

+DIVINE SERVICE III+  
OF THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST  
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT + 19 DECEMBER 2021

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## The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

A member congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

902 S. Maple

Inglewood, CA 90301-3824

[tgslcms.org](http://tgslcms.org)

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# 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:

James L. Brauer is professor emeritus of applied theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He has published a few organ compositions in recent years. His setting of “Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding” has a joyful mood.

Bach's fugue is based on an ancient chant. The subject is the first phrase, then after developing it is rich counterpoint, he has the pedal enter with the complete melody, to dramatic effect.

# Confession and Absolution

## Hymn of Invocation

## 435 Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain



1 Come to Cal - v'ry's ho - ly moun - tain, Sin - ners, ru - ined  
 2 Come in pov - er - ty and mean - ness, Come de - filed, with -  
 3 Come in sor - row and con - tri - tion, Wound - ed, im - po -  
 4 They that drink shall live for - ev - er; 'Tis a soul - re -



by the fall; Here a pure and heal - ing foun - tain  
 out, with - in; From in - fec - tion and un - clean - ness,  
 tent, and blind; Here the guilt - y, free re - mis - sion,  
 new - ing flood. God is faith - ful; God will nev - er



Flows for you, for me, for all, In a full, per -  
 From the lep - ro - sy of sin, Wash your robes and  
 Here the trou - bled, peace may find. Health this foun - tain  
 Break His cov - e - nant of blood, Signed when our Re -



pet - ual tide, O - pened when our Sav - ior died.  
 make them white; Ye shall walk with God in light.  
 will re - store; They that drink shall thirst no more.  
 deem - er died, Sealed when He was glo - ri - fied.

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 184

- P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
**C** **who made heaven and earth.**
- P** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,  
**C** **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

*Kneel/Stand*

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

## Confession of Sins

LSB 184

- P** O almighty God, merciful Father,  
**C** **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

## Absolution

LSB 185

- P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I 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 19:1, 4–6; antiphon: Isaiah 45:8a*

*Show, O heavens, | from above,\*  
and let the clouds rain down | righteousness;  
let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may | bear fruit,\*  
let the earth cause them | both to sprout.  
The heavens declare the glo- | ry of God,\**

*and the sky above proclaims his | handiwork.  
Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end | of  
the world.\**

*In them he has set a tent | for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his | chamber,\*  
and, like a strong man, runs its | course with joy.  
Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the | end of them,\*  
and there is nothing hidden | from its heat.*

## Gloria Patri

LSB 186



**C** Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther and to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

## Kyrie

LSB 186



**C** Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

**Gloria is omitted during Advent**

## Salutation and Collect of the Day



**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with thy spir - it.



**P** Let us pray.

**P** Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



**C** A - men.

*Sit*

## Old Testament

*Deuteronomy 18:15–19*

<sup>15</sup>“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—<sup>16</sup>just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’<sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>19</sup>And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.’”

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Psalm

*Psalm 111; antiphon: v. 9*

### Great Are the LORD's Works

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my | whole heart,\*  
in the company of the upright, in the congre- | gation.

<sup>2</sup>**Great are the works | of the LORD,\*  
studied by all who de- | light in them.**

<sup>3</sup>Full of splendor and majesty | is his work,\*  
and his righteousness endures for- | ever.

<sup>4</sup>**He has caused his wondrous works to be re- | membered;\*  
the LORD is gracious and | merciful.**

<sup>5</sup>He provides food for those who | fear him;\*

he remembers his covenant for- | ever.  
**6He has shown his people the power | of his works,\***  
**in giving them the inheritance of the | nations.**  
 7The works of his hands are faith- | ful and just;\*  
 all his precepts are | trustworthy;  
**8they are established forever and | ever,\***  
**to be performed with faithfulness and up- | rightness.**  
 9He sent redemption to his people;  
 he has commanded his covenant for- | ever.\*  
 Holy and awesome | is his name!  
**10The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;**  
**all those who practice it have a good under- | standing.\***  
**His praise endures for- | ever!**

## Epistle

*Philippians 4:4-7*

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**P** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Stand

### Alleluia

*LSB 190*



**C** Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

### Holy Gospel

*Luke 1:39-56*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the first chapter.



