

Songs of the Season



Advent Service One

2022

St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)
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November 30, 2022

Midweek of Advent 1

The order of worship is based upon Evening Prayer, from Hymnal Supplement 98 (CPH, 1998)

Service of Light

- P** The Spirit and the Church cry out:
- C** **Come Lord Jesus.**
- P** All those who await His appearance pray:
- C** **Come Lord Jesus.**
- P** The whole creation pleads:
- C** **Come Lord Jesus.**

Hymn of Light 890 O Blessed Light, O Trinity

- P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- C** **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**
- P** Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Enlighten our darkness by the light of Your Christ; may His Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for You are merciful, and You love Your whole creation and we, Your creatures, glorify You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C** **Amen.**

Psalm 72

- ¹Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- ²**May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!**
- ³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
- ⁴**May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!**
- ⁵May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!

**⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!**
⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
⁸**May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!**
⁹May desert tribes bow down before him
and his enemies lick the dust!
¹⁰**May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!**
¹¹May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!
¹²**For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.**
¹³He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
¹⁴**From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.**
¹⁵Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!
¹⁶**May there be abundance of grain in the land;
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field!**
¹⁷May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed!
¹⁸**Blessèd be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.**
¹⁹Blessèd be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!

**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.**

Reading *Luke 1:46-55*

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

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

P In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

C **But now in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.**

Canticle Hymn (Magnificat) 934 My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord

Litany

P In peace let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For all pastors in Christ, for all servants of the Church, and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For our public servants, for the government and those who protect us, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For the faithful who have gone before us and are with Christ let us give thanks to the Lord.

C **Alleluia.**

P Help, save, comfort, and defend us gracious Lord.

Silence for meditation.

P Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord.

C **To You, O Lord.**

P O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments; and also that we, being defended from our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God forever.

C **Amen.**

P Lord, remember us in Your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

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 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.**

P Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Presentation of the Offering

Office Hymn 337 The Night Will Soon Be Ending

Sermon

Prayer

P Holy Redeemer, Prince of Peace, though You appeared here in lowliness to free us from our sins, and to establish peace between us and God, we have Your promise that You will come again in great power to judge the hearts of all people and bring Your Church into eternal glory. We await Your second advent with eagerness and joy. Come quickly to take us to the place in our Father's house, which You have prepared for all who love You.

Help us to be prepared at all times for Your coming. Keep our hearts filled with true contrition and faith; overcome our doubts; cast sin from our lives; keep us from embracing the treasures and sinful pleasures offered by the world. And fill us with humility, that we may never trust our own works to earn heaven, but rely fully on You to save us. To this end cause the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in us with His grace through Word and Sacrament.

Lord Jesus, with the bright hope of Your coming, cast the dark shadows of sorrows and cares from our hearts. As we await Your advent, help us in all our needs. Increase brotherly love and harmony among us. Hear our prayers as we faithfully cry to You night and day, and deliver us from all our afflictions. As the Heavenly Father in our behalf not to count our sins against us, but grant us full pardon for Your sake.

Because You are the Light of the Gentiles, enlighten the hearts of people everywhere with the Gospel, calling them to saving faith. Work faith also in the hearts of the people Israel. Convert all sinners unto You, that none be left in spiritual darkness to speak against Your holy and saving name. Hear us, gracious Lord.

C **Amen.**

P Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from heaven that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and in the confession of Your name may abide to the end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C **Amen.**

Blessing

☩ The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

☩ Amen.

Closing Hymn 887 Now the Light Has Gone Away

Silent Prayer

Advent Devotionals are available in the Narthex. Please take one and share one with a neighbor, friend or other family members.

Advent 1 Midweek
November 30, 2022
Text: Luke 1:46-55

“Songs of the Season: The *Magnificat*”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Already in apostolic times public worship included Old Testament psalms as well as newly written hymns and songs, as we know by St. Paul urging Christians to be, “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”¹ So in consideration of this apostolic command, this year’s Advent series will examine some Biblical texts which were brought into Christian worship, focusing on those which are connected to Christ’s birth, so that we might well call these sung texts “Songs of the Season.”

The first canticle we shall consider is the song of St. Mary, known as the *Magnificat*, the Latin word “magnify.” While at first it was a morning hymn of praise connected with the singing of psalms,² fairly early in the Western Church it was elevated to a standalone song in the evening service, *Vespers*, a tradition that still continues today, whether it be *Vespers* proper or a related, more recent service of Evening Prayer, such as we are using tonight.³ But *why? Why* did these words of Mary become a spiritual song that Christians have used to address God and one another throughout the centuries in our worship services?

Some may say that it is because *Mary* spoke (or sung?⁴) it. After all, she *is* the virgin mother of the Christ; she *is* the mother of God.⁵ But her own words stop such thoughts. For while she does say, “from now on all generations will call me blessed,” she immediately follows with the reason, “for *He who is mighty* has done great things for me.” In fact, as if she almost foresees that some people might excessively adore her some day because of her role as the mother of the Savior, she makes it clear that it is not she who is holy, but instead, “holy is *His* name.”⁶ So no. Mary’s own words make it obvious that these words should not be sung by Christians just because *she* said them. For it’s not a matter of *who* said the words, but the *words* that were said.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.”⁷

Remember, the angel Gabriel had already come to Mary with the message that she would conceive and bear the Son of God, name Him Jesus, and that He will sit on David’s throne forever.⁸ And just now her relative Elizabeth, who carried John the Baptist in her womb, cried out, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that *the mother of my Lord* should come to me?”⁹ No wonder then that Mary begins with words of praise, magnifying the Lord for the great things He has done for her.

