

Week of Populus Zion (Advent 2)

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: *Second Commandment and Meaning (Luther's Small Catechism)*

Hymn of the Week: *When Sinners See Their Lost Condition (TLH 65)*

Monday - Introit (Isaiah 30:29-30; 62:11; Psalm 80:1, 3, 14, 17)

Read Psalm 80.

Filia Zion. That is, "Daughter of Zion." It is from Isaiah 62:11-12:

Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth:

Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

We recite this in the Introit for this the Second Sunday in Advent. In this Sunday we return again to the theme of Christ's return, but, as the Introit reminds us, our Lord's return is for our comfort, not for our terror. It is as we sing in the hymn:

He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A light of consolations
And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's Appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come!
Send forth Your beams to cheering
And guide us safely home.

In our Old Testament reading, we learn that Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness, who arises in healing in his wings (Mal 4:2). He is our righteousness who comes to deliver us, his Zion. The daughters of Zion are those members of his holy Bride, the church, who have the forgiveness of sins through faith in his merits, his death, and his resurrection. So when our Lord, who sought us out, returns, he himself

invites us to lift up our heads and behold our redemption that draws near (Luke 21:28).

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Malachi 4:1-6)

Read Malachi 4.

The Day of the Lord describes the last day, also known as judgment day. But it also describes the day when Jesus came first in the flesh. We now come to the second Sunday of Advent, also called *Filia Zion*, or Daughter of Zion. On this day we consider specifically the last day. But notice how the prophet Malachi sort of mashes the last day with the time when Christ first came in the flesh. He says that the Lord will send Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers and children to each other and prepare the way of the Lord. This is a prophecy of John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Jesus by preaching a Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:17). This teaches us that when we wait for the last day when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, we should see it in light of Christ's first coming in the flesh. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15). In light of this, the daughters of Zion, the elect children of God who rely on the salvation revealed in Christ, look forward to the coming judgment. They wait for their salvation. As Jesus says, "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near." We can only see Christ's coming day of judgment as a comforting thing if we first know him as our Savior.

To prepare for the last day we are taught to go back to the basic teaching of the whole Bible: The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23). Remember the Law of Moses given on mount Horeb. Remember what the law teaches you about yourself. It teaches you to repent and be watchful. It teaches you about the curse of sin when it says, "Cursed is everyone who does not do the things required in the law (Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10)." But God does not leave us with the curse. Even as the law still warns of the coming curse, John, who comes in the Spirit of Elijah, turns our hearts to the Sun of Righteousness who brings healing in his wings. These basic teachings of law and gospel, warnings and comforts, commands and promises, Moses and Christ, cannot be exhausted. Because heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of the Lord will never pass away.

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Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 50:2-3, 5)

Read Psalm 50.

Our *Gradual* is taken from Psalm 50, which teaches us that all things are created by God, and therefore all things are merely testimonies to his coming. He has created all things. He has spoken all things into existence from the rising of the sun to its setting, and still preserves them. But then the Psalmist declares, "Out of Zion, the perfection of Beauty, God will shine forth." This refers to God's promise that he will reveal himself among his own people. Zion, which was the name for the mount on which Jerusalem stood, is used to describe God's people. This physical Zion does not exist anymore. Even though there are those living in a city called Jerusalem, the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. So has God's promise in Psalm 50 been broken? No, Jesus, the true temple of God in the flesh, has fulfilled and perfected Jerusalem. He has died on the cross, drawing people from all nations to himself (John 12:32). In Christ, the true Light of Light, we find the perfection of God's beauty. In him we have the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Zion, his holy people.

This is why the Psalmist goes on to record God's declaration, "Gather my saints together unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Those who are God's saints, who are made holy and set apart by him, are those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. What is this sacrifice? It isn't a matter of the particular bulls and other animals they offer before him. The Psalmist continues: "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." The bulls and goats were only shadows of the true redemption God would bring in his Son's redeeming death. So all things in this world, whether stars falling or moons eclipsing, are merely shadows of the redemption, which draws near to Zion, the saints of God. So lift up your heads, children of Zion! Christ will shine forth to be your Judge!

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Thursday - Epistle (Romans 15:4-13)

Read Romans 15.

The Scriptures were written for our learning. And what is the outcome of such learning? It is hope. The Scriptures do not teach us simply head knowledge so that we can pass an exam. Rather, they prepare us for

Christ's return by giving us patience and comfort. They make us united in mind with our fellow saints, so that we may receive one another as Christ has received us into his Kingdom. Our learning therefore does not happen in isolation. We do not each by himself hope for salvation. We learn the gospel together. We therefore are comforted together, and we hope together.

Christ came for all nations. He came for Jews, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Americans, Russians, Asians, Africans, and all people. Christ gives us all a common language, a culture, a worship in spirit and in truth. He gives us all the same faith in the same forgiveness from the same Lord through the same baptism. We all learn from the same source of the Holy Scriptures. And we all receive the same patience and comfort from the same Scriptures. We all wait in hope for the same salvation ready to be revealed to us in Christ. We all endure the same struggle for the truth, whether a Christian is being threatened for confessing the deity of Christ in the face of Islam, ridiculed for confessing the fatherhood of God in the face of feminism, pitied for relying on the promise of his baptism in the face of scoffers, or assailed with temptation as he clings in faith to Christ as his only hope and righteousness before God. Whether Christians are enduring danger from eastern tyrants or sneering from western snoots, whether their persecution is severe or mild, they are all given the same patience and comfort from the Scriptures. Your struggle against the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh is not unique only to you. Your brothers throughout the world endure the same suffering. Christians in all nations hope in Christ, who is the Savior of the nations. He is also the judge of the nations. We therefore wait together for such judgment, knowing that our redemption draws near. In the mean time, God grants the same peace and joy through faith.

