



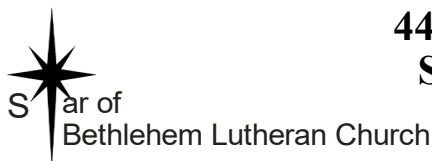
**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**

He came as a witness to
testify concerning that
light, so that **through him**
all might believe.

John 1:7



**NORTHWESTERN
PUBLISHING HOUSE**



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Pastor Michael Foley

Worship Service

Sunday, December 17, 2023 10:00 a.m.

Third Sunday of ADVENT

Theme of the day: In this season of Advent (Coming) we focus on the three “comings” of Christ: his coming into this world as a baby to put himself in our place and to pay for our sins, his coming in glory at the last day to take us into the full enjoyment of our salvation, and his coming into our hearts through the power of his word which gives us faith and makes that salvation our own. All three of these comings lead us to REJOICE....

WELCOME

A warm welcome to our friends and visitors! Star of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is eager to share with you the blessings of its Christ-centered ministry. If you are a new or long-time resident of the Central Coast looking for a church home, we invite you to meet with us at the close of this worship service or at your convenience. All are welcome to stay for refreshments in the fellowship hall.

Families are encouraged to worship together. If you need to step out with your children, the service can be seen and heard in the fellowship hall or narthex area. Feel free to enter and return at any time.

OUR MISSION

Our congregation exists for the purpose of “HOLDING OUT THE WORD OF LIFE.” This is accomplished by faithfully preserving and proclaiming all of God’s inerrant word, and administering the Sacraments as they were instituted by Christ.

OPENING HYMN: # 524 “Rejoice, the Lord Is King”

♪ **Rejoice, the Lord is King!**
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

The Lord, our Savior, reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules o’er earth and heav’n;
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Please stand for last verse:

Rejoice in glorious hope!
Our Lord and judge shall come
and take his servants up to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Minister: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Congregation: **And also with you.**

The Call to Repentance

M: A voice was saying, “Cry out!”

C: **And I said, “What shall I cry out?”**

M: All flesh is grass,

C: **and all its beauty is like a wildflower in the countryside.**

M: Grass withers, flowers fade, when the breath of the LORD blows
on them.

C: **Yes, the people are grass.**

M: Grass withers, flowers fade,

C: **but the word of our God endures forever.**

C: Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Introduction is played (Melody of # 316)

♪ **O Jesus, Lamb of God, you are
My comfort and my guiding star;
I come, a sinner, trustingly
And bring my many sins with me.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: (Spoken) Amen

Please be seated.

ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING INTROIT

♪ **Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
and see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christ Child lying there.**

M: The darkness of sin and unbelief are shattered by the light of the Gospel. The **Prophecy Candle** gives us the first flicker of hope as we watch for the coming of the Lord.

C: Watch! Be alert and pray, because you do not know when the time will come. (Mark 13:33)

The Prophecy Candle is lit.

M: The **Bethlehem Candle** calls us to repent. See in Jesus the Light of the world. Change your hearts so that you may live as children of the light.

C: “Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.”
(Matthew 3:3)

The Bethlehem Candle is lit.

M: The **Shepherd Candle** points to our joy as God’s people. In Jesus we have all that matters. In joy and peace we ask God to keep us in the faith and faithful in our lives.

C: The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. *(1 Thessalonians 5:24)*

The Shepherd Candle is lit.



♪ **Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
that you might share your joy with me.**

M: May the light of these candles call to mind the glorious light of the Gospel, shining in the birth of our Savior. May his grace enlighten our lives, both now and forever.

♪ **Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
within my heart, made clean and new,
a quiet chamber kept for you.**

FIRST LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶Rejoice always. ¹⁷Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸In everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not extinguish the Spirit. ²⁰Do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹But test everything. Hold on to the good. ²²Keep away from every kind of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

PSALM OF THE DAY: Psalm 71

Refrain



Bless-ed are they who hope, who hope in the Lord.

Psalm tone



In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge;*
let me never be put to shame.

Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness;*
turn your ear to me and save me.

Be my rock of refuge to which I can always go;*
For you are my rock and my fortress.

Refrain

Since my youth, O God, you have taught me,*
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

Even when I am old and gray,*
do not forsake me, O God,


till I declare your power to the next generation,*
your might to all who are to come.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son*
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,*
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Refrain

VERSE OF THE DAY:

M: Alleluia. Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia. (*Matthew 11:10*)

C:  **Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**
These words are written that we may believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

GOSPEL LESSON: John 1:6-8,19-28

⁶There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony John gave when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

²⁰He confessed and did not deny. He confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

²¹And they asked him, “Who are you then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

“No,” he answered.

²²Then they asked him, “Who are you? Tell us so we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

²⁴They had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵So they asked John, “Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, or Elijah, or the Prophet?”

²⁶“I baptize with water,” John answered. “Among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

²⁸These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

HYMN: # 315 “Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord”

♪ Let the earth now praise the Lord,
who has truly kept his word
and at last to us did send
Christ, the sinner's help and friend.

What the fathers most desired,
what the prophets' heart inspired,
what they longed for many a year
stands fulfilled in glory here.

Abram's promised great reward,
Zion's helper, Jacob's Lord—
him of twofold race behold—
truly came, as long foretold.

Savior, hear my welcome cry —
loud hosannas lifted high!
King of Glory enter in;
cleans my soul of ev'ry sin.

Crush for me the serpent's head
that, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to you in faith,
safely kept through life and death,

And, when you shall come again
as a glorious king to reign,
I with joy may see your face,
freely ransomed by your grace.

