

4th Sunday in Advent December 23 , 2018

Year C – the Gospel of Luke

Lutheran

Living the ^ Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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- ✦ www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
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- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104
- ✦ **On Facebook through Messenger** in a discussion group shared by people throughout the United States, Kenya and Uganda. Contact Harold Weseloh on Facebook Messenger.



<http://www.memorialpcusa.org/event/fourth-sunday-of-advent/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 357 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 62

“O come, O come, Emmanuel”

“This hymn, originally in Latin, takes us back over 1,200 years to monastic life in the 8th- or 9th-century. Seven days before Christmas Eve monasteries would sing the “O antiphons” in anticipation of Christmas Eve when the eighth antiphon, “O Virgo virginum” (“O Virgin of virgins”) would be sung before and after Mary’s canticle, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46b-55)...

British hymnologist J.R. Watson provides a context for the antiphons included on the second page after the hymn in the *UM Hymnal*: “The antiphons, sometimes called the ‘O antiphons’ or ‘The Great O’s’, were designated to concentrate the mind on the coming Christmas, enriching the meaning of the Incarnation with a complex series of references from the Old and New Testaments.”

Each antiphon begins as follows:

O Sapientia (Wisdom)
O Adonai (Hebrew word for God)
O Radix Jesse (stem or root of Jesse)
O Clavis David (key of David)
O Oriens (dayspring)
O Rex genitium (King of the Gentiles)
O Emmanuel

Put together, the first letter of the second word of each antiphon spells SARCORE. If read backwards, the letters form a two-word acrostic, “Ero cras,” meaning “I will be present tomorrow.”

All of the Latin attributions to the coming Messiah are from the Old Testament except “Emmanuel,” which is found both in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. Matthew quotes Isaiah virtually verbatim—“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel”—with the exception that Matthew adds the phrase: “which being interpreted is, God with us.”

The “O Emmanuel” antiphon was traditionally sung on the night before Christmas Eve, revealing the meaning of the liturgical riddle through the completion of the acrostic...

There are numerous textual variations in many hymnals, including even the order of the stanzas...

Regular readers of this column will note that many hymns found in our hymnals transcend centuries, cultures, translations and many variations until we find them in the form that we sing. With this hymn, the essence of the original Latin text remains. By singing “O come, O come, Emmanuel” with the antiphons interspersed, Christians today may participate in a sacred Advent ritual at least 11 centuries old.”

- <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-o-come-o-come-emmanuel> **C. Michael Hawn, D.M.A., F.H.S.,** is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Church Music and *Adjunct Professor and Director, Doctor of Pastoral Music Program* at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMe0Fi8OqE8> Sung in Latin. Music video by Mannheim Steamroller performing Veni Veni (O Come O Come Emanuel) [Audio]. (C) 2015 American Gramophone

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO7ySn-Swwc> One of the best. As you listen imagine God as the piano, constantly there; as Israel, the cello, laments her condition. As the hymn nears the end, the piano slows to match the cello as if God is saying, "I hear you, I'm here." (Piano/Cello) - [ThePianoGuys](#)

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

"Into the little town of Bethlehem enters the strength of the Lord, and His name is Jesus! (Micah 5:2-5a) Christ comes as a frail infant to accomplish the will of His heavenly Father -- to mature & become the divine, sacrificial offering for sinners. He is the innocent to be slain; we are the guilty to be acquitted by His mercy. (Hebrews 10:5-10) There can be no greater confession for the whole Church than to sing with Mary, "My soul magnifies the Lord!" (Luke 1:39-45)"

- <http://www.messiahgr.org/events> MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, 2727 FIVE MILE RD. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Micah 5:2-5a; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (Next week: Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15; RCL, 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26)

"The text for this fourth Sunday in Advent is on the surface quite un-Micah-like. It could be said that Micah is among the angriest of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. He is apparently a rural farmer, furious at the depredations of folk of the big city, calling them thieves (2:2), false preachers, more interested in lighter problems like drunkenness while injustice is rampant in the city (2:11), greedy for wealth, who "hate good and love evil, both tearing and eating the flesh of the poor, breaking their bones in pieces, chopping them up like meat for the kettle, like flesh in a cauldron" (3:2-3). One can only hope the prophet is being merely metaphorical here!

