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 Rev. Dr. John Rickert, Pastor

OUR REDEEMER'S VOICE DECEMBER 2019

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

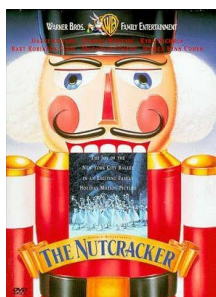
The poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* begins with the famous line "Twas the night before Christmas." It ends with the "jolly old elf" exclaiming, "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!" First published in 1823, this poem quickly became a Christmas tradition.

Twenty years later, the book *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, was published. The main character is Scrooge. The name "Scrooge" has come to mean the type of person Dickens portrayed, a "tight-fisted, hand at the grindstone" type of person; someone who is "a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster." Dickens said of Scrooge that, "the cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas."



Of course, we all know the story. Scrooge is visited by four "spirits" – his deceased business partner, Marley; Christmas Past; Christmas Present; and Christmas Future. In the end, Scrooge is completely turned around and became the exemplar of a generous and caring person. This story has become so much a part of our modern Christmas that hardly a year goes by that a brand-new rendition isn't produced for the movie theaters or television.

Reading these works or watching them in a movie are just two of the ways people get ready for Christmas in America. There are many others. Some of the standard holiday viewing include: "It's a Wonderful Life," "A Christmas Story," "Christmas in Connecticut," "Elf," "Skipping Christmas," "White Christmas," "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," or maybe someone might binge-watch all the romantic comedies set at Christmastime on the Hallmark Channel.



There is traditional music like the "Nutcracker," "White Christmas," "Old Tannenbaum" or even humorous ones like "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer." There are traditional foods like turkey or ham, pecan or pumpkin pie, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, creamed onions, cranberries, stuffing, and the list goes on.

In America, preparing for Christmas also includes decorating – just about everything. We put up trees, wreaths, lights, Santa villages, garland, and so forth. We also attend Christmas parties where everyone breaks out their green and red clothing, drink eggnog and eat fruitcake. And what would an American Christmas be without shopping. It seems everywhere we go we are reminded about how many shopping days are left until Christmas.

I'm sure everyone recognizes these signs of the season. Yet it is surprising how much of this has nothing to do with the actual holiday. While such things are fun and even celebratory, they typically do not point us to Christmas, at least not the real Christmas of which the day is intended to be a celebration. This year, during our Advent services, we will take a small step in reversing this American trend.

Our Advent sermon series is titled "The First Christmas." Our scripture lessons will cover the entire story, drawn from the Sacred Scriptures. To accomplish this without redundancy, we will be using a "harmony of the Gospels." Such harmonies are efforts to weave all the Gospel accounts into one smooth story. These efforts date back to the Second Century. The one we will be using was done by William Beck, first published in 1959 and titled *The Christ of the Gospels*.

Please join us as we meditate on the real Christmas story, the story that started it all, the story that begins the story that turned the world upside-down. This will also be a great series to which you can invite a friend, especially one who thinks Christmas is all about the trimmings instead of about Christ. Our services will be on Wednesdays and begin at 7:00 PM.



Christmas Blessings,
 Pastor



Digging In The Nicene Creed Second Article, Part 7

And [I believe] 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.

Last month I wrapped up what we are going to say about the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" and promised we would move on to the phrase "the only-begotten Son of God." The words that follow this phrase in the creed point our understanding to the eternal begetting of the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. So, when we say Jesus is the "only begotten Son of God" we mean he existed before all creation. In other words, the Son of God had no beginning, just as the Father and the Spirit had no beginning. When we say Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God we mean he is of the same substance as the Father (that is, divine) and that Jesus Christ is just as much God as the Father and the Spirit is God. So, when we say "only-begotten" we do not mean that there was a time before he was begotten, or that there was a point in time when he was begotten, or something like that. The term is a relationship term. It identifies Jesus as the eternal Son, eternally in the relationship of Son to the Father.

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is one of love, as all father-son relationships should be. So, John says "God is love," not God became love (John 4:8). From all eternity this loving relationship existed and is the defining characteristic of God. I could here digress to a discussion of this love and how it is not emotional (like human love) but volitional, but that would take us too far aside.

