



ADVENT 3

**THE KING SHALL COME:
HE IS BRINGING PERFECT JOY**

December 17, 2023



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

God's Word for This Week

The historic Christian Church gave Latin titles to each Sunday. They titled the Third Sunday in Advent "Gaudete," which means "Rejoice!" As we reach the midway point of Advent, we remember that when the King shall come, he will bring us perfect and everlasting joy. Joy is not the same thing as happiness. Happiness is an emotion. Joyfulness is a condition. Happiness comes from your circumstances. Joyfulness comes from your King entering into your heart and assuring you of his abiding love and your glorious future. Therefore, happiness is fleeting. Joyfulness is enduring.

Before Worship

Take time for prayer and to review the lessons and the service notes.

General Information

The restrooms are located in the fellowship hall. Visitors – welcome, and please take a moment and sign the guestbook in the fellowship hall.

Serving in Worship

Music: Rachel Halldorson
Ushers: Mike Jensen, Kurt Knurr
Pastor: Wayne Halldorson
Pastor's Cell: 903-717-1922
Pastor's Email: grace.tx.pastor@gmail.com

Church Information

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text to 520-236-9673

T-Loop Hearing Assistance

If you have a hearing aid with a T-coil, you can connect it to the T-Loop device installed throughout the church building. Headsets are available for anyone needing hearing assistance. Personal ear-buds can also be used with a head set. See Kris Martinson if you need assistance.



ADVENT 3 WORSHIP SERVICE

Lighting of the Advent Candles

The first Advent candle is called the candle of Prophecy. It symbolized the Old Testament prophecies of the Advent, or coming, of the world's Savior.

You came first in humility to save us dear Lord, come again in glory to bring us home according to your promise – amen.

 *The First Advent Candle is Lit:*

The second Advent candle is called the Bethlehem candle. It represents the coming to earth of Jesus, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary.

You took on human flesh and made a permanent bond between God and humanity.

 *The Second Advent Candle is Lit:*

The third Advent Candle is called the Shepherd Candle. It represents the coming of the Savior into our hearts through faith in his Holy Word. Even as the shepherds saw their Savior with their own eyes, and believed, so we see him now through the eyes of faith.

The pink represents the true and lasting joy we now have by faith in Him.

 *The Third Advent Candle is Lit:*



1 Re - joi - ce, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King a - dore!
 2 The Lord, our Sav - ior, reigns, the God of truth and love;
 3 His king - dom can - not fail, he rules o'er earth and heav'n;
 4 Re - joi - ce in glo - rious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come



Re - joi - ce, give thanks and sing, and tri - umph ev - er - more:
 when he had purged our stains, he took his seat a - bove:
 the keys of death and hell are to our Je - sus giv'n:
 and take his ser - vants up to their e - ter - nal home:



Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joice, a-gain I say, re - joi - ce!
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joice, a-gain I say, re - joi - ce!
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joice, a-gain I say, re - joi - ce!
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re-joice, a-gain I say, re - joi - ce!

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.
 Tune: John Darwall, 1731–1789
 Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

Blessing

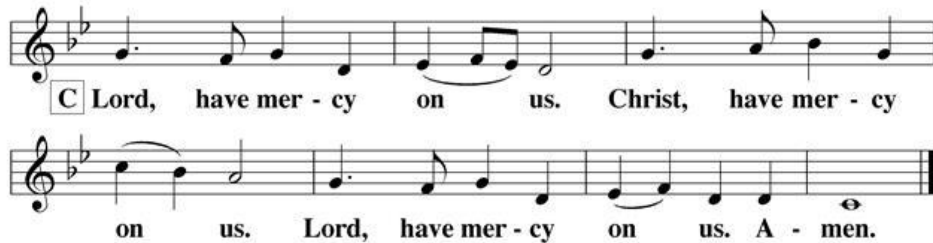
The grace of our Lord † Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Confession & Absolution

God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us, in order that we are ready to meet him:

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 grown spiritually lazy and let my heart be distracted by life. For all 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:



God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for all of 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 the Son + , and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Our sin and guilt is washed away. Our hearts are filled with joy. We are ready to worship him. We are ready to serve him. We are ready to meet him.

