



*Stand*

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

**C: Amen.**

*Psalm 66:16-19*

Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I shall tell what He has done for my soul.

**I cried to Him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.**

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

**But truly God has listened; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.**

**Prayer: 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. Amen.**

*Sit*

### **THE MEANING OF 'ADVENT'**

Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” Traditionally, the church had devoted the Advent season to a meditation on the threefold coming of the Saviour: 1. His coming in the flesh. 2. His spiritual coming in the hearts of men, women, and children through Word and Sacrament, and 3. His final coming on the Day of Judgement.

In only a few short weeks, we shall celebrate Jesus’ coming in flesh - His human birth. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that we use these weeks to prepare our hearts to rejoice over the miracle of Christmas. In that miracle lies our highest hope for time and eternity. In that miracle lies “forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation” for every one of us.

We receive that miracle for our very own when the Saviour comes into our hearts through Word and Sacrament. And this is the second meaning of Advent. The Saviour comes to us again and again – each time His saving Word is spoken.

Through faith in Him, we need not have any fear of His final advent, that is, His coming at the end of time. In fact, we may look forward to His coming with glad anticipation. For us who have found forgiveness in His atoning death, He will come not as Judge, but as the King of Glory, our Saviour and our Lord. May ours be a blessed Advent season as we look forward to our Redeemer, who will come again!

### 515 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers



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 The saints, who here in pa - tience Their 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, O'er this be - night - ed 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 they 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 cast be - fore Him Their di - a - dems of gold.  
The day of earth's re - demp - tion That sets Your peo - ple free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660–1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823–1907, alt.  
Tune: Swedish  
Text and tune: Public domain

## The First Candle

Genesis 3:15 *“I shall make you and the woman hostile to each other and shall make your descendants and her Descendant hostile to each other. He will crush your head and you will crush His heel.”*

When man fell into sin, the blackness of night was relieved by a gracious promise that through the Seed of the woman, evil would be conquered, and a Deliverer would come. This promise of a Saviour was often repeated through patriarchs and prophets. As centuries passed, this hope became concentrated on the tribe of Judah and the royal line of David. The Deliverer would be the Messiah, David’s Son.

Among the faithful, there grew a fervent longing for the Coming One. Speaking of this hope, Jesus said: *“Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it”* (Matthew



13:17). How often the cry must have gone up from the lips of the faithful: *“Watchman, what is left of the night?”* (Isaiah 21:11). When will this long night be ended, when will the morning dawn appear? When will the drought give place to freshness? When will these deserts bloom with cheer?

As we meditate on the hopes of God’s Old Testament people, we light the first candle – as a sign of the hope that Christ would come to fulfil God’s promise.



### 352 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord



1 Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has tru - ly  
2 What the Fa - thers most de - sired, What the proph - ets'  
3 A - bram's prom - ised great re - ward, Zi - on's help - er,  
4 As Your com - ing was in peace, Qui - et, full of



kept His word And at last to us did send  
heart in - spired, What they longed for man - ya year,  
Ja - cob's Lord— Him of two - fold race be - hold—  
gen - tle - ness, Let the same mind dwell in me



Christ, the sin - ner's help and friend.  
Stands ful - filled in glo - ry here.  
Tru - ly came, as long fore - told.  
Which is Yours e - ter - nal - ly.

5 Bruise for me the serpent's head  
That, set free from doubt and dread,  
I may cling to You in faith,  
Safely kept through life and death.

6 Then when You will come again  
As the glorious king to reign,  
I with joy will see Your face,  
Freely ransomed by Your grace.

Text: Heinrich Held, 1620–59; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.  
Tune: Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn, 1524, Wittenberg, ed. Johann Walter  
Text and tune: Public domain

## **The Second Candle**

Matthew 3:1-3, 11 *“In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judea: “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

*He was the one about whom the prophet Isaiah spoke: “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord! Make His paths straight!’” “I baptise you with water to bring about a change of heart. However, the One who is coming after me is mightier than I am. I am not worthy to carry His sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*

John the Baptist saw the fulfilment of the prophetic hope. He proclaimed in the desert that the One who was to come was about to be revealed. *“Prepare the way of the Lord!”* was his challenging cry.

John preached repentance and baptised the people as they confessed their sins.

At last, the longing of the ages was fulfilled. *“It came upon a midnight clear,”* and God sent His angels to announce it: *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.”* Now *“true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.”* It is the coming of Jesus to be the Light of the world, which we celebrate at Christmas. Heralded by the star, this Child was born to reveal to us God’s grace and to make known His love. For many years those who have rejoiced in Christ, the Light of the world, have been declaring that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that through Him we come to the Father. The cry of John the Baptist is continually repeated as God’s New Testament people proclaim: *“Prepare the way of the Lord!”*

As we meditate on John’s challenging Advent cry, we light the second candle - as a sign that in Jesus God’s promises of salvation are fulfilled.



