

Rejoice



**Mid-Week Advent Service
2025**

Stand

P O Lord, open my lips,
C and my mouth will declare Your praise.

P Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
C make haste to help me, O Lord.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Psalm

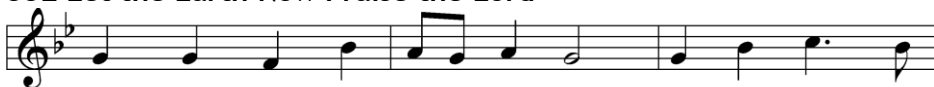
Psalm 96

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
tell of His salvation from day to day.
3 Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples!
4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
6 Splendour and majesty are before Him;
strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.
7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!
8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
bring an offering, and come into His courts!
9 Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness;
tremble before Him, all the earth!
10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
He will judge the peoples with equity."
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

12 let the field exult, and everything in it!
 Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
 13 before the LORD, for He comes,
 for He comes to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world in righteousness,
 and the peoples in His faithfulness.

Sit

352 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord



1 Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has truly
 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

Readings

Isaiah 52:7-10

- ⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”
- ⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
- ⁹ Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted His people;
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
- ¹⁰ The LORD has bared His holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

48 for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

49 for He who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is His name.

50 And His mercy is for those who fear Him

from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with His arm;

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

52 He has brought down the mighty from their thrones

and exalted those of humble estate;

53 He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich He has sent away empty.

54 He has helped His servant Israel,

in remembrance of His mercy,

55 as He spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to His offspring forever.”

Responsory (Advent)

P Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

P In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

P Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

The Song of Mary *(remain standing)*

933 My Soul Rejoices



1 My soul re - joic - es, My spir - it voic - es— Sing the
2 His arm now bar - ing, His strength de - clar - ing— Sing the



great - ness of the Lord! For God my Sav - ior Has shown me
great - ness of the Lord! The proud He scat - ters, Their rule He



fa - vor— Sing the great - ness of the Lord! With praise and
shat - ters— Sing the great - ness of the Lord! Op - pres - sion



bless - ing, Join in con - fess - ing God, who is sole - ly Might - y and
halt - ed; The meek ex - alt - ed. Full are the hun - gry; Emp - ty, the



ho - ly— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord! His mer - cy
wealth - y— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord! Here is the



sure - ly Shall rest se - cure - ly On all who fear Him,
to - ken All that was spo - ken To A - br'ham's off - spring



Love and re - vere Him— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord!
God is ful - fill - ing— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord!

Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955

Tune: Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi, c. 1556–c. 1622

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Sermon (*Remain standing as the Sermon is announced, then sit*)

MARY SANG

Sermon for the 2nd mid-week Advent Service, 2025

Luke 1:46-55

Dear friends in Christ,

As we learn about Mary, we learn about Jesus. Mary has finished her conversation with the angel Gabriel; now she gets up and hurries to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who is six months pregnant with the infant John, known as the Baptist. Do babies in the womb respond to things outside the womb? Every mum can tell you they do!

So here comes Mary, bearing the Christ Child. He is not much more than a clump of cells, but He is a living human being. The words of the prophet Jeremiah apply here: “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you*” (Jer. 1:5). And again, “*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb*” (Ps 139:13). How mysterious are these things!

When Mary approached Elizabeth, she heard Mary’s greeting and “*the baby leaped in her womb*” (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth uttered an eloquent speech of praise to God, and calls Mary “*the mother of my Lord*” (Luke 1:43). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she perceives that the Son of God is living in her cousin’s womb.

Now it’s Mary’s turn to speak, so we focus on her sacred words, the Magnificat, sung by the church for two thousand years.

“And Mary said”—or maybe sang—“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant... He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.”

People throughout history have appreciated comic reversals. For example, let’s say we have a cartoon mouse that a cat is chasing. The cat is about to pounce. Just then, the mouse sees the mousetrap. He flips it up into the air, and the trap snaps shut on the cat’s nose. The cheese falls out of the trap. The mouse grabs it and runs away laughing. The cats of this world love to torment the mice, don’t they? It’s so satisfying when the tables are turned, the cat gets his comeuppance, and the mouse gets away with it.

The Italian poet Dante, who lived in the 1200s, authored the epic poem *Divine Comedy*. And properly so. The world will end like this. Just when the powers of Satan are about to destroy the church, Christ comes down from heaven with His angels and throws the devil and his angels into the lake of fire forever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10).

First, Mary exclaims how happy she is: “**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.**”

Why? Even though she's not a princess or the daughter of wealthy or famous parents, Mary recognises her humble status as a servant whom God has chosen to do something special for Him—**“For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant”** she says, and realises that she will go down in history: **“For behold, from now all generations will call me blessed.”**

Furthermore, she confesses that **“He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.”** Here we are getting to the heart of the matter: God is mighty and holy. Only someone holy has the right to judge; only someone mighty has the power to carry out judgment upon the wicked in the series of reversals that follow.

