



ASCENSION 2020

ST. PAUL'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

1010 ADAMS AVE. NORTH FOND DU LAC WI 54937

920-922-1080 www.stpaulsluherannfdl.com

OPENING SENTENCES

M: There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

C: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

M: a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

C: a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

M: a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

C: a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,

M: a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

C: a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

M: Jesus Christ is the same

C: yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

M: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in thought, word and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: O most merciful God, who has given Your only begotten Son to die for us, have mercy on us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

M: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To all who believe on His name He gives power to become the sons of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. Grant this, Lord, to us all.

C: Amen.

THE CHURCH YEAR

M: Our lives are shaped and structured by time. Throughout the course of our lives, we mark hours, days weeks, months and years – and sometimes even minutes and seconds. Time establishes a rhythm for our lives, and how we use our time demonstrates what is most important to us.

This same principle applies to Christian Worship. Instead of trying to escape time, the early Christian Church used time to structure its worship. Over the centuries, this focus developed into what we now know as the church year.

Kristi Meyer Understanding Lutheran Worship p26

As we contemplate the church year this evening, we will see that it consists of two halves. The festival half which marks the events of the life of Christ and the non-festival half, which marks the events of the life of the Church, Christ's body. In the middle of these two halves of the church year sits the event which we celebrate this evening, the Ascension of our Lord.

The Season of Advent

The church year begins anew not in January as our calendars advance but already a little over a month previously as the anticipation builds for Christmas. The season of Advent is perhaps best summarized by the well-known Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”, which borrows its verses from the ancient “O Antiphons” which are ultimately Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah. The expectation is perhaps best characterized in the earthly ministry the John the Baptist who would himself decrease as the Christ would increase (John 3:30). It is the angel Gabriel however, who announces the incarnation of our Savior and the ever-nearing completion of the season of watchful anticipation.

Of course, in this season of the history of our world waiting has become far more common place than in seasons past. A world accustomed to immediate and constant gratification has been in lockdown. The ravages of sin are everywhere. Disease continues to rear its ugly head. Of course, it always has but now Covid-19 takes a turn on the world stage. Death has been a constant companion of life in this fallen world. Way back as this all ramped up, I remember someone saying well maybe this will finally be able to unite us but in truth it seems these days that even against a common foe the world is as divided as ever. Anger, fear, selfishness, it turns out that sin hasn't bowed to this new threat. John's preaching is still timely. The announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary as much necessity today as it has ever been. Advent's cry fulfilled in time, continues until our Savior returns: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!”

Matthew 3:7-12

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Luke 1:30-33

“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

Christian Worship #23:1
Text: Latin hymn, c. 12th century, abr.;
tr. John M. Neale, 1818-66, alt.

***Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel!***

The Season of Christmas

The season of Christmas shatters the anticipation of Advent. Perhaps a better way of expressing it would be to say, “Christmas fulfills the expectant yearning of Advent and the centuries previous.” The Angels are back as God moves heaven and earth to make sure His Son is born in the exact place and time He desired. Yet it is not as we expect. So often the ways of our God are very different than our own. His Son is not born in the finest palace the world has to offer, but in a humble manger. He is not born with silver spoon in mouth and all the advantages that wealth and power can offer, but in seeming poverty. The birth is not announced to dignitaries and kings, in fact Herod will seek to kill Him, slaughter will mark His arrival into the world. No, it’s shepherds who receive the news God’s Son, the One who will take on the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh has come. He will defeat death for us.

Oh, how we yearn for a cure, a vaccine, or some other news that announces an end to it all these days. Oh, Wisconsin is slowly opening up, but the fear still remains for many. I imagine that should some ultimate solution come, wiping the disease of the face of the earth, we will treat it with all the pomp and celebration we would give a conquering hero back from war. Dear friends, this virus has already been defeated! Oh, I know it does not look like it. Death has already fallen? Sure, death beds would seem to speak differently. Your own sin has met its match? I know, we still need police and soldiers and yes, our own personal apologies as sin seems to rage on unchecked. It may not always look like it, but with God that is so often the case. Christmas marks the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise that grants you hope in every situation and a cure for every ailment. The Babe we celebrate, the one we worship, it’s the God-Man, the world’s Redeemer.