**344 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry**



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc - es  
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; Make straight the  
3 We hail Thee as our Sav - ior, Lord, Our ref - uge  
4 Lay on the sick Thy heal - ing hand And make the  
△ 5 All praise, e - ter - nal Son, to Thee Whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and hear - ken,  
way for God with - in, And let us all our  
and our great re - ward; With - out Thy grace we  
fall - en strong to stand; Show us the glo - ry  
sets Thy peo - ple free, Whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!  
hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.  
waste a - way Like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.  
of Thy face Till beau - ty springs in ev - 'ry place.  
we a - dore And Ho - ly Spir - it ev - er - more.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. composite  
Tune: adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621  
Text and tune: Public domain



### **The Third Candle**

John 14:21-23 *“The person who has My Commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The person who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and show Myself to him.”*

*Judas, not Judas Iscariot, asked Him, “Then, Lord, what has happened that You are going to show Yourself to us and not to the world?”*

*Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We shall come to him and make Our home with him.”*

It is Jesus’ wonderful promise that those who love Him will become His dwelling place. Through the Holy Spirit we are led to respond to God’s love in Christ by opening our hearts to Him, treasuring Him as our Saviour, and honouring Him as our Lord.



In this way the Lord Jesus comes into the lives of each of us personally. It was at our baptism that He claimed us as His own. Continually through Word and Sacrament, He comes to us and, through His love, prompts us to share His love with others.

This coming of Jesus personally into our lives is truly “Advent” for each of us. Throughout Advent, as we prepare for the Christmas festival, our prayer should be: *“Come thou precious Ransom, come, enter now our waiting hearts. Glorious King and Lord most holy, dwell in us and ne’er depart.”*

As we meditate on Jesus’ promise to make us His dwelling place we light the third candle - as a sign that through the Spirit God’s love moves us to the response of love.

## 602 The Gifts Christ Freely Gives



1 The gifts Christ free - ly gives He gives to you and me  
2 The gifts flow from the font Where He calls us His own;  
3 The gifts of grace and peace From ab - so - lu - tion flow;  
4 The gifts are there each day The ho - ly Word is read;



To be His Church, His bride, His cho - sen, saved and free!  
New life He gives that makes Us His and His a - lone.  
The pas - tor's words are Christ's For us to trust and know.  
God's chil - dren lis - ten, hear, Re - ceive, and they are fed.



Saints blest with these rich gifts Are chil - dren who pro - claim  
Here He for - gives our sins With wa - ter and His Word;  
For - give - ness that we need Is grant - ed to us there;  
Christ fills them with Him - self, Blest words that give them life,



That they were won by Christ And cling to His strong name.  
The tri - une God Him - self Gives pow'r to call Him Lord.  
The Lord of mer - cy sends Us forth in His blest care.  
Re - stor - ing and re - fresh - ing Them for this world's strife.

5 The gifts are in the feast,  
Gifts far more than we see;  
Beneath the bread and wine  
Is food from Calvary.  
The body and the blood  
Remove our ev'ry sin;  
We leave His presence in  
His peace, renewed again.

6 All glory to the One  
Who lavishes such love;  
The triune God in love  
Assures our life above.  
His means of grace for us  
Are gifts He loves to give;  
All thanks and praise for His  
Great love by which we live!

### **The Fourth Candle**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 *“Fellow-Christians, you do not need us to write to you about times and dates, because you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. When people are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come on them suddenly like labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will certainly not escape. You, however, fellow-Christians, are not in darkness, that this day should overtake you like a thief. For you are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, like the rest but let us keep awake and be sober!”*

As the faithful people of God waited in hope for the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, even so, we who are God’s people of the New Testament wait in hope for His Second Coming.

As we whom God has gathered into His Church face the trouble of this present evil age, as we battle against the forces of darkness and wickedness and at times feel almost overwhelmed by the evil that surrounds us, yet the bright light of hope keeps shining through all the darkness. The Lord Jesus will come in glory with His holy angels to gather His people into God’s eternal kingdom. So *“we who have the first fruits of the Spirit wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies . . . For in this hope we are saved.”* The season of Advent testifies to this living hope.

As we meditate on our Lord’s Second Coming we light the fourth candle - as a sign that Jesus will surely come again. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

*Stand*

Prayer, Lord’s Prayer and Benediction.

*Sit*

### 345 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding

1 Hark! A thrill - ing voice is sound - ing! "Christ is  
2 Star - tled at the sol - emn warn - ing, Let the  
3 See, the Lamb, so long ex - pect - ed, Comes with  
4 So, when next He comes in glo - ry And the  
△ 5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, do - min - ion To the

near," we hear it say. "Cast a - way the  
earth - bound soul a - rise; Christ, its sun, all  
par - don down from heav'n. Let us haste, with  
world is wrapped in fear, He will shield us  
Fa - ther and the Son With the ev - er -

works of dark - ness, All you chil - dren of the day!"  
sloth dis - pel - ling, Shines up - on the morn - ing skies.  
tears of sor - row, One and all, to be for - giv'n;  
with His mer - cy And with words of love draw near.  
liv - ing Spir - it While e - ter - nal a - ges run!

Text: Latin, c. 5th–10th cent.; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–78, alt.  
Tune: William H. Monk, 1823–89  
Text and tune: Public domain

