

# Advent Midweek 1

December 1, 2021

## INVOCATION AND CALL TO WORSHIP (From selected verses in Micah 4:1–5)

Pastor: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: It shall come to pass, in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the highest of the mountains.

**People: Then many nations will say—**

Pastor: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.”

**People: “That he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”**

Pastor: They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.

**People: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.**

Pastor: God’s fierce judgment—

**All: Gives way to final grace!**

## HYMN “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” sts. 1-4 *LSB* 344

1        On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry  
Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Awake and hearken, for he brings  
Glad tidings of the King of kings!

2        Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin;  
Make straight the way for God within,  
And let us all our hearts prepare  
For Christ to come and enter there.

3        We hail Thee as our Savior, Lord,  
Our refuge and our great reward;  
Without Thy grace we waste away  
Like flow’rs that wither and decay.

4        Lay on the sick Thy healing hand  
And make the fallen strong to stand;  
Show us the glory of Thy face  
Till beauty springs in ev’ry place.  
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## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Lord God, merciful Father, pour out your Holy Spirit and deliver us from all evil. Open our eyes so we see our sin and selfishness. Inspire our repentance so we return to you.

**All: Amen.**

Pastor: Returning to our gracious Lord, let us confess our sins.

*Silence for reflection and confession.*

Pastor: Almighty God,

**People: Have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**

Pastor: Our God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love! Out of that love he sent Jesus to shed his blood for us. By faith we stand forgiven, restored and empowered to live new lives. As a called

and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

**HYMN** “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” st. 5 *LSB* 344

5 All praise, eternal Son, to Thee  
Whose advent sets Thy people free,  
Whom with the Father we adore  
And Holy Spirit evermore.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray. 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.

**All: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT** *Micah 1:1-4*

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

**EPISTLE** *Romans 13:8-14*

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

**GOSPEL** *Mark 13:26-37*

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.

## APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## SERMON "The Advent of Our God"

John Glenn learned how to fly fighter jets. He completed 59 missions in World War II and 90 missions in the Korean War. John Glenn learned how to fly fast, too. He was the first pilot to fly at supersonic speed and he also learned how to fly into outer space. In 1962, he became the first American to orbit the earth. John Glenn also learned how to win elections. He was a United States Senator from Ohio from 1974 to 1999.

John Glenn learned a lot, but there was something that John Glenn never learned. What is that? How to say good-bye. John and Annie Glenn both hated goodbyes so they developed a code. Each time John left home, he would say, "I'm going to the store to get a pack of gum." Annie would respond, "Don't be long." And then John Glenn would go to Japan, Korea, Germany or to outer space. John and Annie Glenn never learned to say good-bye.

I don't blame them. No one likes to say goodbye. It can be the spouse of an astronaut or the mom of a preschooler. It can be the father of the bride or spouse in a funeral home. No one likes to say goodbye because goodbye leaves us what? Alone.

For our Advent midweek services, we will be focusing on the Old Testament Prophet Micah. Micah lived in Judah in the late 8th century BC. And prophesied during the same time as Isaiah. Today's theme from Micah? The Advent of Our God. "Advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*. *Adventus* means "arrives" or "coming." On Sunday, we focusing on the meaning, "coming." Today, we will focus on "arrives." Micah 1:1-4 says that God arrives to address our deep pain of being alone.

The Word of the LORD Arrives. Micah 1:1 says, "**The Word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.**" The Word of the LORD arrives for people overwhelmed with feeling alone. Micah knows what it feels like to be alone. Does he ever! In Micah 7:5-6, the prophet describes the total breakdown of neighborhoods, friendships, families and marriages. Micah describes people who are all alone. Jesus even quotes this passage!

It applies well, today. Americans are alone now, more than ever. A New York Times article is called, "How Loneliness is Tearing America Apart." One-half of all Americans say they sometimes or always feel alone; 13% of all Americans say "zero people know them well"; 45,000 Americans tragically commit suicide every year; 70,000 die from drug overdose. Being alone is killing us—literally.

For some of you, your family lives far away. For others, you've spoken your final good-bye to someone you deeply love and raging loneliness is breaking your heart. For still others, your teenager is off in college, busy with well, everything! Maybe, it is your grown child, or grandchild. You long to reconnect and reminisce with them, but the time never comes. It reminds me of a song a teacher made us write a reflection paper on in drama class; I never began to understand it until I became a parent. It is an oldie, but a classic. It is a tearjerker, but I know you have heard it. It goes: "But the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon and the little boy blue and the man on the moon. When ya comin' home son, I don't know when, but we'll get together then."

Loneliness isn't good, and God knows that. In Genesis 2:18, God says, "**It's not good for man to be alone.**" God has a heart for lonely people. That's why He says in verse 2, "**Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it.**" The Word of the LORD arrives.

Hear his Word. Pay attention to his Word. Press hard into God's Word. When being alone brings great anguish, say, "But Heb 13:5 says, "**I will never leave you or forsake you.**" When being alone brings great anxiety, say, "But Mt 28:18 says, "**I am with you to the end of the age.**" When being alone overwhelms you, say, "But Joshua 1:9 says, "**For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**" You are not alone! The Word of the LORD arrives!

The Warrior of the LORD Arrives, too. In verse three, the prophet continues: **“The LORD is coming out of his place [his heavenly temple], and will come down and tread upon the high places on the earth.”** Did you hear that? “Is coming.” “Come down.” This is our God! “Who for us men and our salvation, came down.” The expression **“tread upon the high places on the earth”** describes a warrior marching in victory. The Warrior of the LORD arrives to defeat every evil force that makes us feel so all alone.