John 1:1-4, 10-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Of the Father’s Love Begotten

Christian Worship #35:2

Text: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-c. 413, abr.;
tr. John M. Neale, 1818-66, st. 1-4, alt.;
Henry W. Baker, 1821-77, st. 5, alt.

*Oh, that birth forever blessed When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world’s Redeemer, First revealed his sacred face
Evermore and evermore.*

The Season of Epiphany

Some have said the church year is like a wave with peaks and valleys. If that's true, then in the season of Epiphany, we are the surfer riding the wave between the emotional heights of Christmas and humble repentance of the season of Lent. The season has historically housed several important events in the life of our Savior. The visit of the Magi, the Gentile Christmas, or Epiphany all names for the festival which carries our attention throughout the season. However, the Baptism of the Christ as the Father announces who Jesus is, the Miracle at Cana as Jesus first shows us the power He has willingly set aside the full use of, the Transfiguration which comes at the end of the season with blinding light and the Father's approval once more announcing the Champion perfectly equip for the sacrifice He is about to make, It all leaves us "ooing" and "awing" over who Jesus is as He reveals Himself to us.

Every season of the church year is properly one in which we could dwell for our entire lives and still find treasures to add to those we had mined. Epiphany is no exception. That our God would come to us, that He would display Himself to sinners, for sinners, it is no small marvel. No, not just for the Jews of Jerusalem, the bloodline of Abraham, but Gentile stargazers, and all others who need Him and the perfection He fulfills in our place, the forgiveness He brings. We are grafted into His family line in the water which announced Him our Champion, a miracle every bit as impressive as changing water into wine as the Spirit works faith in hearts in Baptism and allows sinful human eyes to behold the glory of God not for a fleeting moment on the heights of the Mount of Transfiguration but in the glory of the heights of heaven for all eternity. Oh yes, brothers and sisters, may we always "ooh" and "awe" over who Jesus is as He reveals Himself to us in the pages of His Holy Word and the gracious gifts of His Sacraments.

Matthew 2:9-12

⁹ After (the Magi) had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Mark 9:7

"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Christian Worship #82:5

Text: Christopher Wordsworth, 1807-85, alt.

*Grant us grace to see you, Lord, Mirrored in your holy Word.
May our lives and all we do Imitate and honor you
That we all like you may be At your great epiphany
And may praise you, ever blest, God in man made manifest.*

The Season of Lent

Lent is known for many things. Some would give things up like chocolate or meat. Others would add things in like extra service times and fellowship meals. These all serve a good purpose but hopefully, the earthly wrapping paper doesn't exclude the spiritual blessings of the season. After He has set His face toward Jerusalem on the mount of Transfiguration in Epiphany, we now join the pilgrimage with Jesus. We remember anew the passion history of our Savior and all He is willing to endure for sinful mankind. The scorn of the spiritual house He had come to save, the injustice that would be heaped upon Him, the brutality which we in our politically correct world have a hard time even imagining anymore. All so that it can end in the most terrible way imaginable, death on a cross. Holy Week, really a season within a season, highlights it all with such crystal clarity that it cannot be missed. The hymn cries out, "Oh sorrow dread! God's Son is dead! But by his expiation Of our guilt upon the cross Gained for us salvation (CW#137:2)."

That's right dear friends Lent is a season our fallen world needs. Lent is a season my sin-filled heart needs. For the sickness and trouble, for the heartache and pain, for the sin and the destruction it brings in relationships, to my own emotional state, to whole human history of mankind, there on Golgotha is the cross. There is a life worth all others, as God dies for us all in the person of Jesus Christ. *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). He takes away your sin and mine.

Isaiah 53:1-6

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

Christian Worship #127:1
Text: Thomas Kelly, 1769-1855, alt.

*Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, See him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected; Yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he.
'Tis the long-expected Prophet, David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it: 'Tis the true and faithful Word.*

The Season of Easter

If Christmas shatters the expectation of Advent, then Easter obliterates the gloomy sin-filled clouds of Lent. Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!! It is the very basis of the Christian faith. Jesus won! Because He did, death could not hold Him. An empty tomb has shouted across the ages words which we will read again in a moment, *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* It has been said no other religion does this. In effect Christianity throws down the gauntlet of proof and announces, “If you can prove this one point, we all go home and this is completely pointless.” 2000 plus years later, here we stand. More than that through this season, we see proof after proof of the resurrection as we peer through the eyes of the sceptic, Doubting Thomas, who touched and saw and cried out, “My Lord and My God” as he stood in the room with the resurrected Christ. The women at the tomb, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the disciples in manifold locations and yes, that crowd of more than 500 gathered together in one place. Paul later says you know most of them. Many still live. Go ask them what they saw (1 Corinthians 15:6). Yes, Christ is risen dear friends! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!!

And so, Easter shines its incredibly bright light into our hearts and minds. The half year of Christ draws to its close and as it does our enemies lie in the dust, defeated, dismantled. Sin could not claim our Champion, death did its worst and could no hold Him, even Satan was left enraged unable to repeat with this Son of Man what he had done with the Adam and Eve. Payment rendered, you have been purchased and won, not with gold or silver but with the holy precious blood of Christ. Your salvation has been sealed by the empty tomb, established and as solid as the rock from which the tomb itself was cut. Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! His victory is our own.

1 Corinthians 15:12-23

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

I Know that My Redeemer Lives

Christian Worship #152:1
Text: Samuel Medley, 1738-99, abr.

*I know that my Redeemer lives; What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead; He lives, my ever-living Head!*

Ascension

Really nestled here towards the end of the season of Easter, we'll pause for a second to recall the truths in which the Christian Church has reveled on this day. Perhaps, they are especially poignant as our country finds herself contemplating opening up society. Rebuilding what has been beaten down in the solitude of quarantine. No doubt the disciples thought this part would now be pretty simple. Jesus was back, the resurrection undeniable, His victory and status unassailable. Now, now would be the time for the earthly power and pomp, now would be the time for receive souls to crowd into the synagogues and form into ranks of regal warriors ready to claim earth and establish thrones, even demand the respect so many had failed to give it. Oh, and that time will come, when Jesus returns and every eye sees Him and His kingdom of glory will be established visibly on earth even as it is on heaven. But this not just yet dear friends. Now there is still work to do and He would have us do it. So He ascends that He might send His Spirit to His Church (of course there is a bridge to Pentecost there), now He ascends that all may be made ready for the arrival of His saints, made so in the flow of His blood, now He ascends that He might guide and guard His Church until His return to judge the living and the dead.

Oh, we are not orphaned. No, far from it. His Spirit, working through His means of Grace, works mightily in the stewards who have been left here to build the Church as best we can. To build on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. To light the way to Him with the very lamps He has left. We are His witnesses to the very ends of the earth. Oh, we won't be perfect! The work will often be difficult and slow. Our sin will regularly rear its ugly head. But then the very means He left us to grow the church, strengthen our faith and hold out the forgiveness that fuels life in a fallen world.

Acts 1:3-11

(Jesus) appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Christian Worship #169
Text: William C. Dix, 1837-98, abr., alt.

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus; His the scepter, his the throne;

Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.

Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion Thunder like a mighty flood:

"Jesus out of ev'ry nation Has redeemed us by his blood."

Alleluia! Bread of heaven, Here on earth our food, our stay;

Alleluia! Here the sinful Flee to you from day to day.

Intercessor, Friend of sinners, Earth's Redeemer, hear our plea

Where the songs of all the sinless Sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! Not as orphans Are we left in sorrow now;

Alleluia! He is near us; Faith believes, nor questions how.

Though the cloud from sight received him When the forty days were o'er,

Shall our hearts forget his promise: "I am with you evermore"?

