NOTES ✚

Announcements

+ Last Sunday's Attendance: 34
Midweek Attendance: 25

+Join us after service to help decorate the church for Christmas!

+ Dinner will be offered at 6pm on Wednesday nights before Vespers!

+ Look for the Poinsettia Order form in your bulletin! If you'd like to order one, **turn it into Moira or the church office before Dec. 20th. There are 8 left!**

Schedule for Upcoming Midweek Advent Services

Wednesday Vespers at 7pm
December 15th



Schedule for Christmas Services

Christmas Eve – Friday, 24 December
Service of Lessons and Carols
beginning with Organ Recital at 3:30pm

Christmas Day – Saturday, 25 December
Divine Service at 10am



Synod Sentences for the **Third Sunday in Advent**

John the Baptizer Prepares the Way for the Lord

The voice of the Baptizer cried out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord . . ." (Isa. 40:1). John called the people to be made ready for the Messiah's coming through repentance, for "all flesh is grass" (Isa. 40:6). Now He asks from prison, "Are you the one who is to come . . .?" (Matt. 11:2). Jesus' works bear witness that He is. The sick are made well; the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Their iniquity is pardoned; they have received from the Lord's hand double forgiveness for all their sins. The "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1) still deliver Christ's overflowing forgiveness to the poor in spirit, comforting God's people with the word of the Gospel which stands forever. This Gospel produces rejoicing among all those who believe.

A Prayer for the **Third Week in Advent**

Lord God, heavenly Father, You gave Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to become Man and to come into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil, deliver us poor offenders from sin and

death, and give us everlasting life: We beseech You so to rule and govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that we may seek no other refuge than His Word, and thus avoid the sin to which we are by nature inclined, in order that we may always be found among the faithful followers of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Lutherans for Life Thought for the Third Sunday in Advent

“Speak tenderly” in Isaiah 40:1-2 is literally “speak to the heart.” More than nice-sounding words, all of the Good News encapsulated in the first and second coming of Jesus speaks powerfully to those with struggling and burdened hearts. The life issues give us opportunity to speak this Good News to matters of the heart, especially those considered “controversial” and “divisive.” *Prayer: Thank You for touching our hearts with the Good News! Help us share it with all who deal with matters of the heart. Amen.*

An Excerpt from Luther’s Writings

“Christ answered John...in a twofold way...Here Christ first points them to the works, and then also to the words saying ‘And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.’ With these words He does not only confess that He is the Christ, but also warns them against finding occasion of stumbling in Him.... For one can dispense with all the saints, but Christ is the only One that no man can dispense with.” *From the Church Postil for Gaudete.*

A Snippet From 1517

The following is an excerpt from “A Year of Grace: Collected Sermons of Advent through Pentecost” written by Bo Giertz and translated by Bror Erickson (1517 Publishing, 2019).

Shall we look for another?” This is the Baptist’s question in the Gospel reading of [Matthew 11:2-11](#). Many people have the same question today.

The Baptist sat in prison plagued with doubt. What if he had been wrong? What if Jesus wasn’t the one who was to come? What if God hadn’t intervened here?

If such questions could plague John the Baptist, isn’t so amazing that they could also plague us. Are you the one who is to come? Shall we look for another? Today the question is something like this: Is Jesus really the Son of God? Is he the one who knows God better than anyone else? he who was sent for our salvation? On what does our eternal destiny finally depend? Is he sent also for my sake, or must I seek help for myself in other quarters?

Can one find answers for such questions? Can one be certain? And how can one be certain? Jesus gives us the answer: through hearing and seeing. The answer was given to John the Baptist. He had asked if Jesus was the one who was to come, the Messiah, God’s Son. Jesus didn’t answer directly that he did not see purely who he was. He answered instead, “Go and tell John what you now hear and see.” He pointed to his word and his deeds.

He didn’t answer directly.

Why didn’t he answer directly? Because that doesn’t help a person hear that Jesus is God’s Son. Not once does God himself say it. We have all heard it and learned it. But one can know it and understand it without truly believing, and thus one is not certain and does not believe it in the Christian manner. So when difficulties come, faith is torn asunder. One completely misconceives of what it means both that God is God and that Jesus is God’s Son. The Jews did this. They

expected that the Messiah would be a great and powerful king who would make them autonomous and bring them secure income. This belief was behind many cries of hosanna when he entered the city. It explains how the mood changed so quickly that those who cried hosanna on Sunday could cry crucify him on Friday.

In like manner, people now have misconceptions of their own about Christ when they only learn from others. They have heard that Jesus is God's Son, that he is good and merciful, and that his mercy covers everything. They heard this as children and have believed it. They recognize that God exists and that if Jesus is God's Son, he must show great divinity. But then there is a traffic accident or a thrombosis that tears asunder all one's calculations, everything that man hoped upon. Then come the doubts. Now one is like John, in darkness and abandoned and knowing not what one shall believe. One is perhaps completely bitter and says, "Ack, it is all just prattle. There isn't any God; if there was, nothing like this would happen."