**C** Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

## Mary Visits Elizabeth

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, <sup>40</sup>and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup>and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup>And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup>For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

## The Magnificat

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup>for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup>And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
<sup>52</sup>he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;  
<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup>as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."  
<sup>56</sup>And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.



**G** Praise be to Thee, 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

## 346 When All the World Was Cursed



1 When all the world was cursed By Mo-ses' con-dem-na-tion,  
 2 Be-fore he yet was born, He leaped in joy-ful meet-ing,  
 3 Be-hold the Lamb of God That bears the world's trans-gres-sion,  
 4 O grant, dear Lord of love, That we re-ceive, re-joic-ing,



Saint John the Bap-tist came With words of con-so-la-tion.  
 Con-fess-ing Him as Lord Whose moth-er he was greet-ing.  
 Whose sac-ri-fice re-moves The dev-il's dread op-pres-sion.  
 The word pro-claimed by John, Our true re-pen-tance voic-ing,



With true fore-run-ner's zeal The great-er One he named,  
 By Jor-dan's roll-ing stream, A new E-li-jah bold,  
 Be-hold the Lamb of God, Who takes a-way our sin,  
 That glad-ly we may walk Up-on our Sav-ior's way



And Him, as yet un-known, As Sav-ior he pro-claimed.  
 He tes-ti-fied of Him Of whom the proph-ets told:  
 Who for our peace and joy Will full a-tone-ment win.  
 Un-til we live with Him In His e-ter-nal day.

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## Sermon

*Pastor Edward Killian*

*Stand*

## Offertory

LSB 192



☐ Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-

new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -  
 way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it  
 from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -  
 tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

**Offering** *Collected after service in the back of the church.*

**Prayer of the Church**

*The proper response is "Lord, have mercy."*

- P** In peace, let us pray to the Lord:
- C** **Lord, have mercy.**
  
- P** For our congregation, which has rejoiced at the first advent of Christ in the flesh, in His continual advent among us in His Word and Sacrament, and as we await His second advent in glory for judgment at the Last Day, that God would keep us in this Word and faith unto the end, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** For all pastors who, like John the Baptist, cry out with the Word of truth in the wilderness of this fallen world, that they would be preserved in their labors; and that God would send workers into His vineyard and bring forth a bountiful harvest, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** For the schools of the Church, that our young people may be taught to delight and treasure the Word of God above all riches, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** For relief from war and disorder, strife and rebellion; and for good government, faithful magistrates and peace to aid the swift spread of the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** For all Christian citizens, that God would renew our hearts with thanksgiving for His many blessings and grant us the wisdom to use them for His good purposes, let us pray to the Lord:

- P** For the sick and the suffering, and those in need of our prayer, especially *Alice, Carmen, Cynthia, the Conrad's, Dalton, David, Debra, Faith, Gloria, James, Jamesetta, Jod, Johnathan, Karen, Lynette, Marie, Marion and her family, Philip, Sabrina, Steve, and Susie* that they would be anxious for nothing, but instead make their requests known to Christ, the God of peace, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** For all preparing to receive the Lord's Supper, that we may rejoice in the presence of Christ, our true Emmanuel, who gives us a share in His divine life and forgiveness by His body and blood, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now await the joyous return of Christ, who shares our human nature from the womb of the Virgin and has forgiven our sin and destroyed death, let us pray to the Lord:
- P** Lord God, heavenly Father, we give You thanks for Your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is both the Root of Jesse and the Righteous Branch from his stump. By Christ's death You have set Him up as an ensign before the peoples to draw all to Yourself. By His resurrection, You have silenced the kings who stood against Him and taken away the power of death. Grant that, as we recall with thanksgiving His advent in the flesh, we may always confess Him and remain watchful for His advent in glory at the Last Day; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

## Service of the Sacrament

### Preface

LSB 194



**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with thy spir - it.



**P** Lift up your hearts.



**C** We lift them up un - to the Lord.



**P** Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God.



**C** It is meet and right so to do.

### Proper Preface (Abbreviated)

*LSB 194*

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

### Sanctus

*LSB 195*



**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;



heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,



ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,



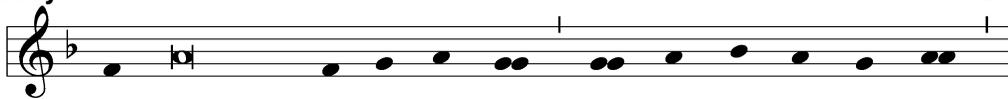
bless - ed is He, bless - ed is He that com - eth in the name of the Lord.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

