

Order of Worship for December 4, 2022

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.

Calling on God: (Pastor)

C. Amen.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12

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

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is He who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’”

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume 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.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Advent Call for Repentance

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-10

R: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what His eyes

see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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: “Other Peoples’ Prayers” – Matthew 3:1-12

It’s the most wonderful time of the year. Everywhere you look, you see brightly colored decorations. Lights on houses, displays in yards, the big tree across from Beardshear covered in lights. Special coffee cups across the street, and special drinks and meals available wherever you eat. Festive displays in stores entice you to buy more. Everywhere you look, people are preparing for Christmas.

But one of the best ways we prepare for Christmas is singing familiar songs and sharing in familiar traditions. We do that at other times, too, such as when a crowd full of children sing along to the newest Disney song, or the crowd at Jack Trice sings along to Sweet Caroline. But as we get ready for Christmas, we can say the lines along with Linus in the Charlie Brown Christmas movie, or grumble along with the Grinch as he plots to steal Christmas, or predict the plotline of the next Hallmark movie on TV. We have words and songs and traditions that help us prepare for Christmas.

That’s how we prepare for Christmas in the church, too. We have traditions that we follow. We decorate the sanctuary and the rest of the building. We put up the Advent wreath. The Sunday School children practice sharing the Christmas story through the special service next week. We hear familiar readings about John the Baptist, and hear the words of Isaiah and others pointing to the coming Savior. We have words and songs and traditions that help us prepare for Christmas.

The most important thing we do to prepare for Christmas, though, is to pray the prayers of those who came before us. We pray along with the generations praying for a Messiah. We pray along with the generations waiting for Jesus to come again. We pray along with the generations that came before us, and we pray with the generations that are yet to come.

Anglican priest Tish Warren writes, “For most of church history, Christians understood prayer not primarily as a means of self-expression or an individual conversation with the divine, but as an inherited way of approaching God, a way to wade into the ongoing stream of the church’s communion with him.” That’s what so much of this season is about. We join in familiar words and songs to join with Christians throughout time and space in preparing for Christmas.

All of the O Antiphons we just read and sang are ancient verses that serve as the basis for the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” They’re not just a song, though. They are prayers. Prayers for Emmanuel to come, for God to come down and be with us. Prayers that use seven different names of Jesus. Prayers that remind us of all that God has done in the past and what

God has promised to do in the future. Prayers for God to come and redeem us as He redeemed the Israelites. Prayers to rescue those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, for us to be brought out into the light.

The prayers were written to be used as antiphons, to be sung before and after the singing of the Magnificat in the monasteries of Europe, in the days leading up to Christmas. But hidden in those old prayers is a message and a promise. We find not just our prayers to God in these prayers, but God's answer to these prayers.

The secret code the monks wrote into the O Antiphons some 1500 years ago as they sat in cold chapels chanting in Latin during the longest nights of the year leading up to Christmas, ending on December 23rd. The Benedictines arranged these antiphons with a definite purpose. If you take the first letter of each one looking backwards—Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia—the Latin words *ero cras* are formed, meaning, "Tomorrow, I will come". Therefore Jesus, whose coming we Christians prepare for in Advent and whom we have addressed in these seven titles, now speaks to us: *ero cras* "Tomorrow, I will come."

The tomorrow that the prayers speak of is Christmas Eve, the celebration of God coming down into the world as a baby. C.S. Lewis once said that the Incarnation was the greatest miracle, because all the other miracles flow from it. Without the incarnation, there would be no turning water into wine. There would be no walking on the water. There would be no giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, no giving speech to the mute or making the lame walk. There would be no feeding of the four thousand or five thousand with only fishes and loaves. There would be no raising of Lazarus. If God had not come down into the world as Jesus, there would be no crucifixion, no resurrection, no Easter. The prayers Jesus answered throughout his ministry would go unanswered.

Jesus came down into the world to be Emmanuel, God with us. His coming didn't make the mountains shake or the nations tremble. Instead, his coming was something few ears heard and few eyes saw.

Throughout his ministry, he would work in the same way, not calling down fire from heaven, but instead coming down to be among those who were seen as the low and unclean and unworthy. He talks to the Samaritan woman at the well, the fishermen on the lakeshore, the cripple by the pool. He gets Zacchaeus to come down and take him to eat with other tax collectors and sinners. He comes down and kneels at his disciples' feet to wash them.

The baby lying in a manger is the first step of God's plan to come down and fix our world, the answer to the prayers of so many over such a great span of time. Jesus was born to die for our sins, to begin God's awesome work of fixing the world from all of the ways it's been broken by sin. And as he did so, Jesus prayed other people's prayers on the cross. He prayed the psalms,

the prayers he learned as a child. He prayed the words of prophecy. He answered the prayers of those who prayed for God to come down.

Jesus' death on the cross defeated death once and for all, and saves us from our sins. But sin, death, and the devil don't realize they're defeated yet, and so we continue to struggle against them. Prayer helps us when we struggle this time of year, when circumstances and memories darken the joy of the season. We pray along with the distraught father, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Prayer shapes us. It works back on us to change who we are and what we believe. Praying the prayers of those who have gone before us give us words when we don't have the words to say.

We don't know when God will answer our prayers and come again. It may be tomorrow, it may be in a thousand years. But we know that God is coming, to lead us out of darkness into light, to end sin and death and sadness forever. Until then, we pray with the church throughout the world and throughout the centuries, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Offerings and Voluntary

Sharing Our Ministry

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 our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 15:4-7

R: For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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:

Choir Anthem: E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come (8:30)

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" - **Hymn #621**

"When All the World Was Cursed" - **Hymn #346**

Prayer After Communion:

P: Christ Jesus, we thank You for answering the call to come into our world, become one of us, and bring about our salvation. We thank You for now for coming to us right now in this precious Sacrament. Help it to sustain us until the day You return.

C: Amen

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen

Closing Hymn: *“On Jordan’s Bank, the Baptist’s Cry”* - **Hymn #344**

Postlude: