

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Blameless Hearts

November 30, 2024 & December 1, 2024

AS WE GATHER

The “blame game” has been happening since the fall into sin when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent for their world-changing transgression. To this day when things go wrong, the “blame game” continues among siblings, spouses, coworkers, elected leaders, and governments around the world. If we are honest, we realize that we often have no one to blame but ourselves, as we are by nature sinful and unclean. In contrast to our “blame game,” we have a blameless Savior who came into this world as one of us. Through Jesus Christ, whose birth we prepare for as we begin this Advent season, we are made holy and blameless in God’s sight. We share Paul’s prayer for the church in Thessalonica to make our hearts blameless: “May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:12–13).

Reception of Holy Communion: If you are planning to receive Christ's supper today, please read through the words of exhortation in the fellowship folder. For members, it is a good review of important spiritual matters for gathering at the table. For guests, it explains our stance on confession of faith, doctrinal unity, and proper spiritual preparation to receive the Supper for your benefit.

WELCOME

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2

HANDSHAKES & HUGS

PREPARATION

OPENING HYMN #342 “What Hope! An Eden Prophesied”

What hope! An Eden prophesied Where tame live with the wild;
The lamb and lion side by side, Led by a little child!

A shoot will sprout from Jesse’s stem, A branch from David’s line,
A Prince of Peace in Bethlehem: The fruit of God’s design.

As banner of God’s love unfurled, Christ came to suffer loss,
That by His death a dying world Would rally to the cross.

Come, Jesus, come, Messiah Lord, Lost Paradise restore;
Lead past the angel’s flaming sword – Come, open heaven’s door.

(Rise)

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Pastor: Each week in Advent, we light a candle as we prepare for the arrival of the Savior, who would come to His people in human flesh and who promises to come again. In a world of darkness, a light shines. Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

People: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Pastor: The first Advent candle is known as the prophecy candle or the candle of hope. We hear again the first promise and prophesy made in the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” The Lord has kept His Word through the mouths of prophets who, for generations, pointed people to the promised Savior to come.

People: **The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

Pastor: Guided by the light of hope, we respond with the psalmist: “Our soul waits for the LORD;

People: **He is our help and our shield.**

Pastor: For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name.

People: Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in You."

The first Advent candle is lit.

HYMN #357 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" Sts. 1–2

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go. **Refrain**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: As we begin the Advent season—a time of preparation for the coming of our Savior and a time of pondering God's great love for us given in His Son—we also prepare ourselves to come before Him in humility and with honesty. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: The prophet Jeremiah proclaims, "The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made. . . . And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"

People: We confess we have not rightly rejoiced in the promises that the Lord made and fulfilled and have instead found our fulfillment in the temporal things of our lives and this world. We have sought our own rightness instead of the Lord's righteousness. Forgive us.

Pastor: Paul prays, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, . . . so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus."

People: We confess our hearts are full of blame and unholiness. Our love has been misguided and our actions have been self-serving. We have not loved you with our whole heart nor loved our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us.

Pastor: As Jesus speaks of the time of His return, He calls His followers to "straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

People: We confess we have not remained ready for your return, nor realized time is short for the work you've called us to do. We have prioritized other matters instead of your Word, relied on other things instead of your presence, and in our thoughts, words, and actions have chosen to live our way instead of by your commands. Forgive us.

Pastor: The Lord is our righteousness. He alone establishes hearts blameless in holiness at His coming. Redemption draws near. We are declared righteous, blameless, and redeemed because of the living, dying, and rising of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION & PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. From everlasting to everlasting you are our God, and you come to your people. In your Word and in the flesh of your only-begotten Son, you come that we may know forgiveness, righteousness, and redemption.

People: Prepare us to receive you in this season and always, that our hearts may be made blameless and filled with holiness;

Pastor: through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

(Be seated)

WORD

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Jeremiah 33:14–16* (The Lord’s eternal covenant)

¹⁴“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *1 Thessalonians 3:9–13* (Lives of the faithful made ready for Jesus’ return) ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? ¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

8:00 CHOIR *“Call to Advent”*

(Rise)

VERSE

Pastor: Alleluia. Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors,

People: that the King of glory may come in. Alleluia.

HOLY GOSPEL *Luke 21:25–36* (Ready and watching for the Son of Man)

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-first chapter.

