



Prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight;
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

+ *Luke 3:4b, 6*

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 6, 2020



"The Appearance of Christ Before the People" by Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov, c1837-1857, Public Domain

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's Gospel is from the holy evangelist Saint Mark . . . who seems to have forgotten all about Christmas! At least Saints Matthew and Luke talk about Mary and Joseph and the baby, and of angels and shepherds. But Saint Mark skips all of that by going all the way back to the Prophet Isaiah and, in the very next sentence, all the way forward to an adult John the Baptizer, preaching in the wilderness outside Jerusalem.

Even though Christmas doesn't *actually start* until December 25, the world is in "Christmas mode" already (sometimes even before the Halloween candy is moved to the discount section of the store). But Saint Mark drops into all this festive planning (or hectic preparation) with the Baptist's call—"Prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight"—"proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:3b-4).

He is saying, "Stop what you're doing. Repent and welcome the Greater One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Christian faith and life is one of repentance and faith. In the words of Martin Luther: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' He intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance."

Yours in Christ Jesus, +Pastor Griebenaw

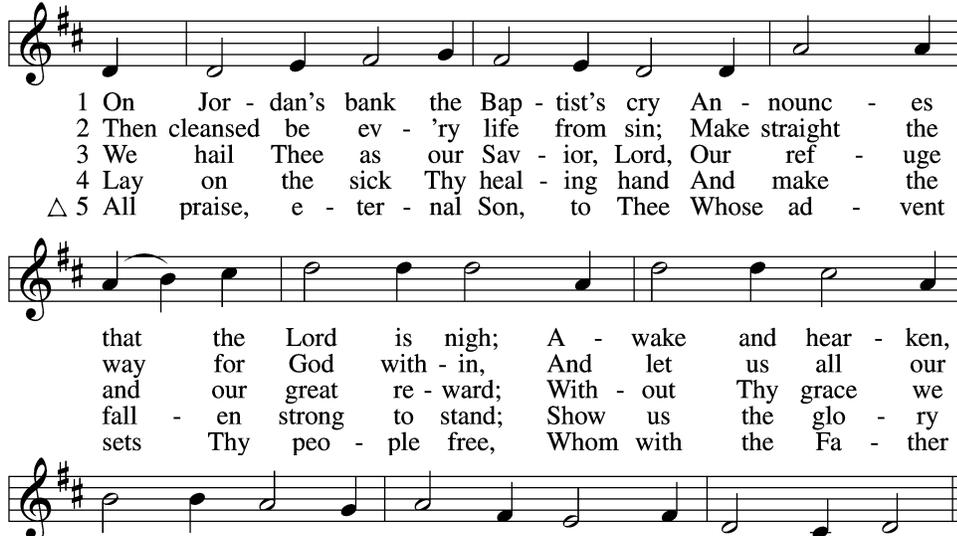
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✠ DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING THREE ✠

HYMN OF INVOCATION: On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

LSB 344



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; Make straight the
3 We hail Thee as our Sav - ior, Lord, Our ref - uge
4 Lay on the sick Thy heal - ing hand And make the
△ 5 All praise, e - ter - nal Son, to Thee Whose ad - vent

that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and hear - ken,
way for God with - in, And let us all our
and our great re - ward; With - out Thy grace we
fall - en strong to stand; Show us the glo - ry
sets Thy peo - ple free, Whom with the Fa - ther

for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way Like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
of Thy face Till beau - ty springs in ev - 'ry place.
we a - dore And Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er - more.

Text and tune: Public domain

Stand – The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

LSB 184

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

C Amen.

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

[Hebrews 10:22]

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 124:8

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Psalms 32:5

Kneel (or remain standing) – Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

P Almighty God, our maker and redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C O most merciful God, who has given Your only-begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

P Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

Mark 16:16; John 1:12

C Amen.

Stand

SERVICE OF THE WORD

INTROIT

Psalm 80:1, 8a, 9b, 7; antiphon: v. 3

The pastor and congregation chant responsively. The antiphon is chanted by the pastor before and after the psalm.



(Antiphon) Restore us, | O God;*

let Your face shine, that we | may be saved!

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph | like a flock!*

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, | shine forth.