Let us, therefore, lift our voices in praise:

363 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

CW 363 sts. 1, 4



1 Now sing we, now re - joice, now raise to heav'n our voice;
4 Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'n - ly ground,



he from whom joy stream - eth poor in a man - ger lies;
where the an - gels sing - ing with all his saints u - nite,



not so bright - ly beam - eth the sun in yon - der skies.
sweet - est prais - es bring - ing in heav'n - ly joy and light.



Thou my Sav - ior art! Thou my Sav - ior art!
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

Text: tr. Arthur T. Russell, 1806–1874, alt.; Latin and German, 14th cent.
Tune: German, 14th cent., alt.
Text and tune: Public domain

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 190

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray:

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of
your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts, and fill
us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

THE WORD

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1–3,10-11

¹The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor

and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
³and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.

¹⁰I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.

71A God Is My Strong Salvation

Psalm 71A

In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;

let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;

turn your ear to me and save me.

Be my rock of refuge,

to which I can always go.

Since my youth, 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, my God,

till I declare your power to the next generation,

your mighty acts 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.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²²reject every kind of evil.

²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. 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.

Alleluia. I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia.



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!



Faith comes from hear - ing the mes - sage, and the



mes - sage is heard through the Word of Christ. Al - le -



lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

Gospel Reading

John 1:6–8,19–28

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

¹⁹Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, “No.”

²²Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’ ”

²⁴Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

²⁶“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

²⁸This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

332 *Let Us All with Gladsome Voice*

CW 332



1 Let us all with glad-some voice praise the God of heav - en,
2 To this vale of tears he comes, here to serve in sad - ness,
3 We are rich, for he was poor; is not this a won - der?
4 Christ, our Lord and Sav - ior dear, bless us and be near us.



who, to bid our hearts re - jice, his own Son has giv - en.
that with him in heav'n's fair homes we may reign in glad-ness.
There - fore praise God ev - er - more here on earth and yon - der.
Grant us now a glad new year. A - men, Je - sus, hear us.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.; German, 17th cent
Tune: Ander Theil Des Dreszdenischen GesangBuchs, Dresden, 1632, alt.
Text and tune: Public domain

Sermon

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 “Putting the Power back into ‘Merry Christmas!’”

353 Joy to the World

CW 353 sts. 1, 4

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the
ceive her King; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous -
room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
Tune: George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759, adapt.
Text and tune: Public domain

Offering

Apostles' Creed

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

**I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there 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.**



Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Prayer of the Church

Gracious Lord, you sent your Son into our world to destroy the power of Satan and restore the human race as your children and heirs. Work in us during this Advent season so that we may rejoice in the coming of our Savior and long for his coming again.

Make us eager to receive the King who comes to save us.

Use the preaching of your holy law to rid us of all delusions that we can gain your love with our own efforts. Move us to realize how hopeless we are because of sin and to feel sorrow for what we have done wrong.

Lead us to be honest about our sinful status in your sight.

Lift up our hearts to see the King who comes to save. Reveal to us his willingness to take on our human form and stand in our place. Show us the power he extends in his Word and sacraments to make us your children and keep us in faith. Thrill us with his promise to come and take us to our eternal home to live with you forever.

Open our eyes to see and believe the wonders of the Savior's love.

As we live with Christ and trust in him, move us to turn away from sin day after day with the strength your Holy Spirit provides. When we fall, forgive us and renew us to love and serve you and all people.

Empower us and guide us to walk with Christ by faith.

Protect us from the distractions that come at this time of the year. Even in gift-giving and celebrating, keep our hearts focused on Christ and his forgiving love.

Give us joy at his coming at Christmas, his coming in the gospel, and his coming again.

Move us to share with others the most important gift of this season, the truth about Jesus. Even in busy times lead us to pray for those whose joy is diminished because of sickness, pain, or loss. Give us opportunities to provide help to those in need.

May others see the love of Christ in our words and actions.

Hear us, Lord, as we bring you those private cares and concerns, and those people that weigh upon our hearts . . .

Silent prayer

Loving Lord, work in us during this Advent season so that our joy may be genuine and may rest in the promises of the King who comes to save.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Closing Blessing

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.

Amen.



Acknowledgments

Setting Three from Christian Worship

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- 1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
- 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the Bride - groom near;
- 3 You saints, who here in pa - tience your cross and suf - f'ings bore,
- 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.
 go forth, as he ap - proach - es, with al - le - lu - ias clear.
 shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.
 a - rise, O Sun so longed for, a - bove this shad - owed sphere.



The Bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.
 A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb you shall be - hold,
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the Bride - groom is at hand.
 in tri - umph lay be - fore him your shin - ing crowns of gold.
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free.

Text: tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823–1907, alt.; Laurentius Laurenti, 1660–1722, abr.

Tune: Swedish

Text and tune: Public domain

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee will meet briefly (in the worship area) after the service today.

We're hoping to have a solution for the Treasurer role that will be vacant in 2024. The church Secretary position is also vacant. If anyone has interest in either position please speak with Scott Cressman.

Christmas 2023

This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, therefore we'll have worship (and Bible class) in the morning at the normal times, and we won't be having a Christmas Eve service in the evening.

On Christmas Day we'll have our worship at 11:00 am and a potluck luncheon to follow.

Bible Classes

Please take advantage of the Bible Classes now offered at Grace: Sunday morning 9 am / Wednesday afternoon 3 pm / the last Friday of the month at 10:30 am (the Parables Bible Class and monthly lunches out will resume in January). Talk to pastor if you'd like to join in one of the current BIC courses as well.

Pastor has just started a new Bible class on **Revelation** held Thursdays at 6:00 pm. You are most welcome to join the group if you are able to – and please invite friends and neighbors! If you can't make the class in person consider watching the course on Facebook (the posts of all our classes are up for 1 month.)

During the week of Christmas and the week following Christmas our regular midweek Bible Classes will be on hold.

Financial Update for Grace

At the November 5, 2023, council meeting, it was decided by unanimous decision to do some rearranging of how the financial accounts at Grace are to be handled going forward. It was decided that the two checking accounts would be combined into a single account and that the WELS Investment Fund (WIF) would be the depository for the Education Fund which was created a few years ago and continues to hold money in anticipation of starting a Christian day school in the future. That Education Fund money would also be used for various school related expenses (such as member tuition assistance for synodical schools, education related equipment for the GMC, etc). At the time of the vote, the Education Fund was determined to have a balance of \$50,348.99. Since that meeting, a large flat screen TV was purchased for the GMC from those funds. Excess money above this amount in the WIF will be available for covering budget shortfalls in the future. If you have any questions about this decision, please speak with the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, or any member of the Church Council. The Education Fund is currently the only officially designated and ongoing fund outside of the General Fund. Offerings designated for other purposes that align with General Fund expenses are passed through the General Fund.

The current balance in the Grace checking account is: \$35,516.48 (as of 12/13/2023) which includes cumulative offerings and the transfer of the balance of the 2nd checking account. This money is available for General Fund expenses as well as unanticipated expenses outside of the budget. Some of those funds may be moved over to the WIF. Given that our monthly offerings are generally approximately \$2,500 below our monthly expenses, having funds in reserve (and in our WIF) is both necessary and a blessing from God.

A Look at our Church Library

On Giving Advice to God - Part 1 & 2

Wanting to strengthen your devotional life? Are you looking for something meaty that challenges your spiritual growth? "On Giving Advice to God" Parts 1 & 2 by Daniel Deuschlander is available in the church library for you to check out. Developing the theme "The Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man", the author reminds the reader how far God's wisdom goes beyond our human thoughts and understanding. Part 1 takes us from Advent through Ascension, following along the church year and the familiar accounts of Scripture we've come to anticipate year after year. The insights you are sure to gain will deepen your understanding and appreciation for God's wisdom and magnanimous love! Part 2 takes us through Pentecost and beyond. Once you get into it, you may even be tempted to buy a copy for your own personal library because you will want to come back to this again and again - one read through is not enough! It makes a great couples' devotion too, and offers plenty of discussion opportunities each time. Your devotional life will never be the same!

Upcoming Schedule

Today	9 / 10 am	Bible Class / Advent 3 Worship
Today	11:00 am	Nominating Committee
Dec. 20	3:00 pm	Genesis Bible Class
Dec. 21	6:00 pm	Revelation Bible Class
Dec. 24	9 / 10 am	Bible Class / Worship + Communion
Dec. 25	11:00 am	Christmas Day Worship + Lunch
Dec. 31	9 / 10 am	Bible Class / Christmas 1 Worship