These are people, says Micah, who "cry 'peace' when they have something to eat, but declare war against those who put nothing in their mouths" (3:5). This is a hilarious and bitter picture of fat cats, satisfied and indolent, murmuring "peace, peace" when they are sated with rich food, but who turn their fury on those who refuse to keep them comfortable and full...

As you can see, Micah is no one to be trifled with, and probably no one to invite to your next dinner party; he holds every chance of making the party both memorable and disastrous as he upbraids the guests and you with angry demands for justice.

So, what are we to make of the rather different words of 5:2 and following?..."

- <https://www.patheos.com/progressive-christian/2012/12/what-micah-want-john-holbert-12-17-2012> John Holbert

² ^[a] 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.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

⁵ And he shall be their peace.

*When the Assyrian comes into our land
and treads in our palaces,
then we will raise against him seven shepherds
and eight princes of men;*

- a. [Micah 5:2](#) Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

When the Lectionary dishes up just 3.5 verses, skipping the first verse of a chapter and stopping just halfway through the fifth verse, you just know it's like putting blinders on us readers to keep us from seeing something on either side of the lection. I don't know why they made this choice but lyric and lovely though verses 2-5a are of Micah 5, we cannot ignore that the happy news here is nestled in some sad news.

We cannot pretend that the verses surrounding this lection do not exist. Micah's prediction of a ruler who would be Peace incarnate gains in brilliance and in realism when we see that he has to speak this promise right in the middle of a dark prediction of Israel's impending military defeat and the suffering it would bring.

But then again, when CAN WE EVER speak of the Prince of Peace who is Christ the Lord without doing so from a context of surrounding darkness? When can we proclaim the gospel without having to do so in ways that stand in tension with the pain and suffering that are not just all around us in the wider world but that are quite literally right in front of us in even the church sanctuary on any given Sunday? Is anyone is unaware of the significant surrounding darkness here in Advent 2015? Our world is gripped by fear, is in mourning over victims of recent terrorism, and is engaged in what looks like a never-ending warfare.

Can the Prince of Peace be celebrated in a world at war?

Of course. This is WHY we celebrate God's Christ...

Micah has a hard word for his audience in Micah 5, and although he provides also an incredibly bright promise in the midst of it all, only those who can understand and (ultimately) experience the difficult parts of Micah's message can appreciate just how luminous the promise is, too...

Only if Christ Jesus the Lord, who is our Peace, can enter our darkness so as to make an everlasting change in our condition does the season have any meaning worth talking about (much

less preaching about). So let's not let Micah 5:1 or the other part of 5:5b have the last word. By no means! But let's not disallow it from having any word, either.

Three (six) years ago when we were last in the Year C Lectionary cycle, the Sunday that featured this text came a scant 5 days after a class of Kindergarten students had been shot up in a place called Newtown, Connecticut. This year we are still reeling from San Bernardino, Paris, Beirut . . . the list goes on (and will be added to no matter what we do).

There is a reason God had to go so far as to incarnate himself into this world to save it. The problem of evil is THAT bad, THAT tortured, THAT unresolvable from our side of things.

Immanuel means "God with us." That's the message we need. It also deepens the urgency of our call for that second Advent of our Lord: Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus. Come."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/advent-4c/?type=old_testament_lectionary Scott Hoezee

Psalm 80:1-7; RCL, the same reading or Luke 1:46b-55 (Psalm 111; RCL, 148)

In 2016 the Revised Common Lectionary used Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, the Lutheran Lectionary using Psalm 24. Rolf Jacobson's commentary which follows gives a good reason for including verses 17-19.

"Psalm 80's thrice-repeated refrain (vv. 3, 7, 19) is a clue both to the psalm's liturgical origins and its driving theological concern.

The refrain indicates that the poem finds its origins as a corporate prayer, with the congregation or a choir intoning the refrain. [NOTE: For worshiping communities that sing the psalms responsively, please note that worship planners would be well advised to take pains to have the congregation sing the refrain. If one simply plows ahead in an every-other-verse fashion, the refrain might be found on the lips of the singer of "Part A" in vv. 3 and 7, but on the lips of "Part B" in v. 19. Ugh!] The petition in the psalm's second verse, "Stir up your might, and come," is the source for prayer of the day for the First Sunday in Advent: "Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come."

