

A Coming King



Advent Hymn Devotions A.D. 2021

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Preface

This Advent, we are providing another set of hymn devotions (this time reflecting upon Advent hymns). Again, each hymn has an uploaded recording, which you may use to listen to or sing along with (instructions for accessing these are provided below). For each devotion, a short Scripture passage and prayer have also been included. The Scripture passages come from historic Antiphons (short sentences sung or recited before or after a psalm or canticle) that would have been sung before and after the Magnificat at Vespers on these days. For December 17 – 23, the passages are those referenced in the ‘Great O Antiphons,’ which, in addition, are themselves the prayers for those days. The remaining prayers are drawn from various liturgical resources.

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Accessing Hymn Recordings

1. Go to: www.redeemer-church.ca
2. Click on “View Sermon”
3. Click on the button labeled “Devotional Music”
4. Click play on the hymn you are looking for

Advent 1

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.” — Luke 1:30

Ironically, our first hymn takes us out of the Advent season to a particular day in the church year: the Annunciation. On this day (March 25) the church celebrates the angel Gabriel’s message to Mary, in which he proclaimed that she would give birth to the Christ-child. This hymn originated in the Basque country, which lies on the border of France and Spain. It is based on an earlier medieval Latin carol, which also paraphrased the Annunciation account from Luke’s gospel.

The first stanza describes Gabriel’s perplexing greeting to Mary, beginning with: “All Hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary;” and ending with the hymn’s refrain: “Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!” It is important for us to understand Mary’s significance and why she is greeted in this way as the “most highly favoured lady.” It is not because of anything that she did. Rather, it is because of God’s grace, by which He gave her the blessing of being the mother of the Christ that He favoured her. It is because of what God did in making her the bearer of the Saviour of the world, that she was greeted with this title.

Gabriel’s message continues in the next stanza as he tells Mary that she shall be a blessed mother and that her child shall be the Christ, who shall be called Emmanuel (Is. 7:14). We hear Mary’s response: “To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said. This response displays Mary’s faith in the Lord. She trusted in and submitted herself to God’s good will, despite the implications that must have been running through her mind. We then hear a paraphrase of the Magnificat, in which she sings His praises: “My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name.”

Finally, we are taken away from the Annunciation and brought to the fulfillment of Gabriel’s words. We sing how Christ, the Saviour of the world was indeed born of Mary “In Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn.” On *the* Christmas morn, when the Son of God came into the world to redeem the world by His death on the cross. It is because of His salvation, that He accomplished for us, that “Christian folk throughout the world will ever say: Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!”

O Lord, as we have known the incarnation of Your Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of the angel to the virgin Mary, so by the message of His cross and passion, bring us to the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LSB 356 - The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,
 2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,
 3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;
 4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



With wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:
 All gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;
 "To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.
 In Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,
 Thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
 "My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."
 And Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy, Glo - ri - a!
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!



Advent 2

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. — Luke 1:45

This hymn, written in the 17th century by Paul Gerhardt, is based on the historic gospel text for the First Sunday of Advent (Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Matt. 21:1-9). The original hymn consisted of 10 stanzas, of which *Lutheran Service Book* has retained 6.

As with many Advent hymns, this hymn sings of more than one advent (or coming) of Christ. However, in the forefront is Christ's coming on the Last Day, as we ponder how we are to greet our coming King when He returns. We reflect upon the welcome Christ received when He entered Jerusalem at the beginning of His passion. However, instead of laying palms before Him, we resolve that we will greet him by adoring Him "with joyous songs and psalms" and "from [Christ's] name [we] shall never withhold the Honour due."

We greet Him this way, since while we "lay in fetters groaning, [Christ] came to set [us] free" and that He has given us a crown and "a treasure safe on High." These are not fleeting like the treasures of this world. These are the blessings of eternal life won for us on the Cross, which His "thirst for [our] salvation procured." God's love for humanity and His desire for our salvation "caused [Christ's] incarnation" in which the Son of God took on our flesh to redeem us by dying on the Cross. This love for us is shown in his outstretched arms, which "embrace...our lost and fallen race." For this wondrous love and grace, He is worthy of all praise and honour.

