

Week of Ad Te Levavi (Advent 1)

First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.

Weekly Catechism section: *First Commandment and Meaning (Luther's Small Catechism)*

Hymn of the Week: *Savior of the Nations, Come (TLH 95)*

Monday - Introit (Psalm 25:1-5, 21-22)

Read Psalm 25.

Ad te levavi Domine animam meam. What's that? It's Latin, and it's from Psalm 25:1 - "To you, Oh Lord, have I lifted up my soul." This Sunday has historically been called *Ad te Levavi*, or "To you I have lifted" Sunday. It is also known as the first Sunday in Advent.

Advent is about Christ's coming. The word, Advent, means arrival. We observe the fact that Jesus came, comes to us still today through his Word and Sacraments, and that he will come again to deliver us from this vale of tears. He came in the flesh, rode into Jerusalem, and he brought with him our salvation by dying for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18). He came as the King of Kings, but not in worldly pomp and triumph. He came lowly and meek, riding on a donkey, to deliver salvation for his people. The prophet Zechariah prophesied (Zech 9:9): "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

It is when we know why Jesus came when we can understand why he still comes to us today as well as why he will appear to us on the last day. We observe in Advent this glorious coming of our righteous King who delivers us from sin by bringing to us his righteousness and salvation so that we may stand before God

as his beloved children. All the while we enjoy the coming of our Lord as he sends us his Holy Spirit so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and thereafter in eternity. It is because he comes to us, remembering his mercy, remembering not our sins, and so remembering us, that we may lift up our souls unto him. We lift our souls to the Lord in confidence, knowing that his arrival is not in terror, but as the King of Kings who brings righteousness and salvation to his people.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Jeremiah 23:5-8)

Read Jeremiah 23.

God gave the people of Israel and Judah up to the surrounding nations. They wanted to be credible before the world. They didn't want the world to hate them. So God gave them up to the world. The physical remnant of the northern tribes of Israel were basically extinct after the Assyrians had their way with them, and only a tiny remnant from Judah and Benjamin came to rebuild Judah and Jerusalem after the Babylonians had taken them into exile. By and large, the ancient people of God had been scattered throughout the world. Their judgment was the world's judgment. Jeremiah spent his ministry warning the people of Jerusalem and Judah about this judgment. Those who want what the world has get what the world has. They get judgment from God. Their kingdom, which began with David, is destroyed with all the other kingdoms of the earth.

But then Jeremiah says something that is joyful and comforting. He says that the Lord will raise up from the royal line of David a King who will exercise righteousness and judgment on the earth. When this King comes God will deliver all of his people from all the nations. No more will we know the Lord simply as the God who brought his people out of Egypt to give them his law from mount Sinai. The law demands righteousness from us but then scatters us with the rest of the nations, confining us all under sin. But now we know God as the Lord our Righteousness, his Son

whom he has begotten from eternity and brought forth through the seed of David. He has fulfilled all righteousness by bearing the curse of the law for us. And in this way he has led his true, spiritual Israel out of every country where they were scattered. His righteousness is revealed to the nations (Ps. 98:2) when the gospel is proclaimed. This tells us that while God judged the people of Israel by scattering them to the nations, this was all for the sake of his proper work to fulfill all righteousness for all sinners everywhere. This is so he might gather his elect children from all nations by his Word and Sacraments. He has done this. He continues to do it. His Word remains pure and his righteousness endures forever.

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Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 25:3-4)

Read Psalm 25 again.

Our *Gradual* is a repetition of part of our *Introit*, taken from Psalm 25:3-4: "Let no one who waits on You be ashamed, O Lord. Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths." As we begin the season of Advent we meditate upon Christ, the Lord, coming to us in meekness. He comes to us. He gave himself up for our sins. He gives us faith through his Holy Spirit working through his Word (Rom 10:17). This faith is a busy and active faith, working through love for our neighbor and of God. But as far as it relates to the salvation Jesus comes to bring us, this faith is purely passive. That is to say, this faith does not add anything nor contribute anything to this coming of Jesus. Jesus comes to us in meekness, just as he meekly went to the cross to bear our sins. He comes to us today under the meek forms of the preaching of his gospel. He gives us his own body and blood to eat and to drink in the meek elements of bread and wine. He washed us clean by his own blood through the meekness of his Word joined to water in our baptism. Our human reason

imagines that it needs to add to these meek elements, calling them only reminders of Christ, only symbols of his salvation. And so our sinful minds figure that we must add our own contributions to these means of grace in order to make up for their apparent weakness. But Christ comes through these instruments of his Word, his baptism, and his body and blood hidden under frail bread and wine.

