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Rev. Dr. John Rickert, Pastor

OUR REDEEMER'S VOICE

DECEMBER 2018

Advent & Christmas Traditions

Advent is here! Soon, Christmas will be here as well! And this is just the beginning of the festival half of the Church Year! Let us rejoice and be glad, with all the saints and angels in glory.

This is a season of traditions. Advent calendars, crèches, Christmas trees, fruitcakes, stockings hung by the chimney with care, carols, family feasts, gift giving, Saint Nicholas, favorite stories read, and the list goes on and on. What are your favorite traditions?

Each tradition has a meaning. Of course, some of those meanings are personal. The presents under the tree delight us when we see the faces of those who open them. The Christmas letters reminds us of old friends that no longer live nearby. The Santa in the mall reminds us of Christmas past when we waited in the line to see the jolly old elf. But some of those meanings are larger. Why do we give presents at Christmas? Is it just to help the economy? Why is Santa dressed in red? Is it just to make him visible to airplanes? What about Yule Logs, or Christmas lights, or fruitcake?



Traditions may not be what Advent and Christmas are all about, but they can point us to the true meaning of the seasons. So, this year, our Advent Wednesday homilies will focus on traditions. We certainly will not have time to cover even a quarter of the traditions but, God willing, the ones we look at will have a richer meaning as we travel through Advent and Christmas this year.

There are three Wednesdays in Advent this year. We will have a short service (about 45 minutes) each Wednesday, which will begin at 7:00 PM. Each service will be followed by our Festive Fellowship time, where light refreshments will be served. The traditions we will focus on will be Advent Calendars (Dec. 5), the Christmas Crèche (Dec. 12), and the Christmas Tree (Dec. 19). The services will also be filled with beloved Christmas songs like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came," and "The Advent of Our King."

As usual,, we will have a Christmas Eve candlelight service, which will also begin at 7:00 PM. As in the past, I will tell an original Christmas story (which has a meaning you are supposed to figure out) for the homily instead of a traditional message. The story this year is titled "The Giving Plate." The service will also be filled with great songs, like "O Little Town of Bethlehem." We will also celebrate the Lord's Supper, which is a divine tradition.

On Christmas Day we will have a "Service of Carols and Communion." Each carol will be introduced and those introductions will serve as the message for the morning.



There is one final tradition I want to mention, the "greening" of the church. This is when we decorate the sanctuary, putting up our Christmas tree, etc. We will do this on the Second Sunday in Advent (December 9), following the worship service. We will not actually turn the lights on until Christmas Eve (the traditional day to green the church) as we are still in the Advent season. The tree and decorations will remain until Epiphany Sunday (January 6), when we will take them down after the worship service.

May the Christ of the Divine Tradition bless your holiday season,

Pastor



Digging In The Nicene Creed First Article, Part 7

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

Last month we spoke of God as creator. It is apparent from the rest of the Creed that God remains involved with His creation (the Son becomes part of the creation, the Holy Spirit gives life, creates the Church, etc.). When we consider God's continuing involvement with His creation in reference to the First Article, we think of how He provides for

us through that creation. Therefore Martin Luther, in his *Small Catechism*, explains the First Article of the Apostles Creed as follows:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

Luther expresses the biblical idea that God not only created all things, but remains creatively involved in His creation. God didn't simply start all things and then remove himself but works through His creation in a continuous fashion. Therefore you are a creation of God and not simply the result of a moment of passion. The farmer who plows his fields is, by his vocation, the hands of God providing food for your table. The scientist who develops a new medicine and the doctor who prescribes it, the pharmacist who fills the prescription and the nurse who weighs you, are all God's ministering agents, how God continues to provide for our health. Government officials (elected or appointed), the police, and firemen, are all agents through whom God cares for us and remains involved in His creation.

One notes that the Creed speaks of God as the creator of all things, not just humanity. Luther reflects this with his phrase "and all creatures." Therefore, God's Fatherly Divine goodness and mercy extends beyond the human realm. If you own a dog, when you feed him, you act as an agent of God caring for his creation just as surely as the farmer has for you, or the dog has for you when he barks and warns you of an approaching stranger. So, Scripture can speak, not only of humanity or angels praising the Lord, but all of creation.

