

Sunday, December 17, 2023, 9:00am
Third Sunday in Advent
Bright Light of Bethlehem...A Special Purpose Light



We are each a light with a special purpose because Jesus has set us apart...a special purpose, to shine the light of Jesus on others.

Prelude

#340, Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

- 1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits. The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here. Life and salvation He doth bring; Therefore rejoice and gladly sing. To God the Father raise Your joyful songs of praise.
- 2 A righteous Helper comes to thee; His chariot is humility, His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter, pity in distress. The end of all our woe He brings; Therefore the earth is glad and sings. To Christ the Savior raise Your grateful hymns of praise.
- 3 How blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the ruler is confessed! O peaceful hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes! The cloudless sun of joy is He Who comes to set His people free. To God the Spirit raise Your happy shouts of praise.
- 4 Fling wide the portals of your heart; Make it a temple set apart From earthly use for heav'n's employ, Adorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov'reign enter in And new and nobler life begin. To God alone be praise For word and deed and grace!
- 5 Redeemer, come and open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide! O enter with Thy grace divine; Thy face of mercy on me shine. Thy Holy Spirit guide us on Until our glorious goal is won. Eternal praise and fame We offer to Thy name.

Text: Georg Weissel, 1590–1635; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.

Text: Public domain

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C: who made heaven and earth.

P: If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C: But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

P: Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and each other that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Jesus, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

C: Almighty God, have mercy upon me, forgive me my sins, and lead me to everlasting life. Amen.

P: Almighty God, merciful Father, in Holy Baptism You declared us to be Your children and gathered us into Your one, holy Church, in which You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

P: Show us Your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation.

C: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints, but let them not turn back to folly.

P: Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.

C: Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

P: Righteousness will go before Him and make His footsteps a way.

C: 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.

P: Show us Your steadfast love, O Lord,

C: and grant us Your salvation.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Together, let us pray,

C: Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.

Children's Time

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the

ruined cities, the devastations of many generations....For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Romans 1:1–7 [Sermon Text]

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

C: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

C: These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

C: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light....This is the testimony of John, when

the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands One you do not know, even He who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

P: We profess our faith,

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

And 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.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

#350, Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come

- 1 Come, Thou precious Ransom, come, Only hope for sinful mortals! Come, O Savior of the world! Open are to Thee all portals. Come, Thy beauty let us see; Anxiously we wait for Thee.
- 2 Enter now my waiting heart, Glorious King and Lord most holy. Dwell in me and ne'er depart, Though I am but poor and lowly. Ah, what riches will be mine When Thou art my guest divine!
- 3 My hosannas and my palms Graciously receive, I pray Thee; Evermore, as best I can, Savior, I will homage pay Thee, And in faith I will embrace, Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.
- 4 Hail! Hosanna, David's Son! Jesus, hear our supplication! Let Thy kingdom, scepter, crown, Bring us blessing and salvation, That forever we may sing: Hail! Hosanna to our King.

Text: Johann Gottfried Olearius, 1635–1711; tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt.

Text: Public domain

The Sermon *A Special Purpose Light*

The Gathering of our Gifts and Tithes

The Prayers of His Children

P: Lord, in Your mercy. **C: Hear our prayer.**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

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

C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Because He is now risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, all who believe in Him will overcome sin and death and will rise again to new life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing,

SANCTUS LSB 208

**C: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth adored;
Heav'n and earth with full acclaim shout the glory of Your name.
Sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord;
Truly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Text: Stephen P. Starke

P: Together, we pray,

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.

The Words of our Lord

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

C: Amen.

AGNUS DEI LSB 210

**C: 1 O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, You take the sin of the world away;
O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.**

**2 O Jesus Christ, true Lamb of God, You take the sin of the world away;
Have mercy on us, Jesus Christ, And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.**

Text: Stephen P. Starke

The Distribution of Holy Communion

#347, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

1 "Comfort, comfort ye My people, Speak ye peace," thus saith our God; "Comfort those who sit in darkness, Mourning 'neath their sorrows' load. Speak ye to Jerusalem Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her sins I cover And her warfare now is over."

2 Yea, her sins our God will pardon, Blotting out each dark misdeed; All that well deserved His anger He no more will see or heed. She hath suffered many_a day, Now her griefs have passed away; God will change her pining sadness Into ever-springing gladness.

3 Hark, the herald's voice is crying In the desert far and near, Calling sinners to repentance, Since the Kingdom now is here. O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way; Let the valleys rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.

4 Make ye straight what long was crooked; Make the rougher places plain. Let your hearts
be true and humble, As befits His holy reign. For the glory of the Lord Now o'er earth is
shed abroad, And all flesh shall see the token That His Word is never broken.

Text: Johann Olearius, 1611–84; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.

Text: Public domain

#333, Once He Came in Blessing

1 Once He came in blessing, All our sins redressing; Came in likeness lowly, Son of God
most holy; Bore the cross to save us; Hope and freedom gave us.

2 Now He gently leads us; With Himself He feeds us Precious food from heaven,
Pledge of peace here given, Manna that will nourish Souls that they may flourish.

3 Soon will come that hour When with mighty power Christ will come in splendor And will
judgment render, With the faithful sharing Joy beyond comparing.

4 Come, then, O Lord Jesus, From our sins release us. Keep our hearts believing,
That we, grace receiving, Ever may confess You Till in heav'n we bless You.

Text: Johann Horn, c. 1490–1547; (sts. 1, 4): tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.; (sts. 2–3): tr. Lutheran
Service Book, 2006

Text (sts. 1, 4): Public domain

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#849, Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness With a liberating light; Praise the One who frees
the pris'ners, Turning blindness into sight. Praise the One who preached the Gospel,
Healing ev'ry dread disease, Calming storms, and feeding thousands
With the very Bread of peace.

2 Praise the One who blessed the children With a strong, yet gentle, word; Praise the One
who drove out demons With the piercing, two-edged sword. Praise the One who brings
cool water To the desert's burning sand; From this Well comes living water,
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

3 Let us praise the Word Incarnate, Christ, who suffered in our place. Jesus died and rose
victorious That we may know God by grace. Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done; Let us praise the true Redeemer, Praise the One
who makes us one.

Text: Rusty Edwards, 1955

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NUNC DIMITTIS LSB 211

**C: 1 O Lord, now let Your servant Depart in heav'nly peace, For I have seen the glory
Of Your redeeming grace: A light to lead the Gentiles Unto Your holy hill,
The glory of Your people, Your chosen Israel.**

2 All glory to the Father, All glory to the Son, All glory to the Spirit, Forever Three in One; For as in the beginning, Is now, shall ever be, God's triune name resounding Through all eternity.

P: Together, we pray,

C: We give thanks to You, Almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

P: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

God's Benediction

#349, Hark the Glad Sound

1 Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, The Savior promised long; Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne And ev'ry voice a song.

2 He comes the pris'ners to release, In Satan's bondage held. The gates of brass before Him burst, The iron fetters yield.

3 He comes the broken heart to bind, The bleeding soul to cure, And with the treasures of His grace To enrich the humble poor.

4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, Thy welcome shall proclaim, And heav'n's eternal arches ring With Thy beloved name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702–51

Text: Public domain

Postlude