MESSAGE: Isaiah 61:1-3,10,11

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the afflicted.
He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release for those who are bound,
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance for our God,
to comfort all who mourn,

³to provide for those who mourn in Zion,
to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
a cloak of praise instead of a faint spirit,
so that they will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD to display his beauty.

¹⁰I will rejoice greatly in the LORD.

My soul will celebrate because of my God,
for he has clothed me in garments of salvation.
With a robe of righteousness he covered me,
like a bridegroom who wears a beautiful headdress like a priest,
and like a bride who adorns herself with her jewelry.

¹¹For as the earth produces its growth,
and as a garden causes what has been sown to sprout up,
so God the LORD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up
in the presence of all the nations.

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

C: 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.

Holy Communion, will be celebrated in today's service. The Bible teaches us that Jesus offers us his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins in the Lord's Supper. The Bible also instructs us that receiving the Lord's Supper together is a public expression of our complete "oneness," or unity of faith.

Because the Lord's Supper is an expression of our unity in faith, we invite to the Lord's Supper only those who have expressed that unity with us through membership in our congregation or one of our sister congregations in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), or our sister church body, the ELS.

If you are a guest from another Christian church, we kindly ask that you simply refrain from participation in our celebration of the Lord's Supper today. We don't want to be presumptuous and put you in the position of declaring your agreement with our beliefs before you have had a chance to learn more.

THE HOLY SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.

C: ♪ And also with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: ♪ We lift them up to the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: ♪ It is right to give him thanks and praise.

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Through his holy prophets, he promised a King to bring light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory forever and ever.

♪ **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
The whole earth is full of your glory.
You are my God, and I will exalt you.
I will give you thanks, for you have become my salvation.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
The whole earth is full of your glory.**

The Words of Institution

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: ♪ **Amen.**

♪ **O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world
grant us your peace. Amen.**

COMMUNION HYMN: # 324 “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

♪ **O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart’s delight.
O Jesus, let your Word be a lamp to light my way,
to show me how to please you, to guide me ev’ry day.**

**Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me.
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
Oh, love beyond all telling that led you to embrace
in love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race!**

**Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, who sit in deepest gloom,
who mourn o’er joys departed and tremble at your doom.
Despair not; he is near you, he’s standing at the door
who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more.**

**Sin's debt, that fearful burden, let not your souls distress;
your guilt the Lord will pardon and cover by his grace.
He comes, for you procuring the peace of sin forgiv'n,
his children thus securing eternal life in heav'n.**

**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 most cheering, and guide us safely home.**

Thanksgiving

Please stand.

**♪ Thank the Lord and sing his praise.
Tell ev'ryone what he has done.
Let all who seek the Lord rejoice
and proudly bear his name.
He renews his promises and leads
his people forth in joy
With shouts of thanksgiving.
Alleluia! Alleluia!**

M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: ♪ Amen

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: ♪ Amen. Amen. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: # 490:1,4 “The Clouds of Judgment Gather”

♪ **The clouds of judgment gather, the time is growing late;
be sober and be watchful, our judge is at the gate:
the judge who comes in mercy, the judge who comes in might
to put an end to evil and diadem the right.**

**Oh, happy, holy portion, relief for all distressed,
true vision of true beauty, refreshment for the blest!
Strive now to win that glory, toil now to gain that light;
send hope ahead to grasp it till hope be lost in sight.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the glory of God by Greg & Vicky Lyon.

PRAYERS: Remember to pray for: Shawn Lozano, John Velasques, little Elias, Dennis Douglas, Bob Ward, George Caravana, Molly Webb (and brother, Jim), Helen Marten, Doug Ward, Kathy Jones, Art Amarillas, Roberta Gowin, Melinda Brown, Alice Taubman, Monica, Louise Perry, Rylan Downs, Sam Daugherty, Jeff Brown, Aaron Taubman, Judy Washburn, Marlene Washburn, and Rich Olerich.

THIS WEEK

Tuesday ESL (English as a Second Language), **6:00 p.m.**
Thursday Bible Class, **10:00 a.m.**
NO ESL
Sunday Bible Class & Sunday School, **9:00 a.m.**
Worship, 10:00 a.m.

COMING UP

Christmas Eve - Candlelight Service, 7:00 p.m.
Christmas Day - Festival Worship, 10:00 a.m.

Christian Questions

prepared by Dr. Martin Luther for those who intend to go to the Sacrament

- 1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?** Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.
- 2. How do you know this?**
From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.
- 3. Are you sorry for your sins?**
Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.
- 4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?**
His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation.
See Romans 6:21, 23.
- 5. Do you hope to be saved?** Yes, that is my hope.
- 6. In whom then do you trust?** In my dear Lord Jesus Christ.
- 7. Who is Christ?** The Son of God, true God and man.
- 8. How many Gods are there?**
Only one, but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?**
He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.
- 10. Did the Father also die for you?**
He did not. The Father is God only, as is the Holy Spirit; but the Son is both true God and true man. He died for me and shed His blood for me.
- 11. How do you know this?**
From the holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.
- 12. What are the words of institution?**
Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."
- 13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?** Yes, I believe it.
- 14. What convinces you to believe this?**
The word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?

We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?

First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins. Only Christ, true God and man, could do that.

Second, so we may learn to be horrified by our sins, and to regard them as very serious.

Third, so we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?

His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2; and Ephesians 5.

18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?

First, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord. Second, his own pressing need, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.

20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?

To such a person no better advice can be given than this: first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7.

Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15–16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.



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