While the Son has always been the only begotten Son of the Father, with no beginning and no end, nonetheless the Father is the begetter while the Son is the begotten. Therefore, the Father is the eternal source, always the begetter and the Son is eternally begotten. This relationship is unchanging. We read in James:

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:16-18)



While James clearly identifies the Father as the source of all good gifts, he also tells us that there is no change in the Father, no variation or shadow due to change. If there was a time when the Father was solo, and he later begat the Son, and following that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, then very profound and basic changes would have been occurring within the Godhead. Such deep and fundamental changes within the Godhead are denied by James. Therefore, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have always existed and existed in perfect harmony as the One True God. While the Father is the source of all things, and the Son is of the Father, nonetheless the Son has no point of origin. He has always been the only begotten Son. We do well to think of this in relational terms and not in a time-line way.

We can see this in Genesis 1:1-3:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

"In the beginning, God created ..." refers to God the Father as Source. The Holy Spirit is hovering over the face of the waters, displaying his role in creation. The Son's role is reflected in the Father speaking, for the Son is the eternal Word of God who became flesh (John 1:1-3). Before anything was created, God was Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That has never changed and never will. Jesus was, is and always will be the only begotten Son of the Father.

Next month we will continue with the phrase "the only-begotten Son of God." Until then, "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.

THE TRINITY



Eternal - exists without a beginning or end...



In *Call His Name Jesus*, Lutheran Hour Ministries' Advent devotions for 2019, we encounter an oft-told story in fresh, new ways. During the Christmas season, we focus our thoughts on that moment in time when God became one of us. This miracle of miracles—this most unlikely story—begins with the Christ Child—God in the flesh—who was born poorly, humbly, vulnerably into this world of sin and darkness.

"Christmas marks the point in human history where God's long-declared promise of redemption was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. This is the start of God's final act to save us," said Dr. Kari Vo, theological writer for LHM and the author of this year's devotions. The conclusion of this drama has our Savior again poor, humble, and vulnerable, as He bears the awful weight of our sins on the cross at Golgotha.

Call His Name Jesus offers excellent messages to complement a family or group Bible study. They can be received as an e-mail subscription throughout the holidays, or they can also be read online and listened to as well. Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, Speaker for The Lutheran Hour, will read them. These devotions are also available in Spanish as *Le pondrás por nombre Jesús*. Reflection questions help users ponder the text and provide a jumping-off place for group discussion.

Daily Devotions from LHM will help strengthen and encourage your faith as you do the same for others. Have them delivered right to your inbox, podcast the audio devotional, access them on your mobile device through the FREE app, or listen with Spotify, iHeart Radio, Alexa, or Google Home. Seasonal Devotions for Advent and Lent are also available in both English and Spanish. Perfect for personal reflection or to share with family, friends and congregations, these seasonal meditations will help prepare you to celebrate the true meaning of these seasons.

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 1, 2019, 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, 2020.

Arlen D. Besel – Ambassador

THROUGH THE WORSHIP WINDOW

December — Advent & Christmas:



Years ago in rural Washington, the children's Christmas program included the children reciting the Christmas story from Luke 2. Our calendar begins Advent with either the Palm Sunday story or Jesus explanation about the end times.

The Gospel continues with the story about John the Baptist preaching. Then Jesus describes the role of John in His own ministry.

Matthew's account of Jesus' birth starts with Joseph's concerns over Mary's pregnancy and the angel's assurance and giving Jesus His name.

The Apostle John provides us with a full account of Jesus as God's Son who participated in creation and was sent to earth to be born human so that He

could be our Savior.

The Advent Gospel message ends with the holy family's flight to Egypt to avoid Jesus death at the hands of Herod.

The Epistle lessons begin with Romans 13 and the reminder that Christians must live under the authority of civil officers. This message continues with a reminder of our obligation to others.

James reminds us that we must be patient in suffering and the value of perseverance.

In Romans Paul outlines his role to share the Gospel with everyone.

Hebrews begins with a reminder that Jesus is far superior to angels and is clearly described as the Son of God. The description makes clear that Jesus was a part of the creation event and was established as one who is above everyone and thing.

The Epistle lessons end with a reminder in Galatians that Jesus birth and life was focused on His role to provide salvation to all who would believe in Him.

The Old Testament lessons are mostly from Isaiah and prophesy of the coming Messiah and His role in the salvation story. God provided a clear map of the future Savior and our redemption.

Take advantage of the mid-week Advent services.