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁵“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” ²⁹And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁴“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Be seated)

CHILDREN’S SONG & CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

“O Come Little Children”

O come, little children, O come one and all,
To Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small
God's Son for a gift has been sent you this night
To be your redeemer, your joy and delight.

Kneel down and adore Him with shepherds today;
O lift up your hands now and praise Him as they;
Rejoice that a Savior from sin you can boast,
And join in the song of the heavenly host.

SERMON HYMN #332 “Savior of the Nations, Come”

Savior of the nations, come, Virgin’s Son, make here Your home!
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.
Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh--Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh.
Here a maid was found with child, Yet remained a virgin mild.
In her womb this truth was shown: God was there upon His throne.
Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and kingly hall;
God of God, yet fully man, His heroic course began.
God the Father was His source, Back to God He ran His course.
Into hell His road went down, Back then to His throne and crown.
For You are the Father’s Son Who in flesh the vict’ry won.
By Your mighty pow’r make whole All our ills of flesh and soul.
From the manger newborn light Shines in glory through the night.
Darkness there no more resides; In this light faith now abides.

Rise Glory to the Father sing, Glory to the Son, our king,
Glory to the Spirit be Now and through eternity.

SERMON “Blameless in Holiness” 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

(Rise)

OFFERTORY LSB p. 192

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence,
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation,
and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and
was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

7 continued

He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

(Be seated)

OFFERING As your offering is collected, **please sign our fellowship folder** located
at the end of the pew. If you are a visitor, please leave your address and phone.
After you are finished, please pass the folder along to others in your pew, and
return it to the center aisle. You may check the folder to see names of those to
greet after the service.
the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.

(Rise)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all
people according to their needs.
Lord of all, your Son declared that if His disciples ceased praising Him,
the very stones would cry out. Receive our thanks that you continue to
preserve your Word among us.

People: **Even in a world that opposes your name, grant us tongues that
joyfully declare your praise.**

Pastor: Lord of the Church, bless all pastors, missionaries, teachers and other
servants in Christ’s church, especially our Together in Mission partner,
Pastor Chuck Ferry and family.

People: **Give success to their efforts and bring many to repentance and faith in
Christ.**

Pastor: O Lord, we often use the cares and troubles of this life as excuses for
turning to sinful things and distractions to find solace. Guard us from
temptations that would harm our faith and cause us to fear your
coming.

People: **Preserve us all by your grace, that we may wait with joy to stand
before the Son of Man in glory.**

Pastor: Almighty God, grant us repentant hearts and increase our love for one another, that we may show forth our faith in good works.

People: Help us all to be kind and compassionate, loving and forgiving one another even as Christ has loved and forgiven us.

Pastor: O Lord, our King, righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne, and steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. Watch over the authorities of our land that they might rule for the common good.

People: Grant that they would govern justly so that we may live in peace as we proclaim your love and faithfulness.

Pastor: We give thanks to you, O God, that as you establish our hearts blameless in holiness before you, so you also provide for all our needs in this body and life. Hear our earnest prayers for those who are in need of your healing and your mercy, especially Bob, Lisa, Judy, Jerry, Charlotte, Carole, Wendy, June, Audrey, Janice, David, Helga, Dick, Michael, Margie, Anna, Charlene, Danielle, Marlene, RoseMarie, Dorothy, Marga, Ardis, Noah, Guy, Mike, Jill, Janet, Vern, Cathy, Shirley and Sarah.

People: Grant them patience and perseverance as they endure their times of affliction and give them hope and peace through faith in Christ.

Pastor: Lord of life, we thank you for the promise of resurrection and life eternal. We pray for the Weil family as they remember Judy who departed this earth just three years ago.

People: Comfort them and give them hope in Christ of being reunited with Judy in glory.

Pastor: Lord of the family, we thank you for the gift of marriage and family, especially rejoicing with Dalen and Pam Heinzen as they celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

People: Bless all our families to live together in harmony and love through faith in Christ.

Pastor: Blessed are you, O Lord, and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ, who came in your name to save us from sin and death. As He visits us this day with His body and blood under the bread and wine, give us penitent hearts that worthily welcome His coming.