The mistake is that one has not heard and seen Jesus himself. Living faith is not built on something one has heard from others. It is built on something Jesus himself has done with me, something that I have experienced while in the company of Jesus. This is something one can actually do today. One does it when one hears his word, applies it to himself, speaks with him in prayer, and comes to Holy Communion. Then one learns to know Jesus in a new manner. One learns what his divinity really means. It doesn't mean that he is some sort of emergency rescue that one has no use for when all is going well but is bound to turn to immediately when everything starts going crazy. One must realize that everything already is as crazy as anything can be.

Living faith is not built on something one has heard from others. It is built on something Jesus himself has done with me, something that I have experienced while in the company of Jesus.

I have not one single day of my life kept God's commandments, loved him with my whole heart, cared about and been good to all my neighbors. I have not been pure and true in my heart. But in the great catastrophe, Christ has intervened and paid for my sin. When I believe in him and keep fast to him, everything is forgiven. So I need him, not just sometimes but always, day and night. I am one of the poor for whom the gospel is preached. I am a blind man who has found my sight. Now I know something about Jesus, not only what others have taught me, that he is God's Son. I myself have met he who is my Savior. I have heard and seen. This is the answer to the first question.

Is all this certain?

No, Jesus says. One can take offense, even if one hears and sees, even if one learns to know Jesus: "Blessed is he who is not offended by me." He is set for the fall and rising of many and as a sign that is spoken against. One can be offended. One can fret. One can criticize and denigrate. Or one can wonder and shake his head.

The temptation meets us all. John met it. There he sat in the prison. The enemies seemed to have triumphed. Christ ought to intervene and administer justice. Why does he let all this happen? The same temptation met the disciples: Why doesn't the Master use his power to beat down evil? He healed the sick and fed the hungry. But when it came to the most important thing, his own great matter, he let himself be bound and led away.

These very same questions can be a temptation and tribulation for us: it seems anyone and everyone mocks what should be most sacred. A neighbor crosses the line and with complete impunity says that these are merely fables. Coworkers at the office smirk and sneer at you for believing such things. And what should not happen out there in the world?

The temptation is to take offense at the insignificance of Jesus and his apparent powerlessness: that he does not display his power in a manner that everyone is forced to bow to. What did John do when these questions plagued him? He sent an envoy to Jesus. He turned to him for an answer. Not everyone is so wise. On the contrary, many are such as Jesus says here that John was not: they are like reeds that are blown here and there in the wind. It is a picture of those who are dependent on all expressions of opinion and gusts of wind. She imagines that she is contemporary, freethinking, and independent. But in reality, she is bound. Hopelessly dependent on her environment and everything that everyone is currently chasing after, imitating, and taking part in.

Or perhaps they are more similar to the eunuch Jesus speaks about, the man with the nice clothing, to all appearances secure, sophisticated, and urbane. But he is empty inside, afraid to be different, a fool, and not as fine as others. These kinds of people dare not take Jesus seriously.

So Jesus can be a stumbling block because he demands that we be different, think and do differently. The most common reason is possibly only that a person just wants a bit of reprieve. They want to avoid taking a position, defer judgment. Maybe he calls himself a seeker, but he isn't that—one who seeks the truth, not an excuse to avoid making a decision. But you seekers, what do you wait for? You will never escape having to take a position. When you avoid taking a position for Christ, you take a position against Christ. It is dangerous—more dangerous than taking a stand against all your social circles.

Everything is not certain. One can take offense and evade. He can say with Pilate: "What is truth?" Or, as the man in the parable, "Please accept my apologies." Or, like the Jews, "Have any of the Sanhedrin believed in Him?" Then one will never be certain.

But you can be certain.

How was John certain? How were the disciples certain? We have already said it: through hearing and seeing. Through the deeds and words of Jesus. We also have these words and deeds of Jesus among us, if we will only hear and see.

You are a Christian even when you doubt so long as you go to Christ with it.

This is the purpose of the new church year that we have begun. Christ has come. He comes as he who wanders through the world: in the form of the word, present in the gospel and in the works He has instituted. The greatest is that which Jesus names last: the poor have good news preached to them. The word about forgiveness, about Christ giving his life. A person becomes certain that there is a God when God deals with us, when he forgives our sins with the direct touch of God's hand. Reason will not make a man certain, but when one confesses His sins and receives forgiveness, even our doubts we can take with us, even if others accuse us of being heathens. Talk with Christ about them. Even though John was the greatest, he was afflicted by uncertainty, so you are a Christian even when you doubt so long as you go to Christ with it. In the end, no one can give solutions or answers. One must find them from Christ himself. And just for that reason, he is here, not as a teacher but as the resurrected Savior, present in all that happens in his church. For this reason, he takes you up in his church. You can be certain. Jesus can make you certain that he is God's Son.

