

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 20, 2020

## + AS WE GATHER +

We stand at the threshold not only of an old and familiar story but also that of an old yet familiar mystery, the greatest mystery ever told. It doesn't appear on any list of greatest novels or plays written by earthly authors. It is the mystery of God. More specifically, it is the mystery of His love for the salvation of the world. But as we prepare to review the mystery of God—the Son of God becoming incarnate in our human flesh and born of the Virgin Mary—the greater mystery is that He, Jesus, looks over your shoulder now in the retelling and hearing of Christmas. The greater mystery is that you not only know the old, familiar story but also that you believe it. And believing brings about the best mystery of all—that your sins are forgiven, that you have a new, eternal life, that you are forever a child, a son, a daughter born of God. The Gospel—the wisdom and mystery of God—is no longer a secret. For it is told by your own mouth singing of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

**OPENING HYMN:** #343 – *Prepare the Royal Highway*

## + PREPARATION +

### INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
People: Amen.

### CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: That our eyes and our ears may be open to receive the mystery of God's love, let us first empty ourselves of everything that has closed our hearts to God, confessing our sin and need of forgiveness and life.

People: **At the Lord's own invitation and command, I confess all my sins to God, the very thoughts, words, and deeds with which I have offended Him and hurt my neighbor. I come now in the sincere hope and faith of the forgiveness of God made known to the whole world in the mystery of His Son, Jesus Christ, who has sacrificed His own flesh and blood for me. Remove my sin and guilt for His sake, and restore a right spirit within me. Amen.**

Pastor: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you. And in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,  
**People: the light no darkness can overcome.**  
Pastor: Let Your light scatter the darkness  
**People: and illumine Your Church.**

**+ WORD +**

**PSALM** *Psalm 89:1-5*

<sup>1</sup>I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;  
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

<sup>2</sup>**For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever;  
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”**

<sup>3</sup>You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:

<sup>4</sup>**“I will establish your offspring forever,  
and build your throne for all generations.”**

<sup>5</sup>Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,  
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

**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.**

**SALUTATION and PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** *2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16*

*(The Lord’s covenant with David)*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup>the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” <sup>3</sup>And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, <sup>5</sup>“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this

day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. <sup>7</sup>In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” <sup>8</sup>Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup>And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. . . .

<sup>16</sup>And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**GRADUAL** *Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.*

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.**

**Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem.**

**Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation.**

**Blessèd is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**From the house of the Lord we bless you.**

**EPISTLE** *Romans 16:25–27*

*(Doxology)*

<sup>25</sup>Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— <sup>27</sup>to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**VERSE** *Matthew 1:23a*

**Alleluia. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel. Alleluia.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** *Luke 1:26–38*

*(The birth of Jesus foretold)*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the first chapter.  
People: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

<sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup>And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
People: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** #340 – *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

**SERMON** – *Christmas Is Almost Here*

### **APOSTLES' CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life + everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

After each petition:

**Pastor:** ... Lord, in Your mercy:

**People:** **hear our prayer.**

At conclusion:

**Pastor:** ... through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**People:** **Amen.**

## **OFFERING**

**LORD'S PRAYER** *Matthew 6:9–13*

**People:**     **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.**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Pastor:**     Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come. Strengthen Your gift of faith in us,  
and keep us by Your power to be Your own; for You live and reign with the  
Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People:**     **Amen.**

## **BENEDICTION**

**Pastor:**     The Lord bless you and keep you.

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

The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

**People:**     **Amen.**

**CLOSING HYMN: #358 – *From Heaven Above to Earth I Come***

Creative Worship for the Lutheran Parish, Series B, Quarter 1. Copyright © 2020 Concordia Publishing House.  
All rights reserved. Used by permission.