You see, Mary understands that she is one of whom Isaiah had prophesied, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”¹⁰ She understands that she was

to give birth to Immanuel, “God with us.” But she also understands that while she is receiving this highest honor, she is also completely *undeserving* of this honor.

Mary knew that there was nothing special about her. Now of course she was a believer, looking forward to the day God would fulfill His promise by sending the Messiah. And surely in the power of the Holy Spirit she was leading a godly life, certainly a wonderful example for people in general, and young women in particular. But such things, that is, faith and a godly life, don’t make one *deserving* of anything, for they are simply *expected* by God from His people and, more, are not even possible *unless His Spirit is already present in a person to produce them*.¹¹

So Mary begins her song in praise of the almighty and holy God who, out of pure mercy, chose her, His humble handmaiden, to be the bearer of His Eternal Son, her Savior. And by that gracious blessing, all generations, ours too, call her blessed for being the mother of God. But she has more to say, “And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.”¹²

The grace and mercy of God, that is, His undeserved love for sinners, is not for Mary alone. It is for all who fear Him. But what is this fear? It is that which is expressed by all who humbly confess their wretched, sinful state before the holy God, acknowledging that they deserve His punishment in time and eternity, but who also trust in His mercy for forgiveness of their sins. It is that which is expressed by all who, being freely forgiven by God, now live in childlike reverence, love, and obedience to Him. Thus this fear is nothing but true *faith*.

It is faith in the Triune God. It is faith in the forgiveness of sins which has been won by the life, death, and resurrection of Mary’s Son, faith that leads to a new life that is pleasing to God because it willingly and joyfully conforms to His holy Commandments. Thus we today, just as much as Mary, are the recipients of God’s mercy. For while the bearing of God’s Son was an incredible honor, it is not the work of Mary, *but her Son*, that brings forgiveness, spiritual life, and eternal salvation to all who believe in Him as their God and Savior. Thus Mary concludes,

“He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His offspring forever.”¹³

Mary shows how God works through *reversal*. It is not the earthly rich and mighty who win in the end; they are the ones whom He brings low, for their pride is offensive to Him since it rejects His mercy. No, it is those, whatever their earthly state, *who recognize their lowliness before the Lord* that He lifts up and fills with good things. It is those who remember God’s promise to Abraham, that through his Descendent all nations of the earth will be blessed.¹⁴ It is those who, like faithful Abraham and faithful Mary, humble themselves before God and trust His promises of help and deliverance and so follow the Lord’s will in their life. Doing such even if those promises seem impossible or forgotten, even when such obedience is the hard path.

Mary is *the* model of faithfulness. In true Spirit-worked piety she puts up no front of holiness, makes no claim of worth for any blessing she receives. She gives God all the honor and glory,

confessing that He alone is the One who does great things to save her and all people. Her role is that of being a recipient of God's saving acts, and then proclaiming them boldly, joyfully, and in reverent awe as she faithfully carries out the vocation into which God has called her.

And so we, Mary's fellow believers who have been equally saved by God's undeserved mercy in her Son, sing her song, the *Magnificat*, as well. With her, we sing it boldly, joyfully, and in reverent awe. We do so to praise God our Savior by holding up His saving actions in Christ Jesus. And so our own faith is strengthened as is the faith of our fellow believers, and our Christian lives encouraged, as we address one another with this spiritual song as St. Paul calls us to do. Let us do this during this Christmas season, and all the days of our earthly pilgrimage, giving all glory to God our Savior. The Heavenly Father who sent His Son to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Son of God and Son of Mary, born under the Law, crucified for our trespasses and raised for our justification, even Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁵ Amen!

¹ Ephesians 5:19. Cf. Colossians 3:16. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² This remains the practice in the Eastern Church.

³ The Prayer Office used is Evening Prayer from Hymnal Supplement 98 (CPH).

⁴ It is possible that Mary sung these words as they do follow the Hebrew poetic structure of the psalms. This of course remains true even if she spoke them, either way indicating how the psalms were a part of her way of thinking and speaking, further indication of her being a pious believer acquainted with Scripture through the synagogue and temple.

⁵ An ancient heresy in the Christian Church, called Nestorianism, was reflected in their being able to confess that Mary was "the mother of Christ," but not "the mother of God." But if Jesus is not true and full God in human flesh, then Scripture is wrong (e.g. Colossians 2:9) and, worst of all, we are not saved! For only if the blood of God was shed and God died upon the cross could the sins of the world truly be paid in full. Thus the eternal Son of God took on a true and full human nature in the Virgin Mary's womb when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (the Incarnation).

⁶ Whatever Mary may or not have thought, certainly the Holy Spirit foresaw this happening and so these words warn against such.

⁷ Luke 1:46-49.

⁸ See Luke 1:26-38

⁹ Luke 1:42-43.

¹⁰ Isaiah 7:14.

¹¹ Luke 17:10; John 15:4-5.

¹² Luke 1:50.

¹³ Luke 1:51-55.

¹⁴ Genesis 12:3

¹⁵ Galatians 4:4 (see also v. 5); Romans 4:25.