Yes, God is holy, and **“His mercy is for those who fear Him.”** That is, those who recognise that He is holy and they are not. For those who repent of their sins, for Christ's sake, He forgives them. He extends His love and blessing **“from generation to generation.”** So here is Mary, who, to her great surprise, *has been lifted up from her humble estate*. When Gabriel visited her with the news that she would be the mother of the Lord, didn't she say to the angel, *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38)? This is everywhere in Scripture. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you”* (1 Peter 5:6). And who exemplifies this more than Christ our Saviour, who *“emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, ...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:7-8). He did all this for you, to take your sins upon Himself and give you His holiness in exchange.

Now come these comic reversals I was telling you about. I'll give you four of them.

One: *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov. 16:18). Mary knew her Bible well. The Bible stories are full of examples. Take Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. She badgered her husband until he confiscated Naboth's vineyard. But when Jehu overthrew Ahab's son, he had Jezebel thrown out the window to the street, where dogs ate her body.

Two: Anyone who studied Shakespeare in school would perhaps be familiar with his work, *Concerning the Fates of Famous Men*. It contained story after story of ambitious men who were lifted up rapidly by the Wheel of Fortune in terms of wealth or fame, only to be tossed off by another turn of the wheel just when they were about to triumph.

Why? Consider this. Three: Scripture says of Satan that pride was found in his heart. He was one of the greatest angels. His name was Lucifer, *“bearer of light”* (Is. 14:12). But he thinks, *“I'm as holy as the Son. Why shouldn't I be worshipped as well?”* Satan was cast out of heaven, taking a third of the angels with him. These became the demons that Jesus so often cast out by His almighty power. As soon as Jesus was baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit, He was driven out into the wilderness, where He was tempted by Satan for forty days. Jesus defeated the devil by the Word of God. He did this for you,

to take away your own sins of pride, lest you end up in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels.

The fourth comic reversal is this: In the Bible, there's the story of King Saul and young David. The people wanted a king, so they chose the biggest, tallest, strongest, best-looking man they could find: Saul. The trouble was, Saul was puffed up with pride. After a battle, God told them to kill the king and all the noblemen. But Saul disobeyed. He thought he could fudge a little on God's command. He spared the king, Agag.

Saul was rejected as king. The prophet Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint a new king. Like a beauty contest, Jesse displayed all his tall, strong boys—seven of them. None of them qualified. Confused, Samuel asked if there were any more sons. Yes, the youngest, David. *“Bring him in,”* said Samuel. God told Samuel, *“Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”* (1 Sam. 16:7). So David, the humble shepherd boy, was made king, and he became the ancestor of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a king. It said so on the sign above His cross: *“The King of the Jews.”* And so He is. If you read Romans 9 and 10 carefully, you'll find that if you are a child of Abraham according to the flesh, it's nothing. A true Jew is one who, like Abraham, believes in God, the true God, the One who would send the Saviour. It is by *faith alone in Christ alone* that we receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Faith accepts the promises of God. Even faith itself is a gift of God, imparted in the water of Holy Baptism.

Mary went on to proclaim, **“He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.”**

In Mary's time, famine was always just around the corner. Drought, crop failure, and insects—people lived in constant fear of starvation. So it's not surprising to hear Mary describing God's justice in terms of food. And what a meal God sets before us in Holy Communion! Here we have the bread of heaven, the body of Christ, really and truly present to forgive sins.

Now Mary sings that God has come to help. **“He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His offspring forever.”**

The Lord has come to rescue Israel from her enemies. How has He done so? By sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for us. God has remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and you. Listen:

“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).

“In My Father's house are many rooms... I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

Stand

Canticle

- P** Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
C and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Prayer

- P** O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in Your mercy grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- C** Amen.

Lord's Prayer

- C** Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
P For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Benedicamus

- P** Let us bless the Lord.
C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

- P** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

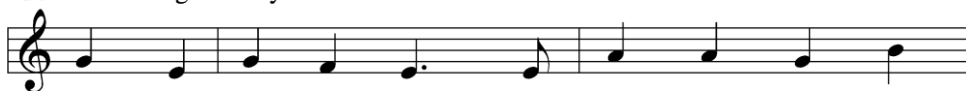
C Amen.

Sit

385 From East to West



1 From east to west, from shore to shore Let ev - 'ry
2 Be - hold, the world's cre - a - tor wears The form and
3 For this how won - drous - ly He wrought! A maid - en,
4 And while the an - gels in the sky Sang praise a -
△ 5 All glo - ry for this bless - ed morn To God the



heart a - wake and sing The ho - ly child whom
fash - ion of a slave; Our ver - y flesh our
in her low - ly place, Be - came, in ways be -
bove the si - lent field, To shep - herds poor the
Fa - ther ev - er be; All praise to You, O



Mar - y bore, The Christ, the ev - er - last - ing king.
mak - er shares, His fall - en crea - tures all to save.
yond all thought, The cho - sen ves - sel of His grace.
Lord Most High, The one great Shep - herd, was re - vealed.
Vir - gin - born, And Ho - ly Ghost e - ter - nal - ly.

Text: Coelius Sedulius, 5th cent.; tr. John Ellerton, 1826-93, alt.
Tune: Geistliche lieder, 1539, Leipzig, ed. Valten Schumann
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Acknowledgments

Vespers from Lutheran Service Book

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