

### Newsletter Announcement

**Oyez, Oyez! - Come one and all to the Saint Shirley Lutheran Church 7:00 pm Wednesday Advent services December 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our Magnificent Theme: “First things Second: Exercises in Reconsidering Advent from the Long Term View.” Or “Pastor Joe preaches on how to use the psalms in the season of Advent to pull our minds out of the malls.” Lots of Good HummableTunes, Fellowship and Praise.**



### First Week of Advent

- **Prelude** Magnificat And Nunc Dimittis Herbert Howells - Choir
- **Welcome and Explanation**

It is our custom in most churches in the western world to gather on some designated weekday evenings in the season of Advent. We do so not just because we enjoy fellowship together, but also because we want to pause to sense the anticipation of the season, anticipation built into the church's calendar, and anticipation that is infectious amongst gatherers.

Still, this Advent stuff is getting harder and harder to do in the midst of a secular society that launches right

into all the trappings of the season of Christmas. It often does this weeks before we've even had a chance to begin the Season of Advent that leads up to Christmas time. This year Advent also falls hard on the heels of Thanksgiving, where Americans cross faiths to jointly than God for the things that are already here. Thanksgiving is a great and wonderful holiday, but it does make it a bit hard to make the subtle seasonal changes in our hearts necessary to become people of anticipation. It is hard to begin an adventure when

our bellies are full of turkey and we are nearly passed out on the couch, watching the televised conflict between the Saints and the Lions.

If the order of things is off a bit, and making it hard for us to focus on Advent, then we can rant about it, or we can we roll with the punches a bit - we can rearrange our own order to recapture our own attention. For the next four weeks we are going to shuffle a few things in our Advent service order. Most notably, we are going to read the Gospel lesson first, and then take a look at a psalm. Usually we save the Gospel reading for last, and while it is still freshest in everyone's minds, we pastors start right into our sermons. We'll continue to take the assigned Gospels for each Wednesday, taken right out of the LBW/s Lectionary cycle of three pre-set lists of readings. We're starting Cycle A right now as we start not only a new season of advent, but a new liturgical year.

The psalms are part of God's holy word too, and I'd like to spend a little extra time thinking about them this Advent, so we'll save them for the last reading for a little while. There are a few psalms assigned in the lectionary for Wednesdays in advent, but since we only are able to meet twice a week in advent, we don't get to go through all the psalms together in a way to assure that we eventually get to the ones that match up with the

assigned readings. We are therefore jumping right to some of the ones that match up a bit with the assigned readings. If we were to get switched by network headquarters to a different night of the week, our programming would be different but at least our demographic target market would still be the same!

So you might ask, why do this reordering for a few weeks of the texts we are reading? Perhaps by focusing on the psalms a bit we can better see that the anticipation that is Advent is something that was building in the Jewish people for centuries. The curious mix of praise, reflection, anticipation and awe that make up Advent is something that Christians didn't invent in the first century AD. We are part of something bigger that perhaps we can better understand if we seek a broader context than just a rehash of the same old Noels and carols for another December.

So that you don't get to unnerved though, we'll start each service with a familiar opening hymn, O Come, O Come Emanuel, We'll sing the first verse each Wednesday, and will sing one other verse each time. Tonight we sing verses one and two, and next week it will be one and three, and so on.

So let us together turn now to Hymn number 34 in the LBW, to sing verses one and two tonight.

- **Opening Hymn** O Come, O Come, Immanuel, LBW #34, Verses One and Two
- **Prayer** (From LBW, page 47) Spoken Together

Blessed Lord, you speak to us through the Holy Scriptures. Grant that we may hear, read, respect, learn and make them our own in such a way that the enduring benefit and comfort of the Word will help us grasp and hold the blessed hope of everlasting life, given through our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

- **Gospel**

<sup>20:19</sup> When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people. <sup>20:20</sup> So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. <sup>20:21</sup> So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. <sup>20:22</sup> Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" <sup>20:23</sup> But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, <sup>20:24</sup> "Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?" They said, "The emperor's." <sup>20:25</sup> He said to them, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>20:26</sup> And they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.