This leads us to look forward to that final day and pray for the consummation of Christ's blessings. By His incarnation in His first advent, He procured for us "the peace of sins forgiven" and secured for us, His children, "eternal life in heaven." When He comes again on the last day, despite being "a terror to His foes," He will come as a blessed hope to those who love His appearing. On that day we will greet Him with songs, psalms, and praises, as we receive the crown and treasure as co-heirs of eternal life. Thus, the hymn closes with the prayer: "O glorious Sun, now come, Send forth Your beams so cheering, and guide us safely home."

O Lord God, Father Almighty, purify the recesses of our heart, and mercifully wash away the stain of our sins; and grant, O Lord, that, cleansed from our sins by Your merciful blessing, we may await in confidence the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LSB 334 - O Lord, How Shall I Meet You



1 O Lord, how shall I meet You, How wel - come You a - right?
2 Your Zi - on strews be - fore You Green boughs and fair - est palms;
3 I lay in fet - ters, groan - ing; You came to set me free.
4 Love caused Your in - car - na - tion; Love brought You down to me.



Your peo - ple long to greet You, My hope, my heart's de - light!
And I too will a - dore You With joy - ous songs and psalms.
I stood, my shame be - moan - ing; You came to hon - or me.
Your thirst for my sal - va - tion Pro - cured my lib - er - ty.



O kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, Your lamp with - in my breast
My heart shall bloom for - ev - er For You with prais - es new
A glo - rious crown You give me, A trea - sure safe on high
Oh, love be - yond all tell - ing, That led You to em - brace



To do in spir - it low - ly All that may please You best.
And from Your name shall nev - er With - hold the hon - or due.
That will not fail or leave me As earth - ly rich - es fly.
In love, all love ex - cel - ling, Our lost and fall - en race.

5 Sin's debt, that fearful burden,
Cannot His love erase;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon
And cover by His grace.
He comes, for you procuring
The peace of sin forgiv'n,
His children thus securing
Eternal life in heav'n.

6 He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A light of consolations
And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Your beams so cheering,
And guide us safely home.

Advent 3

And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” — Luke 7:22

This hymn was written by Swedish Pastor and poet Franz Mikael Franzén. It was first published in 1812 as part of the process of assembling a new hymnal to replace the hymnal used in the Church of Sweden since 1695. During this process, it underwent many revisions until reaching its final form in 1819. *Lutheran Service Book* retains 4 of the original 7 verses.

This hymn focuses on Christ coming as *King* and the significance of the coming of His kingdom. It expresses the joyful hope we have in Christ’s coming, as it calls us to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Is 40:3), for Christ, “the King of Glory,” is coming to save us!

We are reminded of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with palm branches and garments placed before the coming King. We are called to greet Him with the same joy, for “God’s promise will not fail [us].” Consequently, we echo the Hosannas of Palm Sunday in the refrain, as we continue to praise Christ as the living Word, who is the fulfillment of God’s promises. The connection to Palm Sunday also reminds us of where Christ was going, and how He would fulfill these promises. It was by His entry into Jerusalem that He (as another great hymn puts it) “[rode] on to die.” In His death on the cross, Christ fulfilled God’s promise of salvation for us, paying for our sins and winning for us eternal life.

The third stanza exudes the joy we have in the salvation of our King, and calls us to bow down before Christ and adore Him. We are reminded that His kingdom “is no earthly kingdom,” rather “it comes from heaven above.” Christ’s kingdom is “that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the devil’s power. He sent Him to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience. For this reason He has also given His Holy Spirit, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power.” (LC III:51) In thanks for all these blessings, we sing the refrain once more: “Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s word!”

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of Your tender love toward us sinners has given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we may have everlasting life, grant us Your Holy Spirit, that we may continue steadfast in this faith to the end and may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

LSB 343 - Prepare the Royal Highway



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; The King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see Him com - ing: Your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen To greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; It comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley A lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore Him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion Its trib - ute too should bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom And jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of Glo - ry Fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands, bow down be - fore Him! All na - tions, now a - dore Him!
So let your praise be sound - ing For kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain



Ho - san - na to the Lord, For He ful - fills God's Word!

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December 17

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. — Isaiah 11:2-3

Today's hymn was written by Georg Weissel, a Lutheran Pastor who served in Kaliningrad (at the time called Königsberg) in the 17th century. He based this hymn on Psalm 24:7-10 and intended it to be sung on the first Sunday in Advent.