# Lord's Prayer

LSB 196



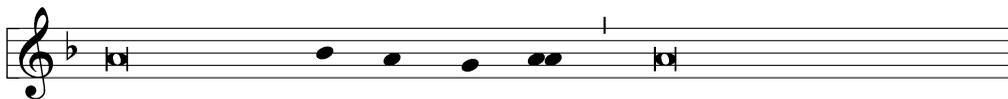
**P** Our Father who art in heav - en, hal - low - ed be Thy name,



Thy king - dom come, Thy will be done on earth as it



is in heav - en; give us this day our dai - ly bread;



and forgive us our tres - pass - es as we forgive those who



tres - pass a - gainst us; and lead us not in - to



temp - ta - tion, but deliver us from e - vil.



**C** For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the



glo - ry for - ev - er and ev - er. A - men.

## The Words of Our Lord

LSB 197



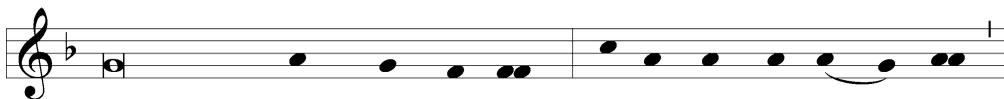
**P** Our Lord Je-sus Christ, on the night when He was be-trayed, took bread,



and when He had giv - en thanks, He broke it and gave it to the



dis-ci-ples and said: "Take, eat; this is My  $\text{I}$  bod - y, which is giv-en for you.



This do in re-mem - brance of Me." In the same way al - so



He took the cup after sup - per, and when He had giv-en thanks, He gave it



to them, say - ing: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in



My  $\text{I}$  blood, which is shed for you for the for-give-ness of sins.



This do, as often as you drink it, in re-mem-brance of Me."

## Pax Domini

LSB 197



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



■ A - men.

## Agnus Dei

LSB 198



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that



tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us.



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, grant us Thy peace. A - men.

*Sit*

## Distribution



Distribution Hymn

364 Away in a Manger



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,  
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,  
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask Thee to stay



The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head.  
 But lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes.  
 Close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



The stars in the sky \_\_\_\_\_ looked down where He lay,  
 I love Thee, Lord Je - sus! Look down from the sky,  
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in Thy ten - der care,



The lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
 And stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.  
 And take us to heav - en to live with Thee there.

Tune and text: Public domain

Distribution Hymn

350 Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come



1 Come, Thou pre - cious Ran - som, come, On - ly hope for  
 2 En - ter now my wait - ing heart, Glo - rious King and  
 3 My ho - san - nas and my palms Gra - cious - ly re -  
 4 Hail! Ho - san - na, Da - vid's Son! Je - sus, hear our



sin - ful mor - tals! Come, O Sav - ior of the world!  
 Lord most ho - ly. Dwell in me and ne'er de - part,  
 ceive, I pray Thee; Ev - er - more, as best I can,  
 sup - pli - ca - tion! Let Thy king - dom, scep - ter, crown,



O - pen are to Thee all por - tals. Come, Thy beau - ty  
Though I am but poor and low - ly. Ah, what rich - es  
Sav - ior, I will hom - age pay Thee, And in faith I  
Bring us bless - ing and sal - va - tion, That for - ev - er



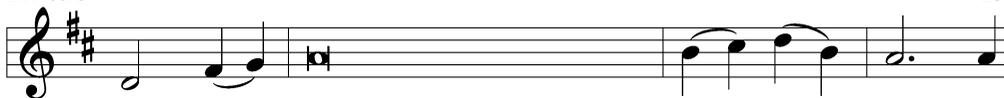
let us see; Anx - ious - ly we wait for Thee.  
will be mine When Thou art my guest di - vine!  
will em - brace, Lord, Thy mer - it through Thy grace.  
we may sing: Hail! Ho - san - na to our King.