- **Psalm 74**

<sup>74:1</sup> O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?  
<sup>74:2</sup> Remember your congregation, which you acquired long ago, which you redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage. Remember Mount Zion, where you came to dwell.  
<sup>74:3</sup> Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary.  
<sup>74:4</sup> Your foes have roared within your holy place; they set up their emblems there.  
<sup>74:5</sup> At the upper entrance they hacked the wooden trellis with axes.  
<sup>74:6</sup> And then, with hatchets and hammers, they smashed all its carved work.  
<sup>74:7</sup> They set your sanctuary on fire; they desecrated the dwelling place of your name, bringing it to the ground.  
<sup>74:8</sup> They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue them"; they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.  
<sup>74:9</sup> We do not see our emblems; there is no longer any prophet, and there is no one among us who knows how long. <sup>74:10</sup> How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?  
<sup>74:11</sup> Why do you hold back your hand; why do you keep your hand in your bosom?  
<sup>74:12</sup> Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the earth.  
<sup>74:13</sup> You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.

<sup>74:14</sup> You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

<sup>74:15</sup> You cut openings for springs and torrents; you dried up ever-flowing streams.

<sup>74:16</sup> Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the luminaries and the sun.

<sup>74:17</sup> You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter.

<sup>74:18</sup> Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy scoffs, and an impious people reviles your name.

<sup>74:19</sup> Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild animals; do not forget the life of your poor forever.

<sup>74:20</sup> Have regard for your covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of violence.

<sup>74:21</sup> Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and needy praise your name.

<sup>74:22</sup> Rise up, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all day long.

<sup>74:23</sup> Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of your adversaries that goes up continually.

- **Sermon**
- **Anthem** Te Deum - Magnificat by Murray Upshaw, Aler Robinson, and Marriner Moll - [Choir](#)
- **Prayers of the Church** – Worship Leader

[*One included prayer:* Dear God of Heaven and Earth, you know the time and hour of all. You gave us many prophets, sent us kings and other psalmists, and have never forgotten us, even when we have forgotten you. We pray that you always give us the way to discern your will and to act on it, Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.** ]

- **The Lord's Prayer** LBW page 71
- **Closing Hymn** : The King Shall Come, LBW #33, All Verses.

## Second Week of Advent

- **Prelude** Magnificat Instrumental by Johann Pachibel – Organ and Accompanists
- **Welcome**
- **Opening Hymn** O Come, O Come, Immanuel, LBW #34, Verses One and Three
- **Prayer** (From LBW, page 47) Spoken Together

Almighty God, draw our hearts to you, guide our minds, fill our imaginations, control our wills, so that we may be wholly yours. Use us as you will, always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

- **Gospel**

<sup>7:53</sup> Then each of them went home, <sup>8:1</sup> while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>8:2</sup> Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. <sup>8:3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, <sup>8:4</sup> they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. <sup>8:5</sup> Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>8:6</sup> They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>8:7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8:8</sup> And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>8:9</sup> When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>8:10</sup> Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>8:11</sup> She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

- **Psalm 16**

<sup>16:1</sup> Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.  
<sup>16:2</sup> I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."  
<sup>16:3</sup> As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.  
<sup>16:4</sup> Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.  
<sup>16:5</sup> The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.  
<sup>16:6</sup> The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.  
<sup>16:7</sup> I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.  
<sup>16:8</sup> I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.  
<sup>16:9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.  
<sup>16:10</sup> For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.  
<sup>16:11</sup> You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- **Sermon**

- **Anthem** Magnificat by JS Bach - Choir

- **Prayers of the Church**

[*One included prayer:* Dear God, we recall now with anticipation how you have sent, and are sending your son into the world to save us from our sinful nature. Guide us as we ponder this amazing gift, and hear our praises of your holy name, Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.** ]

- **The Lord's Prayer** LBW page 71

- **Closing Hymn** Out of the Depths I Cry to You, LBW #295, All Verses.

