

Order of Worship for December 5, 2021

The **Great “O Antiphons”** used in the service this morning have been used in the Christian Church in the days before Christmas since the 8th Century and are the basis of the Christmas hymn, “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*”. The author of these antiphons is unknown.

PRELUDE

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

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

C. Amen

Advent Call to Preparation

P: Blessings on Him who comes as King, whom comes in the name of the LORD.

C: Praise to our God, and peace to His people on earth.

P: I will hear what the LORD God has to say.

C: A voice that speaks for peace.

P: Peace for all people and for His friends,

C: And those who turn to him in their hearts

P: His help is near for those who fear Him.

C: And His glory will live in our land.

P: Blessings on Him who comes as King, whom comes in the name of the LORD.

C: Praise to our God, and peace to His people on earth.

P: We bless You, O God, for Your Word of promise, for the coming of Your Son through the waters of Baptism and the Bread of Life. We look to His coming in glory and confess our common faith.

Old Testament Lesson: Malachi 3:1-7b

R: “Behold, I send My messenger and he will prepare the way before Me. And the LORD whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them.”

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 3:1-14

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the third chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” John said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

P: This the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

THE GREAT "O ANTIPHONS" OF ADVENT

FIRST ANTIPHON – SAPIENTIA

O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things:

Come and teach us the way of prudence.

P: Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far:

C: And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SECOND ANTIPHON – O ADONAI

O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel,
who appeared to Moses in the burning bush
and gave him the Law on Sinai:

Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.

P: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Alleluia!

C: Make His paths straight. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the Law, In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

THIRD ANTIPHON – O RADIX JESSE

O Root of Jesse, standing as an ensign before the peoples, before whom all kings are mute,
to whom the nations will do homage:

Come quickly to deliver us.

P: Rejoice greatly, O Jerusalem.

C: Behold thy King cometh.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree, Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save, And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

FOURTH ANTIPHON – O CLAVIS DAVID

O Key of David and Scepter of the house of Israel,
you open and no one can close,
you close and no one can open.
Come and rescue the prisoners who are in
darkness and the shadow of death.

P: Come, O Lord, and make no tarrying:

C: Loosen the bonds of Thy people Israel.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Key of David, come, And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

FIFTH ANTIPHON – O ORIENS

O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting.
Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death.

P: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined:

C: Our God shall come. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SIXTH ANTIPHON – O REX GENTIUM

O King of the nations, the ruler they long for,
the cornerstone uniting all people:
Come and save us all,
whom You formed out of clay.

P: Behold, the Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Alleluia!

C: And in that day, the light shall be great. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, Desire of nations, bind In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SEVENTH ANTIPHON – O EMMANUEL

O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord,
the anointed for the nations and their Savior:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

P: Drop down, ye heavens from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness:

C: Let the earth open and bring forth salvation.

Congregation sings:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Sermon: “What Shall We Do?” – Luke 3:1-14

We spend a lot of time this time of year getting ready. Families get ready for Christmas, cleaning house, making food, hanging decorations, baking cookies, wrapping presents. Students get ready for finals, Dead Week, projects, papers, and presentations by making flashcards, taking practice exams, and meeting in study groups. Homeowners and car owners get ready for winter, and cities get ready for snow fall. Musicians get ready for a plethora of concerts, special services, and other events. Everyone is getting ready.

But often, when we are getting ready, we reach the point where we don't quite know what to do next. The first year in a new house, you have to figure out how to prepare for the challenges winter brings. The first year of concerts or dance recitals, you have to learn how to get ready for the performance, or how to go watch the performance. Students have to figure out the unique quirks of how their professor or TA grades.

And so there's a lot of time spent asking, either yourself or others, “What should I do?” This year, there are extra questions. Concerns about the newest COVID variant have many asking, “what should I do?” The answer seems to be the same as it has been; get vaccinated if you haven't yet done so, get a booster if eligible, wear a mask, wash your hands, stay home if you're sick, and wait to see how bad it is. Supply chain concerns and inflation concerns have people wondering what to do. The answer is buy local, shop early, and remember Christmas isn't about stuff, but about a Savior.

In the church, we spend time getting ready, too. Advent means coming and it is a season of preparation. We take time out in the church year to prepare for the coming of Christ. And at first glance it seems like all of those other preparations we do this time of year. We add a few extra church services in. Wreathes and garlands are put up, the paraments are all changed to blue. The trees are up. But that's not all we do to get ready.

In the church, we prepare to meet Jesus. And the way the church has done this for centuries is by having you meet John. John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer. A voice on the edge of the wilderness. Every gospel writer includes John and every time John appears he points you to Jesus. He gathers Old Testament prophecies and visions of the future and holds them together in a way that leads you to your Lord. As John points us to Jesus, though, he does so in a way that makes us uncomfortable.

When we come to church, we want to be comfortable. We don't just want to make sure that the sanctuary is warm in winter and cool in the summer. We want to hear that Jesus loves me. We want to hear that God is love. We want to hear that everything will turn out ok in the end. We want to hear that God will make us happy, and fix our problems. We want to do so in a familiar way. We want to sing familiar hymns, follow a familiar liturgy, and finish in an hour. We want to be comfortable.

John doesn't prepare us to be comfortable. Instead, like the prophets before him, he makes us uncomfortable. Not just because he comes eating locusts and wild honey, wearing a camel hair robe. He makes us uncomfortable because he holds up a mirror, and shows us all of our blemishes. He shows us our sins, our failures to love God and our neighbors. He shows us our hypocrisy. He preaches an uncomfortable word to get through to sinful, stubborn hearts and get us to turn back towards God.

