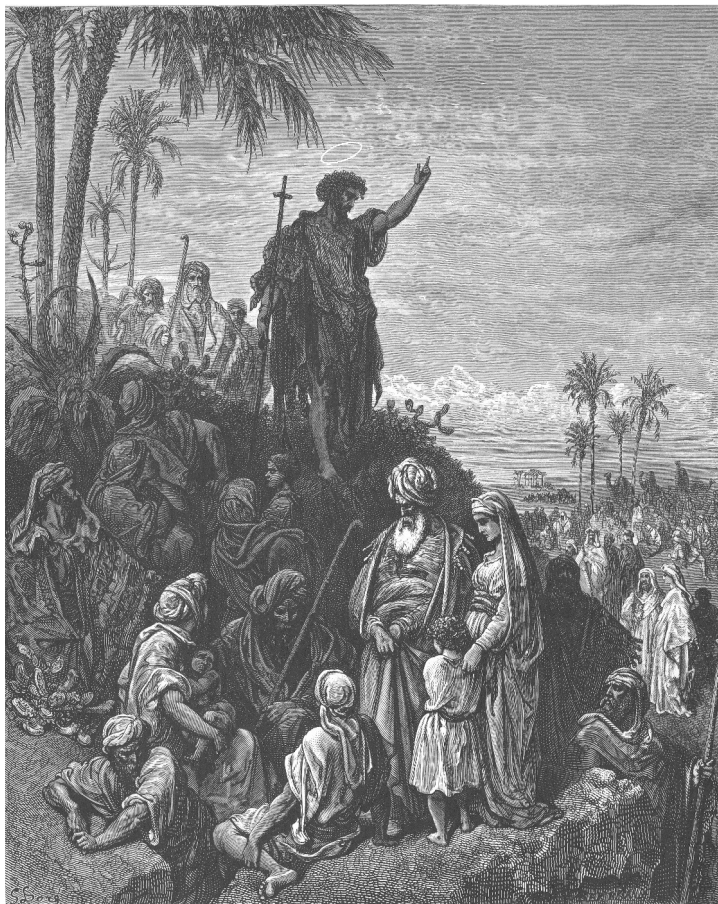


# THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 21st, 2025



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MARTIN LUTHER  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Louis, MO

Pastor Seth Georgson

314-914-6457

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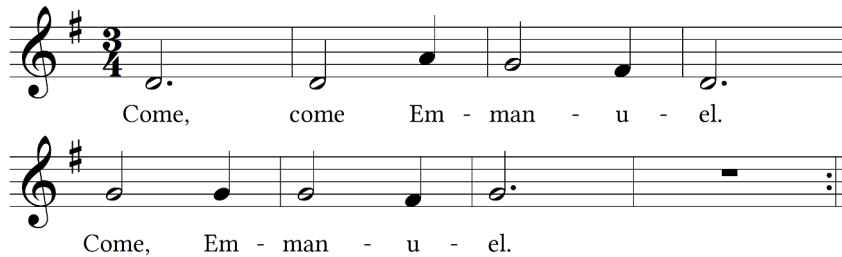
*Cover: “John the Baptist Preaches in the Wilderness,” engraving by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)*

## THE COMMON SERVICE

### ADVENT GATHERING RITE

*The congregation sings the refrain repeatedly until after the final verse.*

#### **Refrain**



#### **Verses (Children's Choir)**

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. For a child from the virgin will...       | <i>Matthew 1:23</i>      |
| 2. Lift your voice with the good news: oh... | <i>Isaiah 40:9–11</i>    |
| 3. Oh rejoice in the Lord, and...            | <i>Philippians 4:4–7</i> |
| 4. Oh make straight his way and...           | <i>John 1:19–28</i>      |

#### **Stand.**

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

### CONFESSION OF SINS

M: Beloved in the Lord: let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

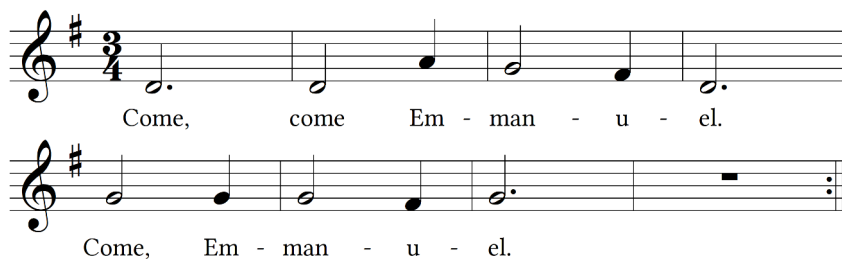
**C:** Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

**M:** God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called 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.