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Friday - Alleluia (Luke 21:26-27)

Read Matthew 24:29-51.

Our *Alleluia verse* is taken from our Gospel lesson, Luke 21:26-27). It ties the *Introit* and the *Gradual* together very well, showing the unity of the Father and the Son as one God, and preparing us for the comforting words of our Lord, Jesus. The *Introit* quotes Psalm 80, which identifies the Son of Man as the Man of God's right hand. He has made him strong for himself. Next, our *Gradual* quotes Psalm 50, which confesses that God will shine forth and come in the perfection of beauty. And then the *Alleluia* quotes Jesus who says, "You will see the Son of Man coming in

a cloud with power and great glory." The Son of Man is God who shines forth, perfected in beauty.

And this prepares us for the comfort of Jesus' words in our Gospel lesson. You see, we know who this God is. He isn't some unknown deity collecting some unknown due. He is the Son of Man, the very face of God himself, who died for us. He is our redemption who draws near. When the heavens are shaking, stars are falling, breath is leaving people's lungs out of fear, and the sea is roaring, we are not left wondering how it will all end. We can straighten up, keep our shoulders back and our chin up, and stand firm. And why? Because we know who God is. We know who is coming. We know who the perfection of beauty is. Who is the King of glory, David asks? The Lord of hosts (Ps 24). The Son of Man, the very face of God, which shines upon us in our baptism, is the one who is coming. So be on your guard against falling into the deceit and carelessness of this world. But don't be afraid. Because while he who comes to judge the nations may be a terror to his foes, he is a light of consolation and blessed hope to those who love the Lord's appearing. So we pray: O Glorious Sun, now come! Send forth Your beams so cheering, and guide us safely home.

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Saturday - Gospel (Luke 21:25-36)

Read Luke 21:25-36 and Zechariah 9:9-13.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." We know from experience that the heavens and the earth are passing away. Man, who is made in God's image, dies because of sin everyday. Comets fall out of the sky. Nations tumble. People are anxious. It is all self-evident, isn't it? Heaven and earth are passing away. The unbelieving world can't believe it, though. They either think that the world is doing just fine, or they think that they can some how save the world if only everybody holds hands and sings songs by John Lennon. Or maybe if we all support the right candidate or alliance, then we can get rid of evil. A veil remains over the faces of those who refuse to acknowledge the truth -- the wages of sin is death. Now, it is certainly good to stay healthy so that we may serve our neighbor and confess Christ. Finding cures for terrible diseases and discovering ways to protect the climate from pollution are certainly virtuous things. Who would argue against protecting our neighbors and fellow citizens from foreign and domestic enemies? But they will not keep the inevitable from happening. Heaven and earth and all that is in it will pass away. All the works of men will burn up with it (2 Pet 3:10). Our outer nature

wastes away (2 Cor 4:16).

But Christ's Word will not pass away. The Word, which holds every atom together just as it created the dust to form the first Adam, remains forever. And this is very good news, because this Word is not revealed to drive us to despair. It is revealed so that we would behold the glory of the Word-made-flesh, who is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). This is the Word who claimed our flesh and blood eternally as his most prized possession, bearing all the sin, which corrupted it and causes all the decay and failing hearts of his creation. This is the Word, which reveals to us a favorable God who claims us as his children through the blood of his Son. So as we witness the heavens and earth passing away, we may lift up our heads and listen to the Word of God, which tells us that our Redemption draws near.

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When Sinners See Their Lost Condition

John 20: 19-28

Naar Synderen ret ser sin Vaade

Magnus B. Landstad, 1888

Tr., Oluf H. Smeby, 1908, alt.

9. 8. 9. 8. 8. 8.

Wer weiss, wie nahe

Christian M \ddot{o} ck, 1818

1 When sin - ners see their lost con - di - tion And feel the
 2 When Je - sus en - ters meek and low - ly To fill the
 3 When Je - sus en - ters land and na - tion And moves the
 4 When Je - sus comes, -O bless - ed sto - ry!- He works a



press - ing load of sin, And Je - sus com - eth on His mis - sion
 home with sweet - est peace; When hearts have felt His bless - ing ho - ly
 peo - ple with His love; When, yield - ing to His kind per - sua - sion,
 change in heart and life; God's king - dom comes with pow'r and glo - ry



To heal the sin - sick heart with - in, All grief must flee be -
 And found from sin com - plete re - lease, Then light and calm with -
 Our hearts His truth and bless - ing prove, Then shall our life on
 To young and old, to man and wife; Thro' Sac - ra - ment and



fore His grace, And joy di - vine will take its place.
 in shall reign And hearts di - vid - ed love a - gain.
 earth be blest, The peace of God on us shall rest.
 liv - ing Word, Faith, love, and hope are now con - ferred. A - men.



When Sinners See Their Lost Condition

5 Then stilled are cries and lamentation,
Then loosed is Satan's every band;
In death is hope and consolation,
The soul is safe in Jesus' hand.
When we shall walk through death's dark vale,
His rod and staff shall never fail.

6 Oh, may He soon to every nation
Find entrance where He is unknown,
With life and light and full salvation,
That heathendom may be o'erthrown
And healing to the hearts may come
In heathen land and Christian home!