



# Advent 2

December 10, 2023 + 9:00

Welcome to our worship of the living God on this Second Sunday of Advent! Today we hear John the Baptist call people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing would get in the way of the Lord's coming. Our reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent, the promise that the Coming One will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to lift up our voices fearlessly and say "See, your God is coming!" We say this to one another in worship so we can say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

Congregational responses are in **boldface italics**.

## GATHERING

### GATHERING MUSIC

ENTRANCE HYMN: "Prepare the Royal Highway" *ELW 264*

*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!*

*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!*

*Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised King!*

*Your King, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.*

*All lands will bow before Him; their voices join your singing:*

*Hosanna to the Lord, for He fulfills God's word!*

*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!*

## **ADVENT CANDLELIGHTING AND PRAYER:**

*Pr Dave teaches us song line by line: He sings a line, we echo it... and we light the Advent candle[s]  
as we sing...*

***As the dark awaits the dawn... so we await Your light...  
Star of Promise, scatter night... loving bright, loving bright...  
Till shades of fear are gone...***

***As the blue expectant hour... before the silv'ring skies...  
We long to see Your day arise... whole and wise, whole and wise...  
O lucent Morning Star...***

***As the moon reflects the sun... until the night's decrease...  
Let Your healing light release... living peace, living peace...  
Unto Your holy dawn...***

***Shine Your future on this place... Enlighten every guest...  
Through us stream Your holiness... bright and blest, bright and blest...  
Come dawn, O Sun of grace...***

## **GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the + love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

***And also with you.***

Then let's pray: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of Your only Son.  
By His coming, strengthen us to serve You with purified lives;  
through Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. ***Amen.***

## **WORD AND PRAYER**

### **PREPARATION FOR THE WORD:**

*Martin Luther once said, "The Bible is the manger in which Christ is laid."  
Pr Dave will sing this chant alone the first time; then we'll sing it through two more times:*

***If in your heart you make a manger for His birth,  
Then God will once again become a child on earth...***

**FIRST READING:****Isaiah 40.1-11**

NRSVUE

“Comfort, comfort My people!” says your God. <sup>2</sup>“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she’s served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she’s received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.”

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every 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. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>6</sup>A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”

<sup>9</sup>Get 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, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here’s your God!” <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. <sup>11</sup>He’ll feed His flock like a shepherd; He’ll gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

*Thanks be to God!*

**SECOND READING:****2 Peter 3.8-15a**

NRSVUE

*The apostle writes:* But don’t ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord isn’t slow about His promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that’s done on it will be disclosed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with *God’s* promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved,

while you're waiting for these things, strive to be found by Him at peace, without spot or blemish, <sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

***Thanks be to God!***

## **THE HOLY GOSPEL:**

**Mark 1.1-8**

**NRSVUE**

***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!***

The Holy Gospel according to St Mark, the first chapter.

***Glory to You, O Lord!***

The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it's written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I'm sending My messenger ahead of you, who'll prepare your way, <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight,'" <sup>4</sup>so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>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>7</sup>He proclaimed, "The One who's more powerful than I is coming after me; I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals. <sup>8</sup>I've baptized you with water, but He'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

***Praise to You, O Christ!***

***O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh:  
In strength and beauty come and stay; teach us Your will and guide our way.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!***

## **PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: "Comfort, Comfort Now My People" ELW 256**

*See the following page for the music to this hymn.*

## **APOSTLES' CREED:**

***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.***

***I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.***

***He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.***

***He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.***

***He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again.***

***He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.***

***He will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,***

***the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,***

***the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

### Comfort, Comfort Now My People



1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.  
2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,  
3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn - ing un - der sor - row's load.  
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.  
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro - claim that God's par - don waits for them!  
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.  
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for - ev - er.  
Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum - ble fa - vor.  
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Text: Johann G. Olearius, 1635–1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.  
Music: FREU DICH SEHR, *Trente quatre psaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

***After singing this hymn, read Apostles' Creed above.***

## PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS:

Then trusting in this God, living in this Hope, let's pray for a world redeemed, the Church renewed, and all people restored in the Coming One:

God of timeless grace, You still pitch Your tent with us in the wilderness place to call us to Yourself. Prepare the way for Your people in this and every place, that we may eagerly welcome the Reign of Your Son, lift up our voices in strength, and faithfully speak Your Word of favor, pardon, and peace for all people, especially those whom the rest of the world would rather marginalize. Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare the way for Your people of every language, tribe, and nation, and comfort them with compassionate leaders whose hearts are set on the ways of Your truth, righteousness, and justice. Guide our leaders to lead in the heart and the wisdom of Jesus, who cares for His flock with a shepherd's strong compassion. Bring peace to every land where violence, fear, and terror hold sway, and healing to all who've been victimized by such terror. Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare the way for all creation to share in the heralding of Your Reign, that every element may be infused with Your care and that all may come to thrive in the bounty of Your wilderness-blooming grace. Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare the way for the weak and the elderly, and through us be their tender strength, their comforting courage, and their living assurance that they're not forgotten. Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare the way for all who live in the wilderness places of sickness, grief, addiction, despair, the challenges of recuperation, or the nearness of death, that in Your presence with them, they may come to know not only comfort for their spirits, but a full rebirth of strength and life. Comfort and heal them according to Your great wisdom and mercy and remember those who've asked our prayers. We especially pray for... Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare the way for the communion of Your saints to be realized more fully among us, that with all those who've gone before us, we may sing Your praises with one voice in heaven and on earth. Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Prepare our hearts to receive You when You come to embrace us in love. Slash through the overgrown thickets of our insecurities, our self-justifications, and all the ways we've trampled on others *en route* to securing ourselves; tear us away from our