Arlen D. Besel– Worship



But the man from whom the demons had gone was begging Him to be taken with Him. But He sent him away saying, "Return to your house, and relate all that God has done for you." And he departed, proclaiming through the whole city all that Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:38-39

As Christians, we know we are sinners in need of a Savior; we know that Jesus died for every thought, word and deed that is not in harmony with God's will; we know how much the Father loves us by His sending Jesus from heaven, into flesh, to suffer, die and rise to new life—all for us! How awesome is God!!

As Christians, we also know that everyone is a sinner, that Jesus died for all mankind because He loves His creation so much, willingly suffering all for the sake of the redemption of the whole world. We have the great responsibility of proclaiming this wondrous love of Jesus. Most of us are not called to go to foreign lands (like our missionary Kate Phillips in the Dominican Republic); most of us are called, like the man in the scripture reading above, to go to those we know—who already know us—and tell them what great things God has done for us. We are not required to learn a new language, adjust to a new culture, eat unknown foods, etc.; instead we are asked to simply tell the Good News (gospel) of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.



At this time of year, we are blessed in the USA to have the freedom of worship; typically, we are not in danger of coming to church, of inviting our family, friends and coworkers to meet Jesus in our worship services. It is our task to invite those around us to come, "come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King"—let us do so boldly this Advent and Christmas season!

Kitty Rickert, Evangelism Chair

Board of Evangelism will meet after worship the 1st Sunday in December, 12/1; board members, please attend.



Advent Worship (Stories Count!)

I love a good story. Who doesn't? If people didn't like good stories then the television industry, the movie industry and much of the book publishing industry would collapse. Okay, we might get some books about mathematics, and some travel or cooking television, but most of what we read and watch would be gone. As far as I know, storytelling has always been a part of human cultures.

Stories are a powerful way to shape our lives and expectations. Take love stories as an example. The modern love story has its origin in medieval France. Sure, people "fell in love" before that, but the idea of butterflies in one's stomach, stars in one's eyes, and so forth, began to be championed in late medieval France. It has spread around the world and is seen in countless books, movies and television shows in America. These stories shape how Americans think about romantic love and relationships between men and women in general.

One of the reasons (but certainly not the only one) why the debate concerning origins is so important is that the story accepted determines one's self-image. Either we are the creation of a loving God or we are highly evolved animals. One view leaves us with moral obligations. The other view leaves us with instincts based on survival and self-service. Stories are important.

As we approach Christmas, we enter a time when the story of the birth of Christ has shaped Western Culture for centuries. However, that story has been challenged for two centuries with counter-stories. The story of Santa is but one. It has done well, but it isn't the only one. Countless "Christmas" stories are told every December. In the clutter of these "Christmas stories," the original Christmas Story can easily be lost or shoved into the background. Many in America today do not know the original Christmas Story and more are born each year into homes where the story is never shared.

Even for those of us who know it, much of the original Christmas story may be forgotten. We may only truly recall the portion recited by Linus in "A Charlie Brown Christmas." Therefore, this year, in our Advent services we will tell the entire original Christmas story. The homilies are titled:

The Stage is Set	Wednesday, December 4
The Greatest Birth of all Time	Wednesday, December 11
Timeless Response	Wednesday, December 18

Join us this Advent as we return to the Original Christmas Story. Worship begins at 7:00 PM.

Blessings in Christ
Pastor



December Birthdays

7 Rachel Gerzevske
11 Carla Fiske
17 Stephen Steltz
26 Sarah Vieering



Anniversaries

30 Pastor John & Kitty Rickert

*If we missed your special day, please call or email the church office with your info so we can celebrate with you!
(302) 737-6176; secretary.orlcde@outlook.com*

Altar Guild

There is a new signup sheet posted in the narthex for Altar Care; please sign up today. Also, on Sunday, 12/8, we will be greening the church; we will also have a luncheon for workers that I will host.
Bonnie Johnston, Altar Guild



In the fall of 2020 the LWML will be having an auction event and we are announcing this now so you can start gathering and crafting items to donate. Ideas could be handcrafted items, gift baskets and when the time gets closer homebaked goods. The proceeds from the event will go to our Seminary student & missionary Kate Phillips who we are sponsoring.

Kathy O'Malley, LWML President

There will be NO BAB Project meetings during December due to everyone's busy schedules; we will start up again in the new year.

DECEMBER BIBLE READINGS

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|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 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 |