Christ comes to us. We simply wait for him. And we are not put to shame. It is only when we rest solely on his grace that we can begin to learn from him. So as we wait for him we pray, "Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." Faith receives in full what Christ comes to deliver to us through his Spirit and Word. It is because of this that we can begin to learn God's Word, learning that we are dust, learning that God will raise us up again, learning to love as he loves and to be meek as he is meek. This is what it means to put on the Lord Jesus. It is to receive his righteousness to fight the sinful desires within us and fill us with his own love poured into our hearts by his own Spirit.

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Thursday - Epistle (Romans 13:11-14)

Read Romans 13.

Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. St. Paul reminds us to walk, knowing what time it is. Now is the time of salvation. And everyday brings us closer to the salvation, which, as St. Peter tells us, is ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet 1:5). And what are we to do while we are in the time of salvation? We are to put on the armor of light. We are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does this mean? St. Paul also tells us that in Baptism we were clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27). His righteousness covers us as an armor against all sin. God sees the obedience of his Son when he sees us. He sees what is good, and not the lustfulness of our hearts.

Therefore, if God does not acknowledge our sin, then we should not give it any opportunity at all. With true hearts we draw near

to God, confessing our sins. And God is faithful to forgive. To live in the light of Christ is to live under his mercy. It is to return to that clothing that we received in our Baptism. So as the Catechism teaches us, we daily drown the old Adam with all sin and evil desires through contrition and repentance. This is more than simply being afraid of punishment. This is the broken and contriteness of the heart in whose spirit there is no deceit (Ps 32:2). This is the heart that God does not despise (Ps 51:17) because it is the heart that trusts in God's mercy. At true heart, or a right spirit, or a spirit in which there is no deceit -- these are different ways of describing faith. Through faith we do not lie about our corrupt condition. We do not lie about our sin-stained hearts. And we do not lie about God's mercy. It is through faith that we, in the Spirit and in Truth, worship the God who makes us children of the day and clothes us with the righteousness of Jesus. Now is salvation near to us through faith in the suffering and death of the Lord our Righteousness. Now is our King who brings salvation very near to us as he gives us his own body and blood. Now is all strife and envy banished by the blood of Christ, which killed the hostility (Eph 2:16).

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Friday - Alleluia (Psalm 85:7)

Read Psalm 85.

Our *Alleluia Verse* is taken from Psalm 85. It was composed by the sons of Korah, a chapter of musicians for the worship in the temple. It is not certain when this Psalm was written, whether it was before or after the captivities of Israel to Assyria or Judah to Babylon. The Psalm is a prayer to God, pointing out that he restored the fortunes of Jacob. This could refer to him bringing back a remnant from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem. Or it could simply be a general declaration of God's grace. After all, God had restored the fortunes of his people a number of times throughout history. Psalms 78 and 106 give a detailed account of these acts of deliverance. Psalm 85 would have been a common song of worship, expressing God's forgiving mercy toward his people. What sticks out is that God has turned his

anger away. This is the central truth of the gospel, fulfilled in Christ who is the propitiation for our sins, and indeed for the whole world (1 John 2:2). Propitiation is that which turns God's wrath away from sinners. How did Jesus do this? He did so by his righteous obedience in our place. And this is why Jeremiah, in our Old Testament lesson, refers to him as the Lord our Righteousness (Jer 23:6). So Psalm 85 concludes by saying, "Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way." That righteousness is Christ, the very presence of God, just as he promised Moses (Ex 33:14), "My presence will go with you, and I will give you life." Begotten of the Father from eternity, going forth from the Father, the everlasting Son of God brings righteousness. The prophet, Zechariah (9:9), says, "Rejoice, O Daughter of Zion . . . Behold, your King is coming to you, righteous and having salvation, meek and riding on a donkey."