Text and tune: Public domain

*Stand*

## Nunc Dimittis

LSB 199



**C** Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac -



cord - ing to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,



which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,



a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy

peo - ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry be to the Father and

to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,

is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

### Thanksgiving

*LSB 200*

**A** O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,

**B** and His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

### 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.

## Salutation

LSB 201



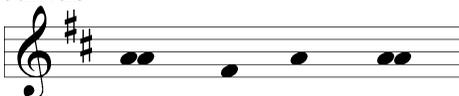
**P** The Lord be with you.



**C** And with thy spir - it.

## Benedicamus

LSB 202



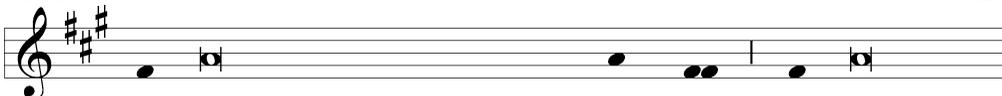
**A** Bless we the Lord.



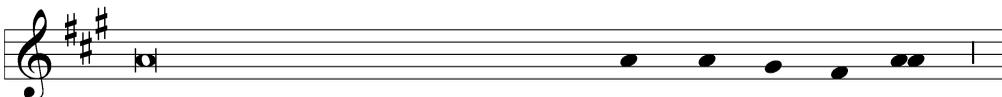
**C** Thanks be to God.

## Benediction

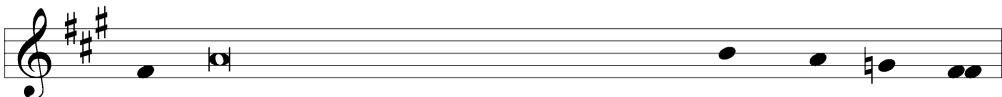
LSB 202



**P** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.



**C** A-men, a-men, a - men.

## Hymn to Depart

## 349 Hark the Glad Sound



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior  
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's  
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing  
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a  
bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him  
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His  
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es



throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.  
burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.  
grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

Tune and text: Public domain

## Fugue on the "Magnificat" BWV 733

*J. S. Bach (1685-1750)*

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## ✝ THIS WEEK'S NOTES ✝

### Announcements

+ Last Sunday's Attendance: 33  
Midweek Attendance: 27

+ Thank you to everyone who was able to help decorate the church for Christmas!

+ Today is the last day to order your Poinsettia! There are two poinsettias left!



## **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 Fourth Sunday in Advent**

### ***John the Baptizer Points Everyone to the Messiah***

The coming of God in all His unveiled power at Mount Sinai was terrifying to the people of Israel. The thundering voice of the Lord puts sinners in fear of death (Deut. 18:15–19). God, therefore, raised up a prophet like Moses—the Messiah, the Christ. God came to His people veiled in human flesh. The skies poured down the Righteous One from heaven; the earth opened her womb and brought forth Salvation (Introit) through the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord (Luke 1:39–56). The fruit of her womb is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the One whose sandal strap John was not worthy to loose (John 1:19–28). In Jesus we are delivered from fear and anxiety. In Him alone we have the peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:4–7).

### **A Prayer for the Fourth Week in Advent**

Lord God, heavenly Father, it is good and right that we should give thanks to You, that You have given us a glorious baptism like that of John the Baptist, and that therein You have promised us the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and everlasting life through Your Son, Jesus Christ: We beseech You, by Your grace and mercy preserve us in such faith, that we never doubt Your promise, but be comforted by our baptism in all temptations; and grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may renounce sin, and ever continue in the righteousness bestowed on us in baptism, until, by Your grace, we obtain our 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.

### **A Stewardship Thought for Fourth Sunday in Advent**

**Philippians 4:6 – “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”** Paul puts two things in opposition to each other: anxiety and prayer. So, trade your worries for prayers! You have a Father who loves you and desires to hear your prayers and bless you.