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels;
 praise him, all his hosts!
Praise him, sun and moon,
 praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
 and you waters above the heavens!
Let them praise the name of the LORD!
 For he commanded and they were created.
And he established them forever and ever;
 he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.
Praise the LORD from the earth,
 you great sea creatures and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and mist,
 stormy wind fulfilling his word!
Mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars!
Beasts and all livestock,
 creeping things and flying birds!
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the earth!



Young men and maidens together,
 old men and children!
 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his majesty is above earth and heaven.
 He has raised up a horn for his people,
 praise for all his saints,
 for the people of Israel who are near to him.
 Praise the LORD! (Psalm 148)



Certainly part of this praises comes from our vocations, like father, mother, son, daughter, janitor, pilot, pastor, etc. (1 Corinthians 10:31). By logical extension, when nature fulfills its role, it is praising the Lord. So, clouds providing shade and rain, the sun providing sunshine, the moon and stars giving light and guidance in the night, the darkness providing creation a natural time to rest (unless we are speaking of nocturnal things), and so on, are all ways that creation praises the Lord. Quite naturally, then, all that deals with our relationship with the larger creation falls under this article of the Creed. This includes, but is not limited to, ecological issues. When we get to the Second Article, and discover that Christ has redeemed all of creation, we again touch on God's continuing connection to the larger creation.

One last observation about the vocation of nature: It doesn't have to have anything to do with humanity. It might, but it doesn't have to. Job 40-41 speaks of two animals, the Behemoth and the Leviathan. While God brags on these two beasts, they clearly are not made for man, except possibly to keep us humble. In fact, Psalm 104:24-26 would point to playing in the water as part of the vocation of Leviathan. While we might learn from Leviathan humility or joy, the creature fulfilled its vocations even if no man was about to observe. Does a tree fulfill its vocation if no human ever sees it? Yes. It fulfills its vocation by its very role on the earth, recycling air, the earth, providing shade, food and habitat for living creatures, etc. Through such methods, God continues to provide for me "and all creatures." (Personally, I think it likely that there is much in the larger creation we do not even suspect, let alone understand.)

We will continue with our consideration of the First Article next month. Until then, may "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14). Amen.

THROUGH THE WORSHIP WINDOW



December Includes Advent & Christmas:

As December begins, the Palm Sunday event is offered as the Gospel lesson or some words about the end times. This is followed by the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus interaction with him. Next we are reminded of Mary's visit to Elizabeth and the words of Elizabeth. Then we take a step back to prophesy of John's birth.

We are then presented with the well-known story of Jesus birth in Bethlehem.

The Epistle lessons focus initially on actions of Timothy and the early church. They emphasize the need for thanksgiving and prayer as well as the joy of Christian lives. There is a brief look at Hebrews and a reminder of Jesus sacrifice for the lives of all. It also explains how Jesus is superior to angelic beings since He is the very Son of God. It is clear that we are a chosen people set aside to share the

news of salvation.

The Old Testament lessons begin with the words of prophesy that the Messiah will come from David's line. It also tells that the forerunner will help prepare the way for Jesus. There are assurances for a better future coming. Of course the words in Micah are well known at Christmas; *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

In Isaiah 52 we are told of the great value of those who share the Gospel message in the world. The Old Testament lessons wrap up with a word about the consecration of the first born son which of course occurs for Jesus soon after His birth.

Since this period includes Christmas it is a joyous time for all of us and more so for the children. Let's take full advantage for the services at Church.

Arlen D. Besel – Worship



Advent Devotion — The Lutheran Hour:

The Coming King

What God has done for the world is most intimately expressed in the life of His Son Jesus. In The Coming King, explore God's marvelous work through the lives of those who were on the scene at the time of the Savior's birth. The coming Savior's birth was foretold by the prophets of old and later experienced by many who were on hand as He came into this world. Mary and Joseph, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, shepherds, wise men from the east, a legion of angels, and even King Herod—all play their parts in the Gospel narratives that speak of the Savior's incarnation. Explore the many ways their lives were touched as God became one of us, for each of us, in The Coming King. If you are not a current subscriber, go to the website and sign up to have the Advent devotions delivered straight to your email! Our devotions offer inspirational messages that reach thousands of subscribers daily. As an added feature, the Advent devotions have reflection questions in the appendix for each day's messages. These can be used for self-study or as prompts for discussion when reflecting as a group.



What is Advent?

The Church divides the year into different seasons that emphasize the life of Christ and the life of the Church. Beginning on Sunday December 2nd, 2018, we will enter the season of the Church year called Advent. Advent is the season of preparation and anticipation leading up to Christmas, and continuing to Epiphany January 6th, 2019.

