

Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways--past, present, and future. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the future focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings which highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today.

The traditional use of Advent candles (sometimes held in a wreath) originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. The four candles remind us that in the four weeks of Advent we are preparing for the coming of the Christ Child, who is the light of the world. The wreath of evergreen could also help a person think of the victory and the new and everlasting life we have in Jesus.

As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle. The purple candles matched the purple paraments on the altar (purple for the royalty of the coming King). The blue candles and paraments are used as a reminder of our eager expectation to celebrate His first coming, our joy in His coming to us in Word and Sacrament, and our joyful waiting for His second coming. The pink candle was the third candle to be lit (not the fourth) on Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means "Rejoice!" in Latin, which is taken from Philippians 4:4. ("Rejoice! . . . the Lord is near"). Hence a "pink" candle was used to signify "rejoicing." Some also included a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas (December 25-January 5).

The custom of Advent candles has seen many different adaptations. As a result you will also find numerous explanations of the four candles. Some call the first candle the Prophecy Candle, or the Hope Candle, or the Expectation Candle. It reminded believers that God had promised throughout the Old Testament that he would send a Messiah, the Shepherd King, to save his people. The second candle is called the Bethlehem candle, or sometimes the Peace Candle. (Others call it the Preparation candle.) The third candle is sometimes called the shepherds' candle or the joy candle. It was often a pink color (see above). The fourth candle is called the angel candle or the love candle. Naturally, for all of these themes, appropriate Scripture references could be used to help hearers and worshippers consider the various Advent themes of preparation, repentance, fulfillment of promises, the joy of Christ's coming.

Blessings on your Advent preparation to welcome the King, our Savior Jesus. He rightly remains the proper focus of our Advent season.

- Adapted from various WELS and LCMS sources

“Words of Refreshment from the prophet Micah”



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Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. Our midweek Advent services this year will focus on “Words of Refreshment from the prophet Micah.”

Week 1 – The Mountain of the LORD

Micah 4:1-5

Week 2 – From Bethlehem shall come Israel’s Shepherd

Micah 5:2-5a

Week 3 – Who is like the LORD, who pardons sins?

Micah 7:18-20

OPENING VERSES

L The Lord Al - might - y grant us a qui - et
 night and peace at the last. **G** A -
 - - men. **L** It is good to give thanks to the

CLOSING VERSES AND SONG OF SIMEON

L Guide us wak - ing, O Lord, **G** and guard us sleep -
 ing; **L** that a - wake we may watch with Christ **G** and a -
 sleep we may rest in peace.
G In peace, Lord, in peace you let your ser - vant now de -
 part ac - cord - ing to your word. For my eyes have seen your sal -
 va - tion, which you have pre - pared for ev - 'ry peo - ple, a
 light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of your peo - ple
 Is - ra - el. In peace, in peace.

BLESSING

Cong: *(spoken)* **O Lord, my God, I called to you for help, and you answered me. I thank you for the love you have shown me in Jesus Christ, my Savior. Through him you have rescued me from the guilt of my sin and given me the peace of forgiveness. Help me fight against temptation, correct whatever wrongs I can, and serve you and those around me with love and good works. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

G Our Fa - ther in heav - en. hal - lowed be your
 name, your king - dom come, your will be done on
 earth as in heav - en. Give us to - day our
 dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins, as
 we for - give those who sin a - gainst us. Lead us
 not in - to temp - ta - tion, but de - liv - er us from
 e - vil. For the king - dom, the pow - er, and the glo - ry are
 yours now and for - ev - er. A - men.

Lord, **G** to sing praise to your name, O Most High,
L to her - ald your love in the morn - ing, **G** your
 truth at the close of day. **L** Je - sus, re - mem - ber
 me when you come in - to your king - dom.
G Je - sus, re - mem - ber me when you come in -
 to your king - dom.

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

- M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C: **Amen**
- M: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- M: Our help is in the name of the Lord.
- C: **Who made heaven and earth.**
- M: I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.

C: And you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

All: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto you all my sins and iniquities, with which I have ever offended you, and justly deserved your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am truly sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and I pray you, of your boundless mercy, and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.

M: Upon this your confession I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the place and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

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SCRIPTURE READING - Luke 1:67-79

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (ESV)

PRAYER

HYMN #19 - “O, Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

SERMON - Micah 7:18-20

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old. (ESV)

OFFERING

PRAYER

L Hear my prayer, O Lord. **G** Lis-ten to my cry.

L Keep me as the ap - ple of your eye. **G** Hide me

in the shad-ow of your wings. **L** In right-eous -

ness I shall see you. **G** When I a - wake, your

pres - ence will give me joy.