### Third Week of Advent

- **Prelude** Exultate (Novus Magnificat: Part One - Track 4) by Constance Demby - organ
- **Welcome**
- **Opening Hymn** : O Come, O Come, Immanuel, LBW #34, Verses One and Four
- **Prayer** (From LBW, page 47) Spoken Together

Almighty God, you pour out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and supplication. Deliver us, as we come into your presence, from cold hearts and wandering thoughts, that with steady minds and burning zeal we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- **Gospel**

<sup>1:1</sup> The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>1:2</sup> As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>1:3</sup> the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" <sup>1:4</sup> John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>1:5</sup> And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>1:6</sup> Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>1:7</sup> He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>1:8</sup> I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- **Psalm 42**

<sup>42:1</sup> As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

<sup>42:2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

<sup>42:3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

<sup>42:4</sup> These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

<sup>42:5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help

<sup>42:6</sup> and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

<sup>42:7</sup> Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me.

<sup>42:8</sup> By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

<sup>42:9</sup> I say to God, my rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?"

<sup>42:10</sup> As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

<sup>42:11</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

- **Sermon**
- **Anthem** Deep River (Traditional Spiritual) - Choir and soloist

Deep river, My home is over  
Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord.  
I want to cross over into  
campground.

campground  
Oh don't you want to go  
to that gospel feast,  
That promis'd land where all is  
peace?

Deep river, My home is over  
Jordan.  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into

Oh deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into  
campground.

- **Prayers of the Church**

[One included prayer: Dear God, ruler of water, air, land and all Creation, you know us and are patient with us. You understand better than we do that we long to see your face, that we long to understand the depths of your love, that we long for the peace of your kingdom on earth and in heaven. Give us patience too. Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.** ]

- **The Lord's Prayer** LBW page 71
- **Closing Hymn** On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry LBW # 36, All Verses.

#### **Fourth Week of Advent**

- **Prelude** Magnificat by John Rutter - Choir
- **Welcome**
- **Opening Hymn** O Come, O Come, Immanuel, LBW #34, Verses One and Five
- **Prayer** (From LBW, page 47) Spoken Together

Lord God, you taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending them the light of your Holy Spirit. Grant that we, by your Spirit, may have a right judgment in all things

and evermore rejoice in his holy counsel; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

- **Gospel**

<sup>1:26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>1:27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>1:28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>1:29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>1:30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>1:31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>1:32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>1:33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>1:34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>1:35</sup> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>1:36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>1:37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>1:38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

- **Psalm 150**

<sup>150:1</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!  
<sup>150:2</sup> Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!  
<sup>150:3</sup> Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!  
<sup>150:4</sup> Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!  
<sup>150:5</sup> Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!  
<sup>150:6</sup> Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

- **Sermon**

May God's Grace and Peace be with you, today and always,  
Amen.

When I was a boy, I was quite involved with music. I traveled all over North America with a boy's choir, was active in all sorts of local productions, and sang in school and church choirs. It has been a big part of my life since its advent, and I've been in at least one choir or band every day of my life it seems.

One of the performances that sticks in my mind many decades later is a setting of the 150<sup>th</sup> psalm that my high school choir performed. Its composer called it "The Brazilian Psalm" although neither the psalm nor the song was not written in Brazil. It had actually inspired the composer with its imagery joy, of percussive celebration, to think of the exuberance of Carnivale in Rio de Janeiro. It is a mysterious thing, how we can have a tune that sticks in our heads.

In today's Gospel we hear a very familiar story, one many of us have heard before: It is the story of how Mary came to be with a child, a child that would very soon come to change the very nature of our existence.

There is so much to this story that we could dig into, and it has been our inclination over the years to do so. It is a feel good story, but as always, there are some questions to ask.: I think by now this congregation understands that some of my questions perhaps appear a bit irreverent at first, they usually end up adding to the our understanding of the story. Here are a few:

We are told that the Angel that come to see Mary is named Gabriel. How do we know that? Did he leave a business card? Did he introduce himself, by saying "I'm Gabriel, but you can call me Gabe?"

Contrast this with how he introduces Jesus: "You are gonna have a son, and you are gonna name him Jesus, but you can call him "the Son of the Most High."

It sounds like Gabriel had some very complex introducing to do here! Here he is appearing before a teenage girl in a dusty outpost of the Roman Empire, bringing an amazing story.

The even more amazing part is that Mary buys it - she seems utterly unfazed by this Angel

in the living room. She says some very wise words praising God, words that have somehow been preserved through the ages. They are words that I would find a bit odd if they came from the lips of any teenage girl I know today. This particular reading mentions one of the things Mary says: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."  
"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." - that is quite a bit of theology, history and commitment wrapped up in one sentence.

