



ADVENT 1

Sunday November 29

Isaiah 1:1-9; Psalms 146, 147; **2 Peter 3:1-10**; Matthew 25:1-13

I really enjoy exploring new places and learning about the environment, history, and culture of a new place. I am hoping to go to Paris. Going anywhere right now is out of the question, but I can dream, and I can prepare for the trip. I think that the earliest the trip can occur is sometime in 2022. I am setting S.M.A.R.T goals to make the dreamed for trip a reality (a SMART goal is one that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.) I know who I want to go with, when I want to go, and I know that I want it to be a learning vacation. I know I need to save up so much per pay period. I can make this trip happen God willing!

In Advent our focus is on preparation. We are preparing for Christ coming again, we are preparing for the birth of Jesus. Peter counsels his audience to be patient, for God does not want anyone to perish on the last day and desires that everyone comes to repentance (that is to turn toward God. 2 Peter 3:8) Is there a SMART goal for that? Yes. For me, it is praying the Examen before sleep. You can access how to do it here: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/examen-prayer-card/> or listen to Fr. James Martin's podcast here: <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/02/13/introducing-our-new-examen-podcast-father-james-martin>. I commend it to you for your own prayer practice. [In the booklet version, there is an Examen Prayer card on the last page.]

-Pastor Melinda Artman

Monday November 30

Isaiah 1:1-20; Psalm 1,2,3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-0; Luke 20:1-8

Do you attend church each Sunday to ask for forgiveness of your sins or attend because it is the right thing to do? Are possessions, positions, or fame important things in your life? God expects more than prayers to redeem our sins.

We listen to our Pastor's message, we watch and listen to the unrest in our homes, communities, nation, and world but do we HEAR? God's message for each of us is to repent and get involved by putting our God given gifts to work on a daily basis.

Pray each day, call a friend, make a donation to a cause, help a less fortunate, volunteer for a cause, etc. all of which will demonstrate peace and love to all in need. Our Advent Season becomes more meaningful and reminds me of " Walk on. Walk on, With hope in your heart and You'll Never Walk Alone". God will be with you on your walk!

-Mary Cerutti, St. John Lutheran Church

Tuesday December 1

Isaiah 1:21-31; Psalm 5,6; **1 Thess 2:1-12**; Luke 20: 9-18

Paul's "How To" Guide

As a child, I sometimes got annoyed when my younger sister wanted to follow me around to do whatever I was doing. If I complained, my mom would repeatedly tell me that "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." She was reminding me to consider it a compliment (and get over it and move along!) Decades later, I found myself often repeating the same phrase to my own daughters.

As a mother, I realize this expression affirms the importance of integrity and striving to live in a way worthy of imitation. Just as Jesus was a role model for Paul, Paul was a role model for Thessalonians, and they became a model for others. Through God's grace, we have all been entrusted with the responsibility of being good Christian role models.

Paul showed us "how to" love unconditionally, work cooperatively, firmly encourage, and courageously lead by example. As believers of Christ, living by the gospel, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit – we become imitators of God. We honor Him as we inspire each other, and together we become worthy of His mercy. Jesus is our greatest role model of all - and imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

-Belinda Klovekorn, St. John Lutheran Church

Wednesday December 2

Isaiah 2:1-11; **Psalm 119:1-24**; 1Thess 2:1-12; Luke 20:1-8

The readings are all in some way about being true to God, honoring the one true God and not being caught up in personal riches and power. In Psalm 119 it says: "Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord". I think that if we could just return to this type of thinking we might have a chance to be the people that God wants. We have become very selfish and need to start with putting God first, doing what he would have us do for the good of all and not just our own benefit. Earthly belongings are nice, and I am not naive enough to think that we don't need to have them, but they are not the truly important things in life. How we treat others, sharing and caring for all is what is truly the important thing. Putting our trust in the Lord is the only way. The leaders of the World should take note of this and follow this path.

-Linda Murrelle, Church of the Redeemer

Thursday, December 3

Isaiah 2:12-22; Psalm 18:1-20; 1 Thess 3:1-13; Luke 20:27-40

“And the Beat Goes On” was a popular Sonny and Cher song in the 1960’s. The song describes how many things change over time, but the basic facts of our lives remain the same. Today’s readings bear this out.

God has promised good to us, but he never said it was going to be easy.

The Old Testament readings for today talk about EVERYONE crawling into holes in the rock or caves to escape the devastation. That does remind me of us quarantining and wearing masks to escape our modern-day disaster.

The New Testament readings are about overcoming problems and how the problems that seem so daunting at this moment will not be at all that important in the future. Our world today is full of doubt, uncertainty, and risk, just as it’s always been, and will be for the foreseeable future. Faith and conviction are the tools we need to use in order to overpower whatever confronts us, so that God’s beat goes on.

-Skip Roupp, St. John Lutheran Church

Friday December 4

Isaiah 3:8-15; **Psalm 16**,17; 1 Thess 4:1-12; Luke 20:41-21:4

“Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord. ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’” (Psalm 16:1)

Here I sit, in my cozy breakfast nook, with 2 different Bible versions in front of me to compare Bible verses. As I read the first verse of Psalm 16, both Bibles make me think the same thing....Except for God, I have nothing good in my life. How can that possibly be true?

Looking around, I see so many things that appear to be good in my life. I have a wonderful family, a warm home in which to live, a friendly neighborhood to share the seasons with, a loving church family to share my religious life with....so much love in so many places of my life!

Thinking deeper, I realize that all those good things that I have are not things I gave myself. They cannot be bought or borrowed from anyone else. They aren’t things that can be sold in a store. They are ALL gifts from God....He blesses us with the most wonderful things in our lives.

As you think about all the good in your life, join me in remembering (and singing) one of the songs we sang in Bible School and Sunday School:

“All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
So thank the Lord, yes, thank the Lord,
For all his love.”

-Jeri Mullen, St. John Lutheran Church

Advent Reflections – 1st Week of Advent

Saturday December 5

Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalm 20, 21:1-7 (8-14) 1 Thess 4:13-19; Luke 21:5-19

The theme of my readings is that God will forgive us and provide a sanctuary, or special place for us in the end. Even when the devil or anyone else tries to bring harm onto you, you will always persevere with God on your side. When bad things happen, you have to take a step back and realize that it's not all your fault and that God can help you through the bad times. For example, when you feel singled out or miss treated, God will protect you and keep you safe. I am thankful that I have God on my side to help me in ways I might not even notice.

-Maddy McConnell, St. John Lutheran Church