In terms of the psalm's overriding theological concern, the refrain shows that the psalm is a prayer for deliverance: "Restore us, O God!" The psalm is vague as to what crisis may have originally precipitated the plea. Perhaps it was the Babylonian exile or some other national humiliation. Or perhaps the psalm was composed to be performed annually as part of a national worship commemoration. This is not clear, but the surrounding doubt is actually a positive--it allows the prayer to be sung by any community undergoing crisis, or even by a thriving community on behalf of others who are suffering..."(continued after the reading)

Restore Us, O God

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Testimony. Of Asaph, a Psalm.

80 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
 you who lead Joseph like a flock.
 You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.
² Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,
 stir up your might
 and come to save us!

³ Restore us, ^[a] O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

⁴ O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

⁶ You make us an object of contention for our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh among themselves.

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

a. [Psalm 80:3](#) Or *Turn us again*; also verses [7](#), [19](#)

¹⁷ *But let your hand be on the man of your right hand,
the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!*

¹⁸ *Then we shall not turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call upon your name!*

¹⁹ *Restore us, O LORD God of hosts!
Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

“...Three verbs dominate the refrain: Restore (Hebrew *shub*), shine (*'ur*), save (*yashab*). The psalm exploits a dual meaning of the first word (*shub*). In the refrain, the word means "restore," and is a plea that God would change the circumstances of the people. But in v. 14, the word means "turn," or "repent" (cf. Psalm 90:13), and is a plea for God to change God's will concerning the people's situation. The poetic play on these two meanings of the word amounts to a faith assertion by the community--the solution to the people's situation rests in the heart of God. The people cannot change their own circumstances, but God can--simply by willing that the situation be reversed.

Similarly, the plea that God "let your face shine" is plea for God's favor to radiate on the people, like the sun bathes the earth in light. In the psalms, God's disfavor is often pictured as God hiding God's face, or turning away from the community. Most people of faith are familiar with the words of the benediction: "May God's face shine on you" (cf. Numbers 6:25). The plea here is a prayer for the very thing that is promised in the benediction: God's shining forth in deliverance and blessing.

One more aspect of the refrain is worth mentioning. The refrain builds in intensity each time it occurs, by adding to God's name, moving from the more generic "God" to the more proper and personal "O Lord God of hosts":

Restore us, O God... (v. 3)
Restore us, O God of hosts... (v. 7)
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts... (v. 19)

This building up of intensity has the effect of turning up the volume on and urgency of the people's desperate cry for help..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=188
Rolf Jacobson Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Hebrews 10:5-10; RCL, the same reading (Colossians 3:12-17; RCL, the same reading)

"...To neglect or diminish the incomparable importance of Christ's sacrifice robs God of his glory and empties Christmas of any eternal meaning. For you see, dear friends, the meaning of Christmas is not about following Jesus' example or following some system of morals. It's not about our love for humanity or hugging your children a little more tightly. It's not about a peaceful earth or a hope for a better tomorrow in this life. Those are the things the world praises at Christmas time.

The reading from Hebrews today reminds us of what Christmas is all about. We don't celebrate the birth of a child who grew up to show us how to love one another by following his example. That's no Savior. Rather we celebrate how God, the eternal Son of the Father, received a human body in a most miraculous, yet lowliest, of ways in order to sacrifice himself to make us holy. Yes, he was born of a virgin to die for us.

Christ's body makes us holy. That's the theme today. How does he do that? He came as the Sacrifice. And he fulfilled God's will..." (continued after the reading)

⁵ Consequently, when Christ^[a] came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

⁸ When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

a. [Hebrews 10:5](#) Greek *he*

"...The writer to the Hebrews quotes the words of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, spoken through David and recorded in Psalm 40 about a thousand years before Jesus' birth. "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am -- it is written about me in the scroll -- I have come to do your will, O God'" ([Hebrews 10:5-7](#) NOV84).

You see, in order to avoid persecution many of the first readers of this letter were tempted to go back to old system of sacrifice. Hadn't God himself commanded those sacrifices? If it was good enough for Moses, wasn't it good enough for them? Did they really need Jesus' sacrifice?

But as the quotation makes clear, even in the Old Testament God's plan to save people wasn't to do it through animal sacrifices. Yes, the law had commanded them and they had value. But the value was not that they could make sinners holy. God had commanded them for a two-fold purpose. One was to show how serious sin is. Sin brought death. But the greater purpose was to point ahead to the one, true Sacrifice who alone can make sinners holy. "Not all the blood of beasts On Israel's altars slain Could give the guilty conscience peace Or wash away the stain. But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb, Takes all our sins away, A sacrifice of nobler name And richer blood than they" (*Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* 128:1, 2 "Not All the Blood of Beasts", [*Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, WELS*]). Only his sacrifice makes us holy...