Can we as easily as Mary say such words, and mean them? When we say the Lord's Prayer, we say something very similar: "Thy will be done." It is fairly easy for us to say such words though, because God sent a teacher to us, who gave us this prayer directly, and we repeat it constantly until it is no longer perhaps a good habit in our hearts, but rather something we cannot even see: a tree in a forest of words.

In contrast, Mary was a good hearted but illiterate teenager, whose religion taught about a few angels, but generally aimed them at powerful men.

So how does Mary respond? With an Amazing Grace. The Gospel reading goes on to provide us the poetic song that she creates, where she proclaims "My soul magnifies the

greatness of the Lord." That word, "Magnifies," translates into Latin as "Magnificat." You might have heard this in a song or two, because it has served as the inspiration for countless composers. In fact, our choir has a Magnificat to share in a little while, and we've been listening to them for the past three weeks as part of our Advent season music.

We've been talking about our songs for a while now too - For the past three weeks we've also been hearing and considering a psalm last in our readings, and focusing our sermons on the psalms. We use our songs to convey great ideas, to make them memorable, to make them manageable and beautiful and lasting.

You can ask any 13 year old girl about the words to the most recent pop songs, and they'll be able to repeat them for you, and if you catch a group of them together, probably could do it as an impromptu choir, complete with dance steps from the video edition.

Mary also didn't grow up in a vacuum. Her Magnificat was a direct production of a Holy Spirit in her that was part of her culture - she was into Pop culture and pop music in her day too, and the amazing thing is you can find the lyrics to

her tunes still floating around today.

In fact, we just read one - the 150th psalm. Mary was probably familiar with many of the psalms that praise the Lord, since she likely grew up in a good Jewish family in a good Jewish town. She might have been inspired more by some other psalm, and there are many "praise psalms" to choose from.

Some might have stuck in her head. Perhaps she even sang in a choir.

It has been said that "when we sing, we pray twice." Now, not all of us are meant to be singers, and some of us should praise God instead with dancing feet and loud clashing cymbals. Perhaps the point of the Psalm is in part that there are many ways for our various souls to magnify the Lord. I am particularly enamored of the people who praise God with their cooking.

Please join me in a prayer. Father, you have provided us a rich tradition of a thousand ways to praise you, to magnify your name. Help us to use this season of advent to consider anew why you are so worthy of praise and adoration. Help us to use this season and all seasons to praise you in our worship, in our service to one another, and in our everyday liturgy. Amen.

- **Anthem** Brazilian Psalm, by Jean Berger - Choir

- **Prayers of the Church**

[One included prayer: Dear God, there is so much to praise you for! Hear our harps, Hear our Tambourines and Trumpets, hear our voices in harmonies. See our art and our dance, taste and smell our food, and inspire in all of these efforts an abiding love for you and for each other – an image of your love for us. Lord in Your Mercy, **Hear our prayer.** ]

- **The Lord's Prayer** LBW page 71

- **Closing Hymn** Savior of the Nations, Come, LBW # 28, All Verses.

*Interpretation of Text to Follow – Still working on it*

*- Joe Leavengood*

Adventure Season  
By Joe Leavengood

Waiting for the blue light to change, stuck behind the wheel  
Playing with the radio, gonna tune in something new  
Folks stuck in the box. sirens up ahead  
Maybe the eye in the sky can tell me what to do

I'm stuck behind a big old bus – smells and memories  
A bunch of plain good folks on a ride not going anywhere  
Looking for a strip mall, some for Mad Dog. smokes and twinkies  
But they are already here and all the ready there

Gotta love those buses though when they are out on the highway  
On the road to Shiprock where the light is so clear  
Raptors on the wires, fry bread in my gut  
Minor league baseball batters genuflect in my ear, static clear

The truckers have their loads of stuff and more stuff  
Between pies, doing all they can to stay awake  
More horses, more candles, more gigas more more  
More blind spots more schedules and loud Jake brakes

There was this Navajo mutt on the yellow line at Tec Nos Pos  
With a big plastic mayo jar stuck on its head  
We stopped to help it, and then watched it run  
The sunset adventure lingered, and ran opaque and red.