complacencies and our easy surrender as slaves to sin; and open us to our deep need for You, that we may stop denying the truth about ourselves. Then have mercy on us and forgive us our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ. Transform our lives by Your Holy Spirit, that we may grow ever more fully into Your image and love.

For into Your hands, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy through Christ Jesus our Lord. ***Amen.***

Hear the Good News, my brothers and sisters:  
In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ has given His life for you,  
and in Him, you're forgiven!

Now reconciled to God and to one another, let's walk in Christ in newness of life.

The peace of the Lord is with you always. ***And also with you.***

*Reconciled to God and to one another, we share a sign of Christ's peace.*

## MEAL

### OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

#### OFFERTORY HYMN:

***ELW 814***

*We'll sing it through three times:*



Take, oh, take me as I am; sum - mon out what I shall be;



set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.

Text: John L. Bell, b. 1949

Music: TAKE ME AS I AM, John L. Bell

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## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:**

Blest are You, holy, mighty, and merciful Lord!  
You bring light from darkness, life from death, speech from silence!  
We worship You for our lives and for the world You give us.  
We thank You for the world to come, and for the love that'll rule all in all.  
We praise You for the grace shown to Israel, the people of Your promise:  
the rescue from Egypt, the gift of the promised land,  
the memory of the ancestors, the homecoming from exile,  
and the prophets' words that won't be in vain.  
In all this we bless You for Your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord,  
who fulfilled and will fulfill all Your promises.  
Living out Your death-defying love in word and deed,  
He gave His life for us even unto death on the cross,  
that filled with the Spirit of His resurrection, we might have eternal life in Him.

In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat.  
This is My body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me."  
Again, after supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all of them to drink,  
saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of Me."

And so, remembering His life given for us, rejoicing in His rising from the grave,  
we await His final appearing when all things will be restored in Him.  
Now pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us, that held and nourished by You,  
we who share the Lord's body and blood may live as His body in the world,  
shining with the light of Your Son.  
All this we pray with joy through our Lord Jesus Christ, who's taught us to pray:

***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.***



## THE HOLY COMMUNION

*Now we share God's consecrated gifts among God's consecrated people, knowing that our living Lord Jesus is fully present with us in His Supper, giving Himself to us in bread and wine and forgiving love. Today, we'll share the Lord's Supper by receiving the body and blood of Christ at communion "stations" at the altar rail. Come forward a pew at a time; take a glass already filled with grape juice if necessary. Receive **"the body of Christ, given for you"** from the Pastor; then, by dipping the bread into the wine ("intinction"), receive **"the blood of Christ, shed for you"** from our communion assistant. We'll pause for silent prayer after we've all communed...*

*If you're joining us from your home, we invite you to share the bread and cup with one another. When giving the bread to your neighbor, say **"The body of Christ, given for you."** When giving the wine/grape juice say, **"The blood of Christ, shed for you."** Whatever's left over may be reverently eaten and drunk by everyone after our worship is over. Once we've all shared in the body and blood of Christ, we continue in blessing and prayer:*

## SENDING

### POST-COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER:

May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen us and keep us in His grace. **Amen.**

Generous God, in bread and cup  
You've revealed Your glory for all people to see together.  
Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim Your good news  
of liberation and release, brought to birth in Christ Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

### BENEDICTION:

Now may God our Shepherd gather you in loving arms;  
may Christ Jesus reconcile justice and peace within you;  
may the Holy Spirit immerse you into the life of God;  
and Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

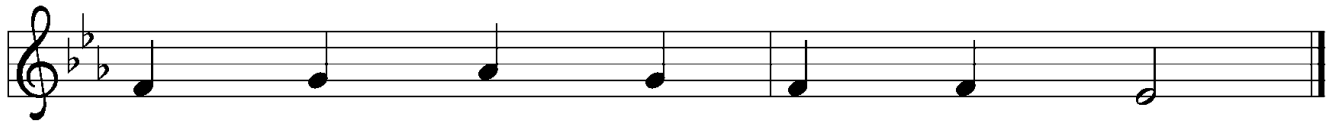
# SENDING HYMN: “Hark, a Thrilling Voice is Sounding” *ELW 246*



1 Hark! a thrill - ing voice is sound - ing! “Christ is near,” we  
2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth’s bond - age  
3 See the Lamb, so long ex - pect - ed, come with par - don  
4 So, when next he comes in glo - ry and the world is  
5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther



hear it say. “Cast a - way the works of dark - ness,  
let us rise; Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling,  
down from heav’n. Let us haste, with tears of sor - row,  
wrapped in fear, he will shield us with his mer - cy  
and the Son with the ev - er - last - ing Spir - it



all you chil - dren of the day!”  
shines up - on the morn - ing skies.  
one and all, to be for - giv’n;  
and with words of love draw near.  
while un - end - ing a - ges run!