As he challenged his hearers, as he echoed the messages of the prophets before him, people flocked to John and his message of repentance. His “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The message of repentance that John preaches is a message of a new life, a new direction. The Greek word for repentance, metanoia, means to turn around. John is preaching a new direction for these people's lives, giving them a complete 180 degree turn.

In Luke's Gospel, this is the first time we hear about the concept of repentance. Having heard him proclaim a baptism of repentance, the crowds ask, "What then should we do?" This is followed by similar, more specific questions from toll-collectors and soldiers. John's answers – give your extra clothing and food to those in need, etc. – help them define and understand "repentance" in terms of everyday life. What John instead suggests is fairly simple, even mundane. He tells the crowds to share He tells the soldiers, who were more like hired mercenaries than organized as we think of, not to bully and extort from those under their protection. He tells the tax collectors to not collect more than they were required to, to stop following the widespread practice of the time of charging more than required and skimming off the top to fund their lavish lifestyles.

We see that repentance from a tax collector in action in the story of Zacchaeus, the wee little man that the children like to sing about. When he meets Jesus, he shows his repentance by giving half of his possessions to the poor, and paying those he cheated four times what he owed them. His life was dramatically turned around from encountering Jesus.

On the surface, it seems that repentance is an act of turning away from self toward a life of neighborly care. Yet, the substance of repentance is certainly not good works. Repentance is a turning to God for mercy and acceptance. It is something the sinner does in search of salvation. Repentance is the cry: "Lord have mercy on me a sinner." Only then, having received God's mercy, can we respond by showing mercy.

So like the crowds went out from Jerusalem, we go out to the wilderness to hear from John, to hear his message for us to change our lives, to turn them around, to repent. Like the crowds, we wonder what we should do. In response, we hear the concrete ways that our lives are to change. We hear the opportunities we have to do the work God calls us to do, in small ways of caring and bringing hope to those around us. Maybe you can take your extra clothes to Overflow or the Salvation Army or Goodwill. Maybe you can volunteer at Food at First, or participate in a food drive. We see how the work of our everyday lives is changed, as they are reshaped around God's priorities. We see how God's kingdom has come and is coming among us and in the world. We are called to do the kingdom's work, without establishing a new kingdom.

But what do we do while we wait for the Lord? We are to be busy living lives of repentance, lives holy and pleasing to God. This doesn't just mean to follow the advice of one of my favorite bumper stickers: "Jesus is coming: Look busy." It means to be doing what God has placed before you to do. If you're doing things you shouldn't, stop! If you're not doing things you should, get started! If you're already keeping God's commands to the best of your ability, thanks be to God—keep it up! Be busy doing good works—and repent and receive the forgiveness Jesus earned for us on the cross when you fall short.

What shall we do? Love our neighbors. Care for those in need. Live out our vocations in service to others. Turn our lives around, to follow the one who turns all of our lives around. It's not easy, but it's simple.

And as we do, we wait. The promise of Advent, the season we're in now as we prepare for Christmas, is that the same Jesus who came down at Christmas, as a baby in Bethlehem, the one who we are clothed with at baptism, the one who comes to us in bread and wine, body and blood is the same one who will come down again to disperse the gloomy clouds of night and put death's dark shadow to flight once and for all.

Sharing Our Ministry

The Prayer for Advent

P: O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, ruling over the universe unto the ends of the earth with tenderness and power, come and teach us the way of wisdom. **C: Lord, come soon.**

P: O Lord, Head of the house of Israel, Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Mount Sinai, come open-armed to redeem us. **C: Lord, come soon.**

P: O Branch of Jesse, arising as a sign among the nations, before Whom kings will keep silence and to Whom nations will call for help, come to deliver us and delay no longer. **C: Lord, come soon.**

P: O Key of David, Scepter of the house of Israel, You open that which no one can close and close that which no one can open, come and deliver the prisoners lying in deep captivity and in the shadow of death.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Morning Star, Splendor of eternal light and Sun of righteousness, come and enlighten those living in darkness and in the shadow on death. **C: Lord, come soon.**

P: O King of the nations. You answer their longing; O Cornerstone, You reconcile nations opposed, come and save us whom You made from dust. **C: Lord, come soon.**

P: O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, Hope and Savior of all nations, **C: Lord, come soon.**

(Special concerns)

P: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

P: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

C: From the house of the Lord, we bless you.

P: Hear our prayer, dear Father in heaven, for we have sinned against you.

C: We have not loved You above all else, we have not loved others as we love ourselves.

P: Lord, have mercy upon us.

C: Christ, have mercy upon us.

P: Lord, have mercy upon us,

C: And grant us Your peace.

P: "While we were yet helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since therefore we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God ... We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation."

(Romans 5:6, 7-9, 11) You are forgiven. Be at peace.

C: "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

The Words of Our Lord:

Lord's Prayer

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" – Hymn #621

"When All the World Was Cursed" – Hymn #346

Prayer After Communion:

P: Almighty God, You once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of Your Son and to prepare His way. Grant us, Your people, the wisdom to see Your purpose today and the openness to hear Your will, that we may be witnesses to Christ's coming and so prepare His way, through Jesus, Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

Blessing: (Pastor) **C: Amen**

Closing Hymn *"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"* – Hymn #344