The underlying theme throughout this hymn is joy. Specifically, the joy that we, Christians, have in the coming of our Lord. The first 3 stanzas present a Doxology praising the Holy Trinity for the wondrous salvation that our God has won for us. We begin by proclaiming the coming of Christ, calling for the gates to lift up their heads, for the King of Glory is coming, bringing life and salvation. Thus, we are called to raise our joyful songs of praise to God the Father in thanks for sending his Son into our flesh to save us by His death on the Cross.

We then echo that Christ, the righteous helper, is coming to us. He is given the description of humble, holy, and compassionate as he brings an end to our woe. Thus, we also raise our "grateful hymns of praise" to Him. As the doxology continues, we rejoice in how blessed we who confess Christ as our King are. He has won for us eternal life by his death, which we receive by faith. For this faith and confession, we raise our "happy shouts of praise" to God the Holy Spirit at the end of the third stanza.

The last two stanzas meditate upon our sanctification. The Holy Spirit works regeneration in us so that we may begin a "new and nobler life." We are called to make our hearts a place "adorned with prayer and love and joy," and to give thanks to God "for word and deed and grace." Finally, we pray for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to open our hearts to Him and for Him to dwell there. As Luther's Small Catechism states: "[we] cannot by our own reason or strength believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called [us] by the Gospel, enlighten[s] us with His gifts, sanctifie[s] and ke[eps] us in the true faith." So we continue to pray that in His mercy, He would send His Holy Spirit to guide us until we achieve our goal of eternal life, won for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we offer "eternal praise and fame."

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. Amen.

LSB 340 - Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates



1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates! Be - hold, the King of
2 A righ - teous Help - er comes to thee; His char - iot is hu -
3 How blest the land, the cit - y blest, Where Christ the rul - er
4 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; Make it a tem - ple
5 Re - deem - er, come and o - pen wide My heart to Thee; here,



glo - ry waits. The King of kings is draw - ing near; The
mil - i - ty, His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness, His
is con - fessed! O peace - ful hearts and hap - py homes To
set a - part From earth - ly use for heav'n's em - ploy, A -
Lord, a - bid! O en - ter with Thy grace di - vine; Thy



Sav - ior of the world is here. Life and sal - va - tion
scep - ter, pit - y in dis - tress. The end of all our
whom this King in tri - umph comes! The cloud - less sun of
dorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov - reign
face of mer - cy on me shine. Thy Ho - ly Spir - it



He doth bring; There - fore re - joice and glad - ly sing. To
woe He brings; There - fore the earth is glad and sings. To
joy is He Who comes to set His peo - ple free. To
en - ter in And new and no - bler life be - gin. To
guide us on Un - til our glo - rious goal is won. E -



God the Fa - ther raise Your joy - ful songs of praise.
Christ the Sav - ior raise Your grate - ful hymns of praise.
God the Spir - it raise Your hap - py shouts of praise.
God a - lone be praise For word and deed and grace!
ter - nal praise and fame We of - fer to Thy name.

December 18

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.— Isaiah 11:4-5

The earliest records of this hymn date from the 9th century. It was written in Latin in the form of an Ambrosian office hymn. These hymns were designed for use in the Daily Office in monasteries and were modeled after a poetic form made popular by St. Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century.

This hymn is a prayer, which begins by addressing Christ as both Creator and Redeemer, asking Him to save and hear us when we call to Him. We then repeat to Christ what he has done. We sing of how He was grieved at the “ancient curse” of sin, which hangs upon all mankind, and we confess Him as the only healing which can “save our ruined race.” We recall Christ’s first advent, as he took on our flesh and came as the Bridegroom to His Bride: the Church catholic. However, He came unexpectedly, as a “spotless victim” to die for her. By His death, He rescued her from that ancient curse and brought her back to himself to live with Him eternally.

For this reason, “All knees must bend [and] all hearts must bow” at Christ’s majestic name. For Christ, now risen from the dead, is exalted and sits in heaven, reigning at the right hand of the Father. But His work is not finished. In reigning from the Father’s right hand, He continues to come to us in our need. He sends us His Holy Spirit, who works through His word, so that we may have faith. He also comes to us in the precious Sacrament of His true Body and Blood, shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

We then look forward to Christ’s second coming on the Last Day. We confess that He will come to judge the living and the dead, and so we pray that He would “preserve us from the ancient foe while still we dwell on earth below.” Christ preserves us through His means of grace. In the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us through the Word, is poured upon us and we are united to Christ’s death and resurrection. By the Sacrament of the Altar, we are strengthened in the assurance of Christ’s all-atoning sacrifice and are “*preserve[d]* in body and soul to life everlasting.” As Christ continues to come to us in His Word and Sacraments, He preserves us in the one true faith. For all these blessings, the hymn fittingly concludes with a doxology praising our triune God.

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. Amen

LSB 351 - Creator of the Stars of Night



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,
2 Thou, griev - ing that the an - cient curse
3 Thou cam'st the Bride - groom of the bride,
4 At whose dread name, ma - jes - tic now,



Thy peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing Light:
Should doom to death a u - ni - verse,
As drew the world to e - ven - tide,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;



O Christ, Re - deem - er, save us all
Hast found the heal - ing, full of grace,
The spot - less Vic - tim all di - vine
All things ce - les - tial Thee shall own,



And hear Thy ser - vants when they call.
To cure and save our ru - ined race.
Pro - ceed - ing from a vir - gin shrine.
And things ter - res - trial, Lord a - lone.

5 O Thou, whose coming is with dread
To judge the living and the dead,
Preserve us from the ancient foe
While still we dwell on earth below.

△6 To God the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
Praise, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally. Amen.

December 19

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. — Isaiah 11:1

This hymn was written by the Bohemian cleric, Johann Horn and published in 1544. The original text of the hymn contained 9 verses. The text in *Lutheran Service Book* is a very unique adaptation of the original, differing from our Synod's previous hymnals.

The hymn concerns the three advents of Christ: past, present, and future. The first 3 verses look at: 1) how Christ came to us in His incarnation; 2) how Christ comes to us now in word and sacrament; 3) how Christ will come again on the Last Day to render judgement.

The first stanza is a synopsis of Christ's salvific work. We sing how the very Son of God assumed human flesh in order that He might die upon the Cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world in order to save us from our sins and eternal death. We then sing the word, "Now," which reminds us that Christ still comes to us here and now. There is no doubt that this second verse is talking about the Sacrament of the Altar. We are reminded that the "precious food from heaven" is Christ himself and a "pledge of peace" with God. We are given the sacrament as a token of the forgiveness of sins that was won for us by His death on the cross. Christ continues to come to us through His word and the sacraments (which ultimately receive their power and efficacy from the Word).

The hymn now turns towards the future. Christ will come again on the Last Day to render judgement. As terrifying as that may sound, we, as Christians, need not fear. Remember how Christ came to us in stanza 1. God the Son assumed our flesh and died for our sins on the cross to save us. When Christ comes again in judgement, we shall rejoice. He will not condemn us to eternal damnation as sinners, but He will declare us guiltless and worthy of eternal life, being covered in His own righteousness, which we have received by faith.

The Day of Judgement is that which we yearn for, despite the objections of our "Old Adam" which clings to this world. Thus, we pray in the final stanza for Christ to come and release us from the sinfulness that still dwells in our flesh. We pray that He would keep us steadfast in our faith and confession, preparing us for that last day "Till in heaven we bless [Him]."

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. Amen.

LSB 333 - Once He Came in Blessing



1 Once He came in blessing, All our sins re -
 2 Now He gent - ly leads us; With Him - self He
 3 Soon will come that hour ——— When with might - y
 4 Come, then, O Lord Je - sus, From our sins re -



dress - ing; Came in like - ness low - ly,
 feeds us Pre - cious food from heav - en,
 pow - er Christ will come in splen - dor
 lease us. Keep our hearts be - liev - ing,



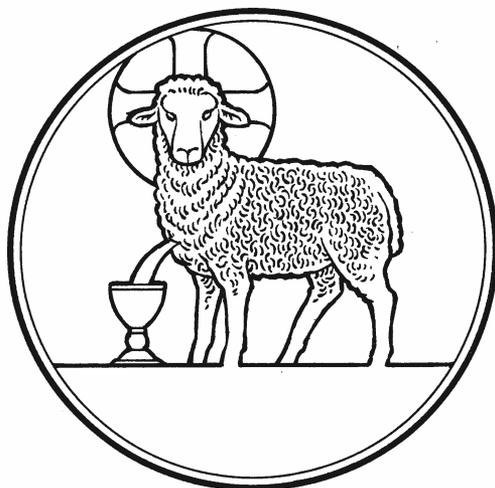
Son of God most ho - ly; Bore the cross to
 Pledge of peace here giv - en, Man - na that will
 And will judg - ment ren - der, With the faith - ful
 That we, grace re - ceiv - ing, Ev - er may con -



save us; Hope and free - dom gave us.
 nour - ish Souls that they may flour - ish.
 shar - ing Joy be - yond com - par - ing.
 fess You Till in heav'n we bless You.

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December 20

And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. — Isaiah 22:22

This hymn, written by the Jesuit priest, Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld, first appeared in 1622 and was being published in Lutheran sources soon after his death in 1631. It first appeared in English in 1969, when it was included in the Missouri Synod's *Worship Supplement*.

Although this hymn addresses all three of Christ's advents, it primarily looks towards Christ's coming on the Last Day. It begins with a paraphrase of Isaiah 64:1 "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down." This can be viewed through two lenses. It echoes the call for Christ to come in His nativity to die on the cross to redeem the world, so that "the way to heaven's crown" may be "unbarred." However, at the same time, the Day of Judgement is when we will receive that crown, so we call for Him to come again soon (2 Tim. 4:8).

This two-sided theme continues as we call for the Son of God to descend to Jacob's line. Christ was born a descendant of Jacob, but we should also remember that God renamed Jacob, *Israel*. We are also calling for Christ to come to us again, since Israel can refer to all those who believe in God aright, both in the past and now.

The third stanza contains imagery of the blessing of rain and the new life of spring. As fickle as this may seem, it alludes to a prophecy from Isaiah 11: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse." Although Jesse is not explicitly mentioned in the hymn, we call for Christ to come to us in the phrase: "Bring forth, O earth, a blossom rare".

We then express our impatience with the Lord. We ask Him "How long?" and "When will you come?" In the sufferings of earthly life, it is only natural that we should desire our Lord's second coming and the joys it will bring. However, we shift our focus to the present and ask Christ to "console us in our veil of woe" as we patiently await His return. Here, we ask Him to come in His word and sacraments, for "without [His] light we grope in gloom of dark and night," (Jn 8:12).

We then call for Christ to come again and "lead us with mighty hand from exile to our promised land." In this parallel with the Exodus, we pray to be led to our promised land of eternal life. When we are brought into that promised land "shall we all our praises bring," singing to our triune God forever.

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. Amen.

LSB 355 - O Saviour, Rend the Heavens Wide



1 O Sav - ior, rend the heav - ens wide;
2 O Fa - ther, light from heav - en send;
3 O earth, in flow'r - ing bud be seen;
4 O Fount of hope, how long, how long?



Come down, come down with might - y stride;
As morn - ing dew, O Son, de - scend.
Clothe hill and dale in garb of green.
When will You come with com - fort strong?



Un - lock the gates, the doors break down;
Drop down, you clouds, the life of spring:
Bring forth, O earth, a blos - som rare,
O come, O come, Your throne fore - go;



Un - bar the way to heav - en's crown.
To Ja - cob's line rain down the King.
Our Sav - ior, sprung from mead - ow fair.
Con - sole us in our vale of woe.

5 O Morning Star, O radiant Sun,
When will our hearts behold Your dawn?
O Sun, arise; without Your light
We grope in gloom and dark of night.

6 Sin's dreadful doom upon us lies;
Grim death looms fierce before our eyes.
O come, lead us with mighty hand
From exile to our promised land.

7 There shall we all our praises bring
And sing to You, our Savior King;
There shall we laud You and adore
Forever and forevermore.

December 21

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.— Isaiah 9:2

Today's hymn was written by the Anglican clergyman, Godfrey Thring and first appeared in 1864. *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal* says of this hymn that it "beautifully emphasizes the advents of the Lord: in humility for redemption; in mercy to the sinner; and in glory." However, to see all the advents, we must add a fifth verse, which was not included in *Lutheran Service Book*.

In its full form, this hymn makes significant use of the number, 3. This number most often symbolizes our triune God. Here the 3 advents of Christ are emphasized. The first, tells of how God the Son was sent by the Father to assume human flesh so that he might die for us and win our redemption. In His humility, He set aside the glory and might of His divinity, and came as a servant. We hear in St. Mark's gospel that "even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," (Mk. 10:45).

We then sing of how Christ still comes to us. We sing that Christ comes "again in answer to an earnest, heartfelt prayer," that He brings "news of sins forgiven" and that He comes to "cheer our hearts and dry our tears." These 3 ways show trinitarian imagery (although Christ is always present). First, Christ is our intercessor and advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1). He instructs us to ask in His name when we pray to the Father (Jn. 16:23-24). Second, the "news of sins forgiven" is declared to us by God's word. The writer of the Hebrews says: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," (Heb. 1:1-2a). It is God's Son, the incarnate Word, who has won for us the forgiveness of sins by His death on the cross and still delivers that forgiveness in His word and as we receive the Holy Absolution from the Pastor, "as from God Himself," (SC V:16). Third, Jesus brings us comfort in His word, which we can only grasp since He has sent us the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us so that we can believe Christ's word.

The final verse confesses hope in Christ's third Advent, when He shall come again in glory. In looking forward to this, we sing our Alleluias (expressions of praise to God) until the dawn of the endless final day, when Christ shall bring us to the fullness of the joys of eternal life.

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

LSB 353 - Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring



1 Je - sus came, the heav'ns a - dor - ing, Came with peace from
2 Je - sus comes a - gain in mer - cy When our hearts are
3 Je - sus comes to hearts re - joic - ing, Bring - ing news of
4 Je - sus comes in joy and sor - row, Shares a - like our



realms on high; Je - sus came to win re - demp - tion,
worn with care; Je - sus comes a - gain in an - swer
sins for - giv'n; Je - sus comes with words of glad - ness,
hopes and fears; Je - sus comes, what - e'er be - falls us,



Low - ly came on earth to die; Al - le - lu - ia!
To an ear - nest, heart - felt prayer; Al - le - lu - ia!
Lead - ing souls re - deemed to heav'n. Al - le - lu - ia!
Cheers our hearts and dries our tears; Al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia! Came in deep hu - mil - i - ty.
Al - le - lu - ia! Comes to save us from de - spair.
Al - le - lu - ia! Hope to all the world is giv'n.
Al - le - lu - ia! Com - forts us in fail - ing years.

- 5 Jesus comes on clouds triumphant
When the heavens shall pass away;
Jesus comes again in glory.
Let us, then, our homage pay,
Alleluia! Ever singing
Till the dawn of endless day.

December 22

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. — Isaiah 9:6

Today's hymn was first published in 1907 by the Scottish pastor, John Brownlie in a book titled *Hymns from the East being centos and suggestions from the service books of the holy Eastern Church*. It was likely written by Brownlie himself in the style of an eastern hymn, rather than being a translation of an earlier work.

The original publication consisted of 7 stanzas. *Lutheran Service Book* retains stanzas 1-4 and 7 of the original. As with many of our other advent hymns, it references more than one advent of Christ. However, this hymn's primary focus is on Christ's second coming. It is unique in that it gives a summary of Christ's life and compares His second coming with His first.

The hymn begins with apocalyptic (symbolic) imagery. The theme of light from St. John's revelation is most obvious throughout the entire hymn. When the King (Christ) comes, He will come with light. Currently, He illumines our darkened hearts by His word. However, when He comes again, He will put an end to all darkness and He Himself will be our light (Rev. 22:5) and we shall reign with Him and rejoice in the eternal pleasures of His salvation.

In the second stanza, the comparisons between Christ's two comings begin. Christ is not coming again in humility, nor being born to bear the cross and die again. The sacrifice of His death on the cross already paid for the sins of the whole world. Instead, He will come as a King "crowned with glory." Similarly, that day will be even more glorious than the day of Christ's resurrection, as His resurrection was only the firstfruits of our own resurrection to eternal life, which we will receive when Christ comes again.

Finally, we reach the pinnacle of this Last Day: "we shall see His face." Being reconciled to God through Christ's death and resurrection in His first coming, we will now be able to see God face to face with our own eyes. We will take part in the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end, enjoying every good gift which our Lord Jesus Christ has won for us. The final stanza hearkens back to the first and reminds us of the light that our Lord shall bring us, instilling in us a longing for the return of our Lord. Thus, the hymn concludes by admonishing us to pray: "Come quickly, King of kings!"

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. Amen.

December 23

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. — Isaiah 7:14

This medieval hymn has its origins in the Great ‘O Antiphons’ of Advent. These antiphons have historically been sung before and after the ‘Magnificat’ in Vespers on December 17-23 (each antiphon is assigned to a specific day). They were written in Latin before the end of the 6th century. Each antiphon refers to a specific prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Christ.

Each verse paraphrases one of these antiphons. They remain in their original order, except that the first stanza uses the antiphon assigned to December 23. Here, the prophecy of Christ being called *Emmanuel* is introduced. This is the basis for the refrain at the end of each verse. In addition, each antiphon prays for Christ to come, although each is slightly nuanced and addresses Christ with a specific title derived from the passages in Isaiah.

The second stanza (paraphrasing the antiphon from December 17th) reflects the prophecy that “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon [Christ], the Spirit of *wisdom* and understanding,” (Is. 11:2). For this reason, Christ is addressed as *Wisdom*, and we pray that He would show us the way of knowledge. The third stanza reflects the prophecy that Christ shall be the righteous judge. He is addressed as *Lord of Might* in the hymn, which appears as *Adonai* in the antiphons. *Adonai* is a Hebrew word for Lord; although not the same as “Yahweh,” it often is used to refer to God in the Old Testament. The fourth verse addresses Christ as the *Branch of Jesse*, who “from His roots shall bear fruit,” (Is. 11:1). The fifth stanza addresses Christ as the *Key of David*, who opens “wide our heavenly home.” The sixth reflects one of the most well known prophecies: “The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light...” (Is. 9:2) and Christ is addressed as the *Dayspring* who puts death’s dark shadows to flight. The final stanza addresses the *Desire of Nations* (*King of Nations* in the antiphon) reflecting another one of the well-known prophecies: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son in given...” (Is. 9:6).

At the end of all these stanzas lies the common refrain “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!” We are called to rejoice, because Emmanuel, the long-expected Christ has come to us and shall come to us again. The Israel mentioned in the refrain does not only refer to the nation of Israel, but also the whole Christian Church of all time. All the truths professed and all that was prayed for throughout the hymn, continue to apply to us now. Thus, we look forward to Christ coming again to bring us to the eternal bliss of heaven.

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

LSB 357 - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
2 O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, Who or - d'rest
3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy
4 O come, Thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, Free them from

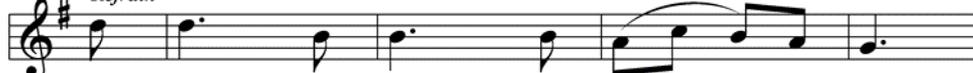


cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly
all things might - i - ly; To us the path of
tribes on Si - nai's height In an - cient times didst
Sa - tan's tyr - an - ny That trust Thy might - y



ex - ile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
knowl - edge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
give the Law In cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
pow'r to save, And give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.

Refrain



Re - joyce! Re - joyce! Em - man - u - el



Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

- 5 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. Refrain
- 6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. Refrain
- 7 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. Refrain

December 24

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. — Isaiah 2:6-7

As we reach the end of our Advent preparations, we enter into the joy of Christmas. Much like our celebration of Easter, we begin our Christmas celebrations on Christmas Eve, as it reflects the Jewish concept of a day, in which the day began at sundown, rather than a few hours later, at midnight.

Tonight's hymn comes from the work of the Roman civil servant, *Aurelius Prudentius Clemens*. Born in present-day Spain, he lived during the latter half of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th. In his latter years, he wrote a large collection of poetry entitled, *Liber Cathemerinon*. Excerpts from this work were used to construct tonight's hymn.

The hymn begins by identifying Christ. It emphasizes Christ's eternal divine nature and equality with the Father. This is in response to the Arian heresy that was becoming popular in the 4th century. This heresy stated that Christ was not of the same divine essence as God the Father and as a result, not co-equal or co-eternal with Him either. For this reason, the hymn states that Christ is the "Alpha and the Omega." He is "the source" that was present in the beginning (Jn. 1:1) as well as "the ending," since He will come as the divine Judge at the end of time.

In the second verse, we sing of Christ's nativity. We are reminded of our Saviour's birth to the virgin Mary, as Isaiah had prophesied (Is. 7:14). The angel Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit is echoed as well. We confess that the Babe born in Bethlehem is indeed the promised Saviour, who would redeem the world by His death on the cross. This is He of whom the Old Testament prophets foretold. Upon this confession of the long-expected Christ's arrival, we call out for "creation [to] praise its Lord" for His wondrous salvation. To emphasize this point further, the final stanza of the hymn is a doxology, praising Father, Son and Holy Ghost "evermore and evermore." This final phrase: "evermore and evermore," which is repeated at the end of each verse confesses again the eternal, undivided nature of all three persons of our Triune God to whom all unending praise, thanksgiving, honour, glory, dominion, and victory are to be given, (Rev. 7:12).

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LSB 384 - Of the Father's Love Begotten



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten Ere the worlds be -
2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, When the vir - gin,
3 This is He whom seers in old time Chant - ed of with
4 O ye heights of heav'n, a - dore Him; An - gel hosts, His
△ 5 Christ, to Thee, with God the Fa - ther, And, O Ho - ly



gan to be, He is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
full of grace, By the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
one ac - cord, Whom the voic - es of the proph - ets
prais - es sing. Pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore Him
Ghost, to Thee Hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



He the source, the end - ing He, Of the things that are, that
Bore the Sav - ior of our race, And the babe, the world's Re -
Prom - ised in their faith - ful word. Now He shines, the long - ex -
And ex - tol our God and King. Let no tongue on earth be
And un - end - ing prais - es be, Hon - or, glo - ry, and do -



have been, And that fu - ture years shall see
deem - er, First re - vealed His sa - cred face
pect - ed; Let cre - a - tion praise its Lord
si - lent, Ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
min - ion, And e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
Ev - er - more and ev - er - more.

A - men.

Christmas Day

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” — Luke 2:13-14

Our hymn for Christmas Day is one of the most well-known Christmas carols in North America. However, its origins come from France, where it originated as a folk carol. It is believed to have been written in the late 18th century, but was first published in 1842. Soon after, it appeared in English in a Catholic hymnal published in London in 1860. *Lutheran Service Book* retains 3 of the original 10 verses.

The hymn paraphrases the account of the Angels and the Shepherds found in Luke 2:8-20. It not only relates this account to us, but it also directs us to the exuberant joy that the Shepherds experienced. It begins from the point of view of these Shepherds, who, while watching their flocks by night, were greeted by angels with the news of the birth of “a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,” (Lk 2:11). They repeat the joyous message of the angels in the famous refrain: “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” meaning: “Glory to God in the highest.”

The second verse starts a conversation with the shepherds. Although it is hard for us to identify who in the narrative is intended to be speaking to the shepherds, it is appropriate for us put ourselves in this position and ask them why they are filled with joy and, “What the gladsome tidings be.” The shepherds respond in the last verse with their answer: “Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the new-born King.” Their proclamation of the birth of the Christ leads us to sing with them once more the glad song of “Gloria in excelsis deo.” We thank and praise our God for the wonderful news of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who would go on to suffer and die to pay for the sins of the whole world and would rise again from the dead and ascend into heaven to procure for us eternal life and salvation.

Lord God, gracious Father, who in the fullness of time sent Your Son to assume our flesh and become our Brother, we thank You for Your truth and fatherly goodness in giving us this Saviour, by whose birth we are delivered from sin, death, Satan and hell; and we ask You to keep us until the end in true knowledge of our Redeemer, that, with all holy angels, we may rejoice at His nativity and behold Him, together with You and the Holy Spirit, in glory and majesty, now and forever. Amen.

LSB 368 - Angels We Have Heard on High



1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet-ly sing-ing o'er the plains,
 2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy-ous strains pro-long?
 3 Come to Beth-le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;



And the moun-tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
 What the glad-some tid - ings be Which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?
 Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.

Refrain



Glo - - - - - ri - a



in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - - - - -



- ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - - o.