**C:** Amen.

*The congregation repeats the refrain.*

**Refrain**



**Verses (Children's Choir)**

1 Lord, have mercy upon us and...

2 Christ, have mercy upon us and...

3 Lord, have mercy upon us and...

*Prayer of the Day*

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



***Be seated.***

THE WORD

**First Lesson ----- Isaiah 40:9–11**

Get up on a high mountain,  
O Zion, you herald of good news.  
Lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, you herald of good news.  
Lift it up! Do not be afraid!  
Say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”  
Look, God the LORD will come with strength,

and his arm is ruling for him.  
Look, his reward is with him.  
The result of his work is in front of him.  
Like a shepherd he will care for his flock.  
With his arm he will gather the lambs.  
He will lift them up on his lap.  
He will gently lead the nursing mothers.

**Psalm of the Day ----- Psalm 19**

CW p.70

*Refrain*

**Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.**

The heavens declare the glory of God;\*  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Their voice goes out into all the earth,\*  
their words to the ends of the world.

*Refrain*

The law of the LORD is perfect,\*  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,\*  
giving light to the eyes.

They are more precious than gold;\*  
they are sweeter than honey.

By them is your servant taught;\*  
in keeping them there is great reward.

*Refrain*

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart\*  
be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Redeemer.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son\*  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*Refrain*

## Second Lesson ----- Philipians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and peti-

tion, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### *Verse of the Day*

*Matthew 1:23*

M: Alleluia. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. And they will name him Immanuel. Alleluia.



C: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!  
*Stand.*

## Gospel ----- John 1:19-28

*After the announcement of the Gospel, the congregation sings:*



C: Glo - ry be to you, O Lord!

This is the testimony John gave when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

He confessed and did not deny. He confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

And they asked him, “Who are you then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

“No,” he answered.

Then they asked him, “Who are you? Tell us so we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

They had been sent from the Pharisees. So they asked John, “Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, or Elijah, or the Prophet?”

“I baptize with water,” John answered. “Among you stands one you do not know. He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

*After the Gospel, the congregation sings:*



*Nicene Creed*

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*Be seated.*



**Hymn of the Day ----- There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying**

CW 13

1.   There's a voice in the wilderness crying,  
      A call from the ways untrod:  
      Prepare in the desert a highway,  
      A highway for our God!  
      The valleys shall be exalted,  
      The lofty hills brought low;  
      Make straight all the crooked places  
      Where the Lord our God may go!
2.   O Christians, you bring good tidings;  
      Get up to the heights and sing!  
      Proclaim to a desolate people  
      The coming of their King.  
      Like the flow'rs of the field they perish;  
      Like grass their works decay.  
      The pow'r and pomp of nations  
      Shall pass like a dream away;
3.   But the Word of our God is eternal;  
      The arm of the Lord is strong.  
      He stands in the midst of the nations,  
      And he shall right the wrong.  
      He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,  
      The lambs shall gently hold,  
      To pastures of peace shall lead them,  
      And bring them safe to his fold.

**Sermon ----- Philipians 4:4-7**

*The Lord Is Near*

*Stand.*

*After the sermon, the congregation sings:*

C: 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 your pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it  
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of your sal - va -  
tion, and up - hold me with your free Spir - it. A - men.

*Be seated.*

*Offering*

*Stand.*

*Online giving option:*

*[mluther.org/give](http://mluther.org/give)*



*Offerings support the spread*

*of the Gospel here and around the world.*

### *Prayer of the Church*

*The Great O Antiphons of Advent have been cherished for centuries by Christian worshipers. Each one consists of a title given to Christ in the Old Testament and a petition asking him to come and fulfill the Scriptural promise or prophecy. The minister offers a petition and the congregation responds by singing a stanza of "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel" (CW 23).*

M: Emmanuel, our king and our Lord, the anointed of the nations and their Savior, Come and save us, O Lord our God.

C: **Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

M: O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily order all things; come and teach us the way of prudence.

C: **Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

M: O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai; come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.

C: **Oh, come, oh, come, our Lord of might,  
who to your tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times gave holy law, in cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

M: O Root of Jesse, standing as an ensign before the peoples, before whom all kings are mute, to whom the nations will do homage; come quickly to deliver us.

- C: Oh, come, O Rod of Jesse's stem, from every foe deliver them  
That trust your mighty pow'r to save,  
Bring them in vict'ry through the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**
- M: O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can  
close; you close and no one can open; come and rescue the prisoners who  
are in darkness and the shadow of death.**
- C: Oh, come, O Key of David, come and open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**
- M: O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting, come and enlighten those who  
sit in darkness and the shadow of death.**
- C: Oh, come, O Dayspring from on high,  
and cheer us by your drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**
- M: O King of the nations, the ruler they long for, the cornerstone for uniting all  
people, come and save us all, whom you formed out of clay.**
- C: Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind;  
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease and be yourself the King of Peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

*Special prayers and intercessions may follow.*

*Lord's Prayer*

- C: 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 tres-**

pass 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 SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.



C: And al - so with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.



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

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.



C: It is good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared when he called people to repentance and pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

*Sanctus*

C: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of heav - en - ly hosts:  
heav'n and earth are full of your 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 who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san -  
na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

*Words of Institution*

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.



*O Christ, Lamb of God*

*Agnus Dei*

C: O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;  
have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.  
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;  
grant us your peace. A - men.

*Be seated.*

## DISTRIBUTION

*In Holy Communion we believe that Jesus gives us his own body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. We ask that, in keeping with God's Word, only confirmed members who are in confessional unity with our church (WELS and ELS) would come forward to receive this sacrament. If you have any questions or are interested in communicant membership, please speak with the pastor.*

*During the distribution, the congregation sings the following hymns:*

### **Hymn ----- Prepare the Royal Highway**

CWS 702

1. Prepare the royal highway; The King of kings is near!  
Let ev'ry hill and valley A level road appear!  
Then greet the King of glory, Foretold in sacred story:  
Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God's Word!
2. God's people, see him coming: Your own eternal King!  
Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!  
God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you!  
Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God's Word!
3. Then fling the gates wide open To greet your promised King!  
Your King, yet ev'ry nation Its tribute too should bring.  
All lands, bow down before him! All nations, now adore him!  
Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God's Word!
4. His is no earthly kingdom; It comes from heav'n above.  
His rule is peace and freedom And justice, truth, and love.  
So let your praise be sounding For kindness so abounding:  
Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God's Word!



Hymn ----- Hosanna to the Coming Lord

CW 21

1. Hosanna to the coming Lord!  
Hosanna to the incarnate Word!  
To Christ, Creator, Savior, King  
Let earth, let heav'n hosanna sing.
2. O Savior, with protecting care  
Abide in this your house of prayer,  
Where we your parting promise claim,  
Assembled in your sacred name.
3. O Advent King, our sins forgive;  
Come in our lives and hearts to live,  
And let our humble souls become  
A temple worthy of your name.
4. Then in the last and dreadful day,  
When earth and heav'n shall melt away,  
Your flock, redeemed from sinful stain,  
Shall swell the sound of praise again.

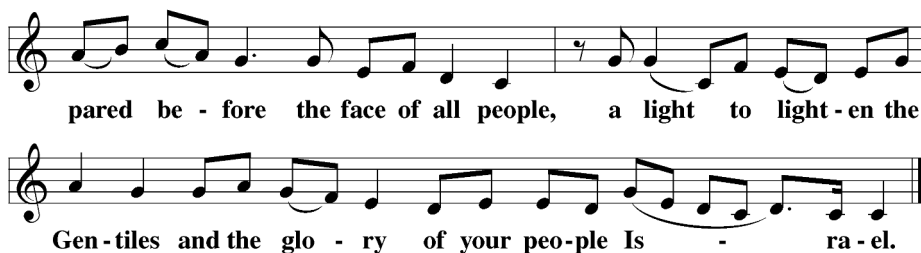
*After the distribution is finished the congregation stands and sings:*

*Song of Simeon*

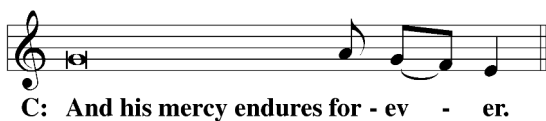
*Nunc Dimittis*

C: Lord, now you let your servant de - part in peace ac-cord-ing  
to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have pre-

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the hymn, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and various note values including quarter, eighth, and half notes, as well as rests.



M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.



M: We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this holy supper. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace.



*Be seated.*

**Hymn ----- On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry**

CW 16

1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Come, then, and listen, for he brings  
Good news about the King of kings.
2. Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin  
And furnished for a guest within,  
And let us all our hearts prepare  
For Christ to come and enter there.
3. We hail you as our Savior, Lord,  
Our refuge and our great reward.  
Without your grace we waste away  
Like flow'rs that wither and decay.
4. Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,  
And lift us up to fall no more.  
Oh, make your face on us to shine,  
And fill the world with love divine.
5. All praise to you, eternal Son,  
Whose advent has our freedom won,  
Whom with the Father we adore  
And Holy Spirit evermore.