People: Bless each of us to rejoice in His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Pastor: God our Father, you have loved and chosen us according to your mercy and called us through the living voice of your Word. Grant to us the Spirit of your grace, that what you have begun in us may be brought to completion when Christ appears in His glory on the Last Day; for you live and reign, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

SACRAMENT

PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

PROPER PREFACE

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was promised after the fall to crush the serpent's head, who was prophesied through the prophets you called, who when the time was right came into this world in our flesh, and who sacrificed His perfect and blameless body that our hearts may be established holy and blameless through Him as we await His coming again. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying:

SANCTUS

LSB p. 208

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth adored;
Heav'n and earth with full acclaim shout the glory of your name.
Sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord;
Truly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

PAX DOMINI

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: Amen.

AGNUS DEI

LSB p. 210

O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, You take the sin of the world away;

O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.

O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, You take the sin of the world away;

Have mercy on us, Jesus Christ, And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

(Be seated)

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

HYMN #354 "Arise, O Christian People"

Arise, O Christian people! Prepare yourselves today;

Prepare to greet the Savior, Who takes your sins away.

To us by grace alone The truth and light were given;

The promised Lord from heaven To all the world is shown.

Prepare the way before Him; Prepare for Him the best.

Cast out what would offend Him, This great, this heav'nly guest.

Make straight, make plain the way: The lowly valleys raising,

The heights of pride abasing, His path all even lay.

The humble heart and lowly God raises up on high;

Beneath His feet in terror The haughty soul shall lie.

The heart sincere and right, That heeds God's invitation

And makes true preparation--It is the Lord's delight.

Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus; Turn not from me aside,

And help me to receive You This blessed Advent-tide.

From stall and manger low Come now to dwell within me;

I'll sing Your praises gladly And forth Your glory show.

HYMN #345 "Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding"

Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! "Christ is near," we hear it say.

"Cast away the works of darkness, All you children of the day!"

Startled at the solemn warning, Let the earthbound soul arise;

Christ, its sun, all sloth dispelling, Shines upon the morning skies.

See, the Lamb, so long expected, Comes with pardon down from heaven.

Let us haste, with tears of sorrow, One and all, to be forgiven;

So, when next He comes in glory And the world is wrapped in fear,

He will shield us with His mercy And with words of love draw near.

Honor, glory, might, dominion To the Father and the Son

With the ever-living Spirit While eternal ages run!

HYMN #350 "Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come"

Come, Thou precious Ransom, come, Only hope for sinful mortals!

Come, O Savior of the world! Open are to Thee all portals.

Come, Thy beauty let us see; Anxiously we wait for Thee.

Enter now my waiting heart, Glorious King and Lord most holy.

Dwell in me and ne'er depart, Though I am but poor and lowly.

Ah, what riches will be mine When Thou art my guest divine!

My hosannas and my palms Graciously receive, I pray Thee;

Evermore, as best I can, Savior, I will homage pay Thee,

And in faith I will embrace, Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.

Hail! Hosanna, David's Son! Jesus, hear our supplication!

Let Thy kingdom, scepter, crown, Bring us blessing and salvation,

That forever we may sing: Hail! Hosanna to our King.

COMMON DISMISSAL

(Rise)

POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,

People: for His steadfast love endures forever.

Pastor: We thank and praise you that as we prepare to celebrate Christ's coming in the flesh and His promised return, you have come to us now through this gift of His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and nourishment of faith. Enable us, equip us, and make us, through faith in you, and in fervent love for one another,

People: to increase and abound in love for one another and for all, so that you may establish our hearts blameless in holiness before you, our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

CLOSING SENTENCES

Pastor: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

People: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: 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.

People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN #341 "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits.
The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here.
Life and salvation He doth bring; Therefore rejoice and gladly sing.
To God the Father raise your joyful songs of praise.

A righteous Helper comes to thee; His chariot is humility,
His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter, pity in distress.
The end of all our woe He brings; Therefore the earth is glad and sings.
To Christ the Savior raise Your grateful hymns of praise.

How blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O peaceful hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless sun of joy is He Who comes to set His people free.
To God the Spirit raise Your happy shouts of praise.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; Make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heaven's employ, Adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sov'reign enter in And new and nobler life begin.
To God alone be praise For word and deed and grace!

Redeemer, come and open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide!
O enter with Thy grace divine; Thy face of mercy on me shine.
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on Until our glorious goal is won.
Eternal praise and fame We offer to Thy name.

Preacher

Liturgist

Lectors

Organist

Pastor Michael Schumacher

Pastor Harold Bender

Russell Hurst, Katie Scepanski, Debbie Nier

Deaconess Carole King

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