And with that body, laid in a manger, he fulfilled God's will. "Here I am, I have come to do your will" ([Hebrews 10:9 NIV84](#)), he declares...

"And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" ([Hebrews 10:10 NIV84](#)). Here is God's saving will. Here is why the Father sent the Son. Here is the meaning of Christmas. Here it is: Jesus was born as a human being with body and soul to serve God in perfect obedience as your Substitute. God counts Jesus holy record as yours. That's how he makes you holy in his record book. He counts Jesus perfect obedience as yours because Jesus was born to take your place. You have his promise on that.

And what's more, as this verse also brings out, he sacrificed his body as the one and only sacrifice, the once-and-for-all sacrifice that washes away the stains of your sin. Without the cross there is no Christmas..."

- http://hancocklutheran.org/sermons/Christ_s-Body-Makes-Us-Holy-Hebrews10_5-10.html Pastor Gregg Bitter, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hancock, MN

Luke 1:39-45 (46-56); RCL, Luke 1:46b-55 (Luke 2:22-40, RCL, Luke 2:41-52)

"...It is interesting to note that Elizabeth is said to have called out to Mary "in a loud voice." That is curious to see in that so far, most all of the action in Luke has been in the quiet shadows. Zechariah emerged from the Temple mute. When Elizabeth became pregnant, we are told she stayed in seclusion for five months. Mary likewise does not appear to have made any public pronouncements about what Gabriel had said to her—indeed, she likely did not dare to speak of it at all. In fact, she may have visited Elizabeth because she was the only person she could trust. But once Mary arrives, those things that had been done in secret are revealed in a public way. Elizabeth is not shy to proclaim God's truth with a loud voice.

Maybe that's where her boy John got his preaching voice from!..."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/advent-4c/?type=the_lectionary_gospel Scott Hoezee

"The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 1st Chapter"

Mary Visits Elizabeth

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

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

⁴⁶ *And Mary said,*

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

⁵⁶ *And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.*

a. [Luke 1:45](#) Or *believed, for there will be*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...this Advent, what tugs at my imagination is neither the singer nor the subject, but rather the song itself. That is, I think it matters that Luke recounts this portion of his gospel story in verse. By transcending the rubrics of prose narrative, poetry, such as Mary's Magnificat, pierces the veil of the ordinary and opens a window by which to perceive afresh the extraordinary and unexpected goodness of God. In doing so, Mary, through her song, promises that the Holy One

of Israel may also encounter us amid the ordinary, mundane, and even difficult activities of daily life.

Luke's infancy narratives are suffused with singing. After Mary, Zechariah will take the stage to praise God's fidelity to Israel through the birth of John the Baptist, the angels will offer their canticle of peace and good will at the birth of Jesus, and Simeon will croon of God's mercy being extended to all the world. Why so much verse? Because Luke understands, as did the Psalmists of Israel, that songs are powerful. Laments express our grief and fear so as to honor these deep and difficult emotions and simultaneously strip them of their power to incapacitate us. Songs of praise and thanksgiving unite us with the One to whom we lift our voices. And canticles of courage and promise not only name our hopes but also contribute to bringing them into being....

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=515 **David Lose** Senior Pastor, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

"...This parallel of music and scripture is so deep and profound in the text for the fourth week of Advent in Year C, provided that you include the optional 46-55 along with 39-45. There is a beautiful and profoundly simple message of joy and delight in 39-45, but my love of Mary's Hymn is far too strong to leave her words out..."

- <http://blogs.baylor.edu/truettpulpit/2015/12/14/luke-139-45-46-55/> **J. David Tate** Coordinator, Certificate of Ministry Program, George W. Truett Theological Seminary,, Baylor University, Waco, Texas
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGLMX-du4_Y The Magnificat from Lutheran Service Book, Evening Prayer — From Lutheran Service Book © 2006 Concordia Publishing House, www.cph.org. Higher Things, Inc. Published on Dec 23, 2016



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It's been almost a month. Have you take the Luke Challenge to produce a handwritten copy of the Gospel? If so, you should be near the end of chapter one. If not, why not?