^{8a} You brought a vine out of | Egypt;*

^{9b} it took deep root and | filled the land.

⁷ Restore us, O | God of hosts;*

let Your face shine, that we | may be saved!

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*

and to the Holy | Spirit;

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The antiphon is repeated.

The Advent Candle is lit.

KYRIE

Mark 10:47



☐ Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

The Gloria in Excelsis is omitted during Advent.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY



☐ The Lord be with you.



☐ And with thy spir - it.



☐ Let us pray.

☐ Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



☐ A - men.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Isaiah 40:1–11

P The Old Testament Reading is from Isaiah, chapter 40.

¹Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" ¹⁰Behold, the LORD God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. ¹¹He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL

Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.

The pastor and congregation chant responsively.



Rejoice greatly, O daughter of | Zion.*

Shout aloud, O daughter of Je- | rusalem.

Behold, your King is com- | ing to you;*

righteous and having sal- | vation.

Blessèd is He who comes in the name | of the LORD.*

From the house of the LORD we | bless You.

EPISTLE READING

2 Peter 3:8–14

P The Epistle is from Second Peter, chapter three.

⁸But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

¹³But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA & VERSE



Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

Alleluia. Prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight;
all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

Luke 3:4b, 6



Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

HOLY GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark, the eighth chapter.



Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
who will prepare Your way,

³the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the LORD,
make His paths straight,’”

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, “After me comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

NICENE CREED

**I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.**

And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
 and ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of the Father.
 And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
 whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the Lord and giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
 who spoke by the prophets.
 And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
 I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
 and I look for the resurrection of the dead
 and the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.

Sit

HYMN OF THE DAY: Prepare the Royal Highway

LSB 343



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; The King of kings is near!
 2 God's peo - ple, see Him com - ing: Your own e - ter - nal king!
 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen To greet your prom - ised king!
 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; It comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley A lev - el road ap - pear!
 Palm branch - es strew be - fore Him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
 Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion Its trib - ute too should bring.
 His rule is peace and free - dom And jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of Glo - ry Fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
 God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
 All lands, bow down be - fore Him! All na - tions, now a - dore Him!
 So let your praise be sound - ing For kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Refrain
 Ho - san - na to the Lord, For He ful - fills God's Word!

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SERMON

Rev. Griebenaw

After the Sermon the pastor may say:

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
 keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

Philippians 4:7

Stand

OFFERTORY

Psalm 51:10–12



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

Kneel (or remain standing)

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(1 Timothy 2:1–4)

- 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 Matthew and Michael, 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 Donald, for all 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 . . . [*additional bids for prayer may be inserted here*] . . . let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**

The prayers then continue:

- 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 individual prayer may follow.

- 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.**

The live-stream service concludes with the following:

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9–13

- P** Taught by our Lord and trusting His promises, we are bold 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.**

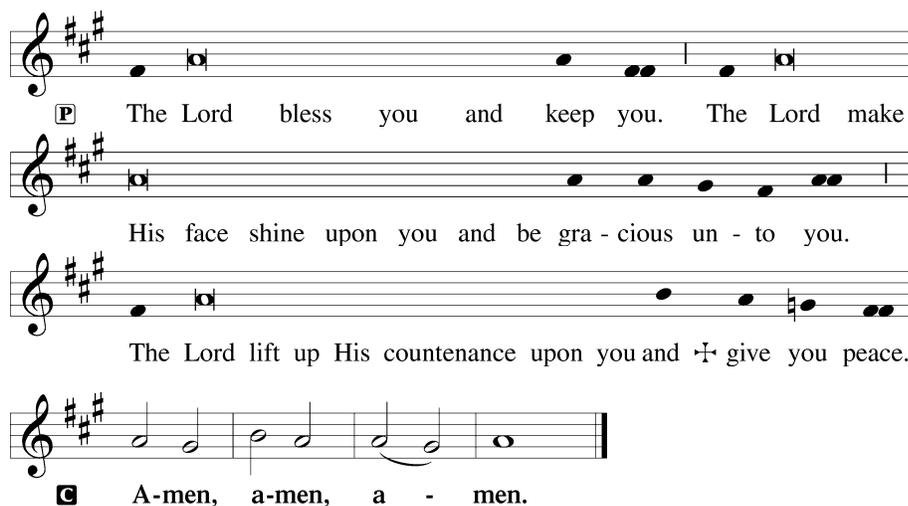
CONCLUDING COLLECT

- P** Let us pray.
Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon ourselves the armor of light now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the Last Day, when He shall come again in glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen.**

Stand

BENEDICTION

Numbers 6:24–26



P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make
His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

C A-men, a-men, a - men.