The focus of Advent is two-fold. On the one hand, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world as both God and man so that our sins might be forgiven. On the other

hand, we anticipate the day when Jesus will return to Earth and bring an end to this world. Those will be scary days, but we can look forward to the end of the world with hope because through faith in Jesus, the end of this world will mean the beginning of a new life with Christ for eternity.

Advent, then, is a time for us to repent and believe. Knowing that Jesus was born to forgive our sins, we repent (admit our failures to God) and believe that we are forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf. Also, knowing that Jesus is coming back, we repent and believe that when He returns, He will give us eternal life.

Arlen D. Besel – Ambassador



SHARING JESUS

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Psalm 100:1

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:13-14 (Ps 148:1)



Some of us are on FaceBook; some are on Twitter or SnapChat; most of us email things to friends & family. There is so much out there on social media these days to choose from that we might share: cat or dog or goat videos; political ranting & ravings; "can this pic get a like & a share?" – you get the idea.

December marks the beginning of the Church Year – Advent – the long-awaited Messiah, Savior of all humanity is coming in the flesh to conquer sin, death & the devil for us, restoring us to everlasting life in heaven through faith in Him! This is utter nonsense to the world – it makes no logical sense, it cannot be proven in scientific experimentation, it is counter-culture to everything we value as fallen human beings – weakness, need, humility – but it is surely the most important event in history. If Jesus did not come, if He did not live, die & rise again for us, we are all lost forever. But He did come, He did live, die & rise again for us! It makes all the difference – now and eternally!

What will you share this Christmas season with those with whom you are connected? Crazy animal videos? Maybe. Political discourses? Probably. But will you, with the angels, make a joyful noise to the Lord at the celebration of His birth? Let this new beginning of the Church Year be a new beginning for each of us in what we share – Jesus Christ, God in flesh, for us!

Blessed Advent & Christmas,
Kitty Rickert, Evangelism Chair



Bulletin & Newsletter Information Dates

Please have all information for the bulletin into the office no later than Tuesday of each week. Newsletter info is due no later than the 20th of each month to ensure its inclusion. Thanks!

Festive Fellowship, our Advent gatherings, begin on 12/5 following the worship service; see Lina for details.

Seasonal Choir Practice will take place prior to Sunday morning worship service this Advent; speak to Julie for more information.

There will be a luncheon after the greening of the church on Sunday, 12/9; Bonnie will be happy to tell you more.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

7	Rachel Gerzevske	30	Pastor John & Kitty Rickert
11	Carla Fiske		
17	Stephen Steltz		
26	Sarah Viering		

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please call the church office. At (302) 737-6176 or email Kitty at secretary.orlcde@outlook.com.

Thanks to everyone for all you do for Jesus in this place! It is a joy & blessing to work alongside you. Christmas Blessings, Pastor & Kitty



December Bible Readings

1	Luke 1:46-55 Revelation 1-2	16	Psalm 15 Isaiah 22-24
2	Psalm 1 Revelation 3-5	17	Psalm 16 Isaiah 25-27
3	Psalm 2 Revelation 6-8	18	Psalm 17 Isaiah 28-30
4	Psalm 3 Revelation 9-11	19	Psalm 18 Isaiah 31-33
5	Psalm 4 Revelation 12-14	20	Psalm 19 Isaiah 34-36
6	Psalm 5 Revelation 15-17	21	Psalm 20 Isaiah 37-39
7	Psalm 6 Revelation 18-20	22	Psalm 21 Isaiah 40-42
8	Psalm 7 Revelation 21-22	23	Psalm 22 Isaiah 43-45
9	Psalm 8 Isaiah 1-3	24	Psalm 23 Isaiah 46-48
10	Psalm 9 Isaiah 4-6	25	Psalm 24 Isaiah 49-51
11	Psalm 10 Isaiah 7-9	26	Psalm 25 Isaiah 52-54
12	Psalm 11 Isaiah 10-12	27	Psalm 26 Isaiah 55-57
13	Psalm 12 Isaiah 13-15	28	Psalm 27 Isaiah 58-60
14	Psalm 13 Isaiah 16-18	29	Psalm 28 Isaiah 61-63
15	Psalm 14 Isaiah 19-21	30	Psalm 29 Isaiah 64-66
		31	Luke 1:46-55 Mark 1