### **Lutherans for Life Thought for the Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Jesus brought God delicately amidst sinners, as humble in crucifixion as He was helpless in conception. Yet this estate did not hinder but, in fact, heralded the full realm and reign of God for us. And thereby He reaffirmed the worth of even the feeblest human beings. God's gift of life arrives all the better for the plain packaging He habitually hides it behind. *Prayer: Lamb of God, make it so that our taking hold of You leads us to cradle Your little ones as well. Amen.*

### **An Excerpt from Luther's Writings**

"John likewise directs the people away from himself to Christ. And although this is a higher and greater office than that of a prophet, yet it is not so on account of his merit, but on account of the presence of his Master. And in praising John for being more than a prophet, not his worthiness but that of his Master, Who is present, is extolled." *From the Church Postil for Rorate coeli, 1520s.*

### **A Snippet From 1517**

#### ***John the Baptist: Witness in the Wilderness***

*John is not the Light; he is the servant sent to bear witness to the light.*

John the Baptist is the preacher of Advent par excellence. He stands on the threshold between the Old and New Testaments with one foot in the Old Testament and the other in the New. The prologue of Mark's Gospel (Mark 1:1-8/Advent II) provides a compact introduction to this wilderness preacher moving quickly to the One who comes after John. Matthew and Luke provide more extensive coverage of John the Baptist. Luther points out that the Gospel according to John is much more terse omitting the details of John the Baptist's unusual birth.\* The fourth evangelist simply introduces him as a man sent from God whose name was John (John 1:6). The Fourth Gospel is more interested in John's mission as he outlines it in John 1:6-8, 19-28 (Advent III). John is not the Light; he is the servant sent to bear witness to the light.

Luther understands the office of John as that of preacher who announces the end of the old and the beginning of the new: "The beginning of the eternal kingdom of Christ and the New Testament are coincident with the time of John the Baptist. And simultaneously the regime of Moses, of the prophets, the priests and the Levites are terminated" (Luther's Works, American edition (AE) 22:38). Stern though his preaching is as he denounces sin and proclaims a repentance that is a fierce call to turn away from the darkness that is characteristic of human existence from the time our first parents grabbed for God apart from His promise, John has yet another assignment. He is the great preacher of consolation for He bears witness to the light.

The hymnist, Johann Gottfried Olearius, puts it this way:  
When all the world was cursed by Moses' condemnation,  
Saint John the Baptist came with words of consolation.  
With true forerunner's zeal the greater One he named,

And Him, as yet unknown, as Savior he proclaimed. (Lutheran Service Book 346:1)  
John is not a new Moses coming with yet more wrath and condemnation. John knows God's holy Law is not the Light of the world. That place is reserved for Jesus. He is the Light proclaimed by John in the darkness just before the dawn.  
John knows God's holy Law is not the Light of the world. That place is reserved for Jesus. John, like every other preacher in Christian history, is not the light. He does not invite his hearers to bask in his glory, be enlightened with his novel principles, or imitate his austere life.

"John is a servant and not the Lord Himself. He is the teacher and guide to the true Light, but not the Light Itself. He administers a more exalted and glorious office than the prophets did; for John did not prophesy, as they did, that Lord will appear sooner or later. No, he points his finger at Him who is already present and says: "Behold, that is He."  
(AE 22:64)

John is more than a prophet in the long success of prophets who have been sent by God from the Fall onward. John is the final prophet, "the messenger" (Malachi 3:1-4; Mark 1:2), who is sent to prepare the way of the Messiah. Now in his words, the many and various forms of prophetic speech come into concentrated focus. As John 1:29 says: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John is sent into a world darkened by sin and in the perpetual shadow of death. The whole of his life and ministry is spent directing people away from himself saying, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20). John knew his place. He was not the light but a witness to the Light of the world. Luther puts it like this:

"In brief, he is not the Light; he is a servant and witness to Christ. His duty is to preach how and in whom I am to believe. He is a witness to the Light. Through his office he is instrumental in our becoming children of this Light. Because of this he shines and serves as a valuable light. However, in comparison with Christ he is nothing but darkness. The relationship is like that of the moon and the stars. They gleam by night but not by day; they count for naught without the sun; none of them can usher in the day. The saints, with their praiseworthy lives, shine similarly; and yet by themselves they can bring no one to salvation. John is not the Light, although he leads many to the Light. But with respect to his office John the Baptist is a great man, and for its sake we laud and honor him."  
(AE 22:66)

John's greatness is found solely in the One to whom he bears witness. Without Christ Jesus, John would be one of many preachers of apocalyptic woes. But in the economy of God, he is the messenger sent to prepare the Messiah's way and the coming of His royal reign. John the Baptist will fade into the background but the Light he pointed to in the darkness will never grow dim and shines even now. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). *John T Pless, 2020*