The Divine Service will continue with the Lord's Supper for those present at the church. Please sing and/or read aloud the closing hymn in your home and, if possible, please come by the church for Holy Communion between 10:30am and 11:30am, parking by the concrete ramp along Holt Avenue.

CLOSING HYMN: Hark the Glad Sound

LSB 349



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a
bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es



throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.
burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.
grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.
ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

Text and tune: Public domain

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠
(TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY)

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR

Brothers and Sisters,

Normally my final thoughts are light-hearted or even a bit silly. But today I'm digging out the old "soap box." Christmastime, as the world marks it, starts as soon as the last dollop of mashed potatoes are scraped from the bowl at Thanksgiving . . . if not even earlier nowadays.

And this "Christmastime" is all about entertaining—and I mean this in all its senses: entertaining our senses with foods and smells, entertaining our ears with jingles and songs about reindeer and elves and falling snow, entertaining our eyes with the latest Hollywood (or Netflix) blockbuster, entertaining of fleshly desires for gadgets and toys and expensive gifts galore (I even saw one car commercial that was all about *rewarding yourself* with a fancy new car).

Now before you paint my face green and call me a "Christmastime Grinch," let me just say that a little entertainment is a-o-k . . . and this year we need it a bit more than perhaps in years past (pandemic lockdowns and all that). I'm all for fun little movies and catchy tunes (even if Jesus isn't mentioned at all). And this isn't another "Keep Christ in Christmas" rant (which, of course, is absolutely essential).

Truth is, this isn't just a "Christmastime" problem. What we see and experience this time of year is just a symptom of the greater problem: *the need to be entertained and entertaining*. And this desire has been creeping into the church—not just today, but ever since the days of Adam and Eve.

There is simply no way that church can be fun and entertaining enough to keep our children interested; just as there is no way that church can be fun and entertaining enough to keep *ourselves* interested. And if entertainment and excitement is all that your church is doing, then it isn't really church—likely it is more a concert interspersed with some motivational speaking.

Church is about hearing God's Word—having Him speak His words to us and we, in faithful response, speaking those words back to God. The liturgy of the church is about catechesis (the fancy word for teaching the faith) and this word literally means "to sound back" (speaking back to God what He has first spoken to us). Take a moment to look at the liturgy in the Lutheran Service Book and see how nearly everything spoken comes from Holy Scripture!

Faithful church attendance, like so many Christian virtues, is a habit—one that must be practiced and reinforced each week, day, and moment of our lives. *And right now, faithful church attendance might mean getting up and "tuning-in" on Facebook!* And that is okay (not ideal, granted, but it is 2020).

It is a fool's heart that thinks our faith can be so secure that we a) will always love and want to come to church, no matter the circumstance, or b) start to think that we don't need church—the gathering of the body of Christ—or the study of His Word. Of course, this is why we call it "practicing the faith" because, this side of glory, our faith will never be perfect. That's also why Holy Scripture calls Jesus the "founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2).

I hope you will join me in practicing our good Christian habits and drop in each **Tuesday at Noon (ending by 1:00pm)** for our **Advent Bible Study** on "Zoom." We socialize for the first 15 minutes and work through the psalm from 12:15pm to 12:45pm, finishing by 1:00pm.

- To join the study on your computer, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7603525715>
- To join by phone, call either "669-900-9128" or "346-248-7799" and enter 7603525715#
- The password for both (computer or telephone) is "12345"

And tune-in to Facebook **Wednesday at 7:00pm** for our Midweek Advent service. The service folder is on our website (www.GraceLutheranElCentro.org) and the live-stream is on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/GraceLutheranElCentro).

Lastly, please continue to mail your tithes and offerings to the church's post office box: Grace Evangelical-Lutheran Church, PO Box 1530, El Centro, CA 92244-1530.

Yours in Christ Jesus, +Pastor Griebenaw