Text: Latin hymn, 1632; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–1878  
Music: MERTON, William H. Monk, 1823–1889

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISMISSAL:

God has a plan.

*We’re it!*

What’s our part in God’s plan?

*Sharing God’s love in joyful service!*

Then let’s go in peace, live in joy, and serve the Lord!

*Thanks be to God!*

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Welcome to Advent, the unsettling season! “Tis the season to be jolly,” the carols in the department stores admonish us (or perhaps sleepy, if you’re still recovering from your Thanksgiving turkey); “Tis the time,” we’re told, to spend obscene amounts of money we often don’t have on things we don’t need for reasons many have long forgotten (except maybe to rescue our nation’s economy). “Tis the season to celebrate the celebration of Christmas, to shop till we drop, to party like the world’s coming to an end— to do everything in our power to forget that we’re partying in Babylon when our homeland is somewhere else...

But then this season of Advent comes crashing into our social inebriation, reminding us of the inconvenient truth of our lives. It greets us with readings from the latter half of Isaiah— readings written to an exiled people of God who come back to their homeland only to find it in ruins and impossible to restore to “the way things used to be”. It reminds us with sober realism that our lives and our communities not only aren’t the way they used to be, but aren’t the way they’re *meant* to be. Worse yet, there’s no perfect present we can buy that’ll change that fact (the credit cards are maxed out, after all, and the last great present we bought our beloved is now moldering in the back of the closet). We want to run straight to Christmas, to the next drink— but Advent bids us put down the spiked eggnog and face facts: *we’re in exile...*

But Advent reminds us of another inconvenient truth as well: *that God has a habit of bringing a new life precisely to folks who find themselves in exile!* To exiles in Babylon who’d pretty much given up on ever returning to their homeland, the “Second Isaiah” proclaims good news of a homecoming so marvelous it could only be cast in terms of a new creation (*Isaiah 40-55*). To exiles returned to their homeland who grieved their continued domination by foreign powers and the seeming insignificance of their status and future (*Isaiah 64*), the prophet proclaimed the presence of the Spirit of the Lord upon him and the Lord’s coming day of liberation, consolation, and jubilee (*Isaiah 61*). And to and through wild men in the Judean outback (John the Baptist) and old priests with no future ahead of them (Zechariah) and young women who’d be scandalized by such things taking shape in them (Mary), God proclaimed that His Reign of justice and righteousness was closer to them than their own breath— that He was meeting us in the wilderness of our exile and pitching His tent with us in Christ Jesus. God Himself was doing (and still is doing) what they and we had no right to expect and no power to command— and nothing bound by the limits of our feeble possibilities would get in the way of His salvation being given and shed for us!

That’s why we’re not simply observing, but celebrating this Advent season and the feast of the Nativity of our Lord that follows it. That’s why we dare to embrace and number ourselves among the many who feel like they’re on the outside looking in, and invite

them to share with us this strange weekly feast of Word and Sacrament and this counter-cultural way of Christian discipleship. That's why we claim as our own calling and mission the Isaiah 61 proclamation Jesus Himself claimed as His own. And that's why we proclaim in the midst of a still-shrouded world, with every candle and every soul enlightened, that "Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, the Light no darkness can overcome!"

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"The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." How ironic that the Good News begins in the wilderness, in the rough and uneven places, with the ancient cry of a displaced, homeless people! How ironic, indeed that the Good News begins for us in the ditches of life, in those times when we're thrown off our well-worn paths of "self-this" and "self-that"— that it begins with acknowledgment of a still deeper need: to name our sin and to be named "child of God"!

The Good News of Jesus Christ begins in the "wilderness" of John the Baptizer, who was clothed with camel's hair and who ate locusts and wild honey. From this starting point of apparent disinterest in other priorities, John exhorted people to acknowledge and turn to the Lord. But he also said it would take more than our repentance to put us on a straight path home— it would take the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. That's why Mark moves quickly from John the Baptizer to Jesus, Son of God and Savior. It's **God's** acknowledgment and initiative that saves us— and that's very good news for us!

In a world where bad news sells and gets most of the press, the meaning of "good news" may become diminished. Richard Deibert says, "The word 'Gospel' is more accurately translated 'glad tidings' and carries the emotional content of a cry of joy. Think of it this way: you've chosen to study 'The Cry of Joy about Jesus Christ, the Son of God,' according to Mark" (*Interpretation Bible Studies: Mark*, 1999, p. 2). We find this joy in the straight path of the Lord, in being connected to one another in Jesus Christ. Joy is God's baptismal river flowing through our wilderness. Joy is being clothed in white and dining on bread and wine. Joy is coming home to the Lord!