This is Christ, the Righteousness of God, who goes before him to turn his anger away from us poor sinners. He brings salvation. And so the main part of Psalm 85, which we sing in our *Alleluia*, is, "Show us your mercy, Lord, and grant us your Salvation." As we begin the Advent season, we meditate upon why Christ has come. He is our Righteousness (1 Cor 1:30), which covers our sin.

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Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 21:1-9)

Read Matthew 21:1-9 and Zechariah 9:9-13.

Jesus draws near to Jerusalem. Jerusalem does not find the Word. Rather, the Word finds Jerusalem. When the wise men traveled to Jerusalem in order to find the one born the King of the Jews, the Scribes consulted the Scriptures, the Word of God. Just as King Herod could not find the Christ child with his own human cunning, neither can the sin-stained heart find Christ by its own free will. Just as Jerusalem cannot draw near to Christ by

its own human traditions, neither can the church find true blessing in Christ by its own methods and measures. Christ draws near to Jerusalem. He, the Truth, establishes his church, making her the bearer of the truth. And how does he draw near? He draws near in meekness, as our King, victorious over the sin and death of our own hearts.

Ye need not toil nor languish
Nor ponder day and night
How in the midst of anguish
You draw Him by your might.
He comes! He comes, all willing,
Moved by His love alone,
Your woes and troubles stilling;
For all to Him are known.

Our King drew near to save us. This is why the crowds shouted, "Hosanna!" "Save us now!" He drew near in righteousness. He came in the name of the Lord, bringing himself as the sacrifice to fulfill all righteousness. And he continues to come today with that same salvation and righteousness. He draws near, not to condemn, but to comfort with his truth. Often his truth hurts, but it always includes his healing hand, and it always accomplishes what he sets it out to do. As his disciples found the colt and the donkey according to Christ's Word, we find a loving God who invites us to cast all our burdens on him. His Word cannot lie. And whoever receives this Word in faith cannot be put to shame.

Savior of the Nations, Come

95

John 1: 14

Veni, Redemptor gentium

St. Ambrose, 1397

German version, Martin Luther, 1524

Tr., William M. Reynolds, 1880, alt.

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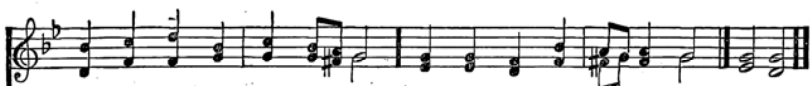
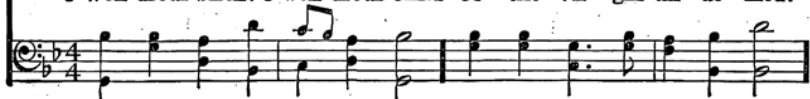
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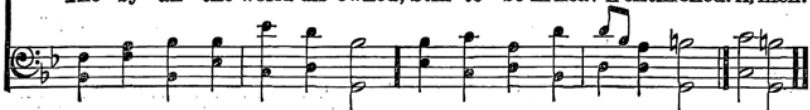
Wittenberg, 1524, ad.



1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come, Vir - gin's Son, make here Thy home!
 2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, By the Spir - it of our God,
 3 Won - drous birth! O won - drous Child Of the Vir - gin un - de - filed!



Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.
 Was the Word of God made flesh—Woman's Offspring, pure and fresh.
 Tho' by all the world dis - owned, Still to be in heav'n enthroned. A - men.



4 From the Father forth He came
 And returneth to the same,
 Captive leading death and hell—
 High the song of triumph swell!

5 Thou, the Father's only Son,
 Hast o'er sin the victory won.
 Boundless shall Thy kingdom be;
 When shall we its glories see?

6 Brightly doth Thy manger shine,
 Glorious is its light divine.
 Let not sin o'ercloud this light;
 Ever be our faith thus bright.

7 Praise to God the Father sing,
 Praise to God the Son, our King,
 Praise to God the Spirit be
 Ever and eternally.