But when the LORD finally arrived, He looked nothing like a Warrior. He didn’t tread upon the high places on the earth. He came down to the lowest place on the earth. A manger. Some straw. A few shepherds. Mary. Joseph. The Warrior cries, naps, sleeps, burps and needs his mother. How does this Warrior respond to our deep pain of being alone?

The Warrior came down to a manger. The Warrior came down to a cross. Jesus was left alone by his countrymen. Left alone by his followers. Left alone, finally, by his Father. Jesus suffers, bleeds and dies for us—alone. Jesus accomplished salvation for us—alone. Jesus finally ended up dead for us. He was all alone.

Death leaves us the most alone, doesn’t it? We hear it all the time, “Death is natural.” But it is not. It is a lie! Let me say that a little bit louder so you never forget. Death is not a natural part of life! Do you know what is? Birth is. Breathing is. Belly laughs, big hugs and bedtime kisses are natural. But death? We’re not made to say good-bye. God’s original plan had no final breath, no final day and no final heartbeat.

Death is an intruder. Why would God fill a crib and then empty it? Why would God give a daughter and then take her? Why would God give a husband and then take him? No matter how you frame it, it never feels right to say good-bye.

Death takes so much. We bury not just a body, but the opportunities and moments: the wedding that never happened, the golden years we never knew, the grandchildren we never met. But death isn’t the end of Jesus and that means death isn’t the end of us! Good Friday’s fierce judgment over our sin gave way to final grace. Christ is alive! The Word of the LORD arrives. The Warrior of the LORD arrives.

The New World of the LORD Arrives. Verse four: **“And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.”** There is fierce judgment—first. Melting mountains; split valleys. Everything will be like wax before God’s purifying fire. What the fire doesn’t burn, the waters will wash and cleanse. Fierce judgment—final grace. Grace follows judgment. Take a look at final grace. It’s Jesus!

Micah 5 proclaims: **“He shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace [shalom].”** Shalom. Shalom puts Humpty Dumpty back together again. You know the old children’s rhyme.

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men, couldn’t put Humpty together again.” When was the last time you felt like that? What shattered into a million pieces? Your career? Your health? Your finances? Sometimes our world falls apart. And we’re all alone. It looks like this: a million of pieces.

You’ve probably heard about people who died from loneliness. You may feel that way right now; so overwhelmed that you feel as though you can’t go on. You might feel you’re in darkness so thick that you can barely breathe. Your sadness and tears may even be leading you to despair of your own life. You just want it all to be over. Life can feel like a losing battle. Take heart! Shalom is on its way. When Christ arrives he will put Humpty Dumpty back together again with shalom! What do we call that?

Advent. Adventus. Arrives! That’s what Micah 1 is all about! The Word of the LORD arrives! The Warrior of the LORD arrives! The new world of the LORD arrives! In this new world there will be no more good-byes. We will talk about the good book. We will talk all about the good book. But good-bye? We will say good-bye to good-bye ... forever. Amen.

#### **SERIES HYMN “Savior of the Nations, Come” sts. 1-3, 8 LSB 332**

- 1 Savior of the nations, come,  
Virgin’s Son, make here Your home!  
Marvel now, O heav’n and earth,  
That the Lord chose such a birth.

2 Not by human flesh and blood,  
By the Spirit of our God,  
Was the Word of God made flesh—  
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

3 Here a maid was found with child,  
Yet remained a virgin mild.  
In her womb this truth was shown:  
God was there upon His throne.

8 Glory to the Father sing,  
Glory to the Son, our king,  
Glory to the Spirit be  
Now and through eternity.

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**OFFERING** (*We offer our gifts to the Lord as we use this time in our service for contemplation. Offerings can be placed in the plates at the back entrance doors as you leave the sanctuary.*)

### **PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH**

Pastor: We see our mighty God arriving in the most unlikely places—a child in a stable, a Man upon a cross, the Risen One bursting forth from an empty tomb. May God hear our prayers, because of Christ Jesus.

*A brief silence*

Pastor: Creator God, stretch out your hand in healing and protection over all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Just God, grant your Spirit to the nations and send your light to the dark places of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Merciful God, inspire all people by Christ's cross and bring forth resurrection and life. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Saving God, sustain all who suffer and release those imprisoned by pain or disease. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Renewing God, take us and empower us to live according to your will, making us shine with the love of Jesus. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

*Additional Prayers*

Pastor: Arriving God, keep us steadfastly trusting your Word, just as you kept your powerful prophet Micah. Lord, in your mercy,

**People: Hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Give us ears to hear, O God, and eyes to watch, that we may know your presence in our midst during this holy season of joy as we anticipate the arrival of Jesus Christ.

**All: Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## BENEDICTION (From Micah 7:18–20)

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**People: Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN “The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns” *LSB* 348

- 1 The King shall come when morning dawns  
And light triumphant breaks,  
When beauty gilds the eastern hills  
And life to joy awakes.
- 2 Not as of old a little child,  
To bear and fight and die,  
But crowned with glory like the sun  
That lights the morning sky.
- 3 Oh, brighter than the rising morn  
When Christ, victorious, rose  
And left the lonesome place of death  
Despite the rage of foes.
- 4 Oh, brighter than that glorious morn  
Shall dawn upon our race  
The day when Christ in splendor comes  
And we shall see His face.
- 5 The King shall come when morning dawns  
And light and beauty brings.  
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray:  
Come quickly, King of kings!

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