

Announcing the Advent Advent 2021

Announcing the Advent to the Shepherds Week 2

The Opening Hymn: LSB 334, “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?”

The Invocation

The Psalmody: Psalm 105 (Selected verses)

P: Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done.

C: Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts.

P: Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

C: Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always.

P: Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced,

C: O descendants of Abraham His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones.

P: He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth.

C: He remembers His covenant forever, the word He commanded, for a thousand generations.

An Advent Reading

A Hymn: LSB 333, “Once He Came in Blessing”

The Study: “*Announcing the Advent to the Shepherds*” (Adapted from *Announcing the Advent* by Curtis Moermond, CPH:1991)

St. Luke’s Gospel often shows the relationship between the general history of the world and the events in this life of our Lord. In so doing he helps us to see that not only did our Lord come into this world at a definite time and in a definite place, but also that His redeeming work was not confined to an isolated nation on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Instead, Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. But word of the Savior’s arrival had to get out. Luke shows how it did. And, once again, God shocks us by the selection of who first receives the news and who serve as the first “*evangelists*.”

The Announcement

Read Luke 2:1-16.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also

went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. ⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

The first seven verses give us a simple account of one of the most glorious events ever to take place on earth. It is also the fulfilment of the words spoken by the angel Gabriel to Mary as St. Luke records them in chapter 1 (our focus last Wednesday). Little can be added to this account without detracting from its simple beauty.

1. The appearance of the angel to Zechariah (1:11-12) and Mary (1:26-30) was frightful to them. What was it about the angel's appearance to the shepherds that frightened them?

2. What kind of people were the shepherds? Why were they selected to see and hear the announcement?

3. The angel's announcement of the advent of our Lord was one of great joy ... and that's an understatement! According to Isaiah 61:10, what is the cause of such great joy? Who is to receive this good news with joy? (11)

4. The angel's message contains two verifications or signs that the shepherds could use to see the truth of the angel's message.
 - The first is the fulfillment of a prophecy found in Micah 5:2. What is the prophecy?
 - The second way to verify the message is noted in Luke 2:12.
5. In the angel's Good News message, what are the titles given to the Child? (2:11).

The Response

1. Although we might say the shepherds were the first to respond to the message of the angel, if we read the text carefully, we see another response that came first.
 - Who made the first response? (13-14)
 - Read Isaiah 6:1-4 and Revelation 5:11-13. These passages give us insight into such praise.
2. The angels' response is important to us as well (see verse 14). Read what the writer to the Hebrews says in 1:1-3. With the miracle of the Incarnation, that is, God becoming man, God has now reached the climax of his self-revelation to man. No wonder even the angels cannot hold back their hymns of praise and adoration.
 - a. The result of the Incarnation is peace on earth. The prophets spoke of peace as a characteristic of the age of the Messiah. See:
 - Psalm 29:11
 - Isaiah 26:3
 - Isaiah 53:5

b. Note how our Savior spoke of peace.

- John 14:27
- John 16:33
- John 20:19

c. Read how St. Paul wrote about peace.

- Colossians 3:15
- Galatians 5:22
- Philippians 4:7

3. Most people seek peace in the wrong places. What are some of those places?

Based on the above-mentioned Scripture readings, what might you say to a person who is looking for peace in their life – whether that be peace of mind/heart or peace with someone they have conflicted with?

4. The shepherds didn't need much time for the message of the angels to sink in. They were ready to go and see what they had been told. The shepherds are good examples for us in this season of Advent to seek again, through Word and Sacrament, the One who has been announced to us as the Christ, our Lord. What plans are you making to go to Bethlehem this Christmas?

Read Luke 2:17-20. *17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying, and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

5. The shepherds serve as examples for us in that as they return to the fields to tend their flock, they proclaim the Good News of the Christ Child's arrival. With whom might you share the Good News of Jesus? How might you do this?

The Offering

The Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

P: Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy ...

C: To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

The Closing Hymn: LSB 352, "Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord"

***Join us next Wednesday evening (December 15) for our final midweek Advent service. It begins at 7:00 p.m. We will discuss:
"Announcing the Advent to the World."***

Join us for our Christmas Services

December 24 at 7:00 p.m. "The Color of Christmas is White"

December 25 at 10:00 a.m. "God's Christmas Gift to You: A White Stone!"

December 26 at 9:30 a.m. "A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols"

December 31 at 7:00 p.m. "The Color of Christmas is Gold"