The Season of Pentecost

Undoubtedly the longest of the seasons of the church year, this one comprises almost the entire half year of the life of the church, in fact, until recently it did. Pentecost fittingly lends its name to this portion of the year. On that great festival day, the New Testament Church leapt into existence. It's easy to get caught up in the wind, the tongues of fire, the miraculous speaking in the languages of the many gathered together in Jerusalem. However, these all simply set the stage for the tool the Spirit would use most effectively on this day. Through a voice, Peter's to be specific, God would bath these pilgrims in Law and Gospel. Convicting them of their sinfulness and reminding them of why the events we celebrate in the first half of the church year are so important, forgiveness, new life, salvation were theirs in the precious gospel message. As the Spirit worked mightily in the Word 3000 came to faith and were baptized, another Means of Grace displayed in the life and work of the Church.

It's easy to slip into the "if only's" when we contemplate the work and life of God's Church here on earth. If only, the Spirit would spit tongues of fire out on His people once again, enliven our mouths to speak in languages unknown. Surly then people would listen and believe. If only, if only, the Church had men like Peter, bold and confident, as it did back then, then we would grow by leaps and bounds. If only, if only we would use the right social media platform, start the right program, dress the right way, well then ... then ...²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'³⁰ "No, father Abraham,' he (the rich man) said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' (Luke 16:29-31)". God has given us His Word and His Sacraments. He has promised that where these Means exist, there His church is as well, in fact dear friends where two or three come together in Jesus (my) name, there He is (am I) with them (Matthew 18:20). So we go about the work of the Church, confident that our Savior Jesus, and the Holy Spirit He sends, work with us, that the Father who moved heaven and earth to save us from sin will sustain us in the work He has given and along the way, languages are spoken, maybe not miraculously and in mere minutes but carefully learned for months and years so that the Law and Gospel may spread to the corners of the globe. God gives His Church people like Peter, bold and confident in the Word God has given and yes, wobbly and in need of help and shoring up from time to time too. And through the voices of His people God proclaims His truth in the miracles He performs, in His Sacraments the Church grows, sometimes visibly and in great number and other times invisibly even as it would appear to be shrinking. Always as our gracious God would direct it.

Acts 2:1-4 , 38-41

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ...

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

Christian Worship #176:1

Text: German hymn, 15th century, st. 1; Martin Luther, 1483-1546, st. 2-3;
tr. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, St. Louis, 1941, alt.

*Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord! May all your graces be outpoured
On each believer's mind and heart; Your fervent love to them impart.
Lord, by the brightness of your light In holy faith your church unite
From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue; This to your praise, O Lord our God, be sung: Alleluia! Alleluia!*

The Season of End Times (or the four festivals)

A fairly recent addition to the church year, the season of End Times is comprised of four minor festivals. Reformation, Last Judgment, Saints Triumphant and Christ the King. These four Sundays encourage and prepare the Church as she awaits the Lord's return, as she lives in the "End Times", the time between Jesus' first coming and His final return. Reformation always carries with it an emphasis on faithfulness to the Word of our God. Last Judgment recalls God's urgent call for repentance as we live always mindful of His return to judge the living and the dead. Saint's Triumphant brings to mind the glories of Jerusalem the golden and the paradise of heaven which God has prepared for His people and builds the yearning and watchfulness anew this time not as we await Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, though the church year is about to begin anew, but rather when He comes again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The final Sunday of the year, ushers in the joy of the reign of our Savior and places all things where they always were, in His capable and loving hands.

It always seems that these four festivals strung together as they are, strongly encourage the Church as we recall that we have a God who is always in control. He preserves His church, even though the hands of His servants be shaky and afraid. He will judge the nations, the unbeliever, the false teacher, the wicked one though they may seem to prosper in this sinful world, they will not go unpunished. Their time will come. Our home was never really here anyway dear saints. It is in heaven where we shall finally experience the perfection we were created for, which we yearn for and which our King will provide, has already secured for us and so we cry it anew, "Come Lord Jesus! Amen!"

Revelation 22:12-21

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴ "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Christian Worship #201:1-2

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. composite.

*A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal.*

*With might of ours can naught be done; Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one Whom God himself elected.
You ask, "Who is this?" Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord. And there's no other God; He holds the field forever.*

PRAYER & SPECIAL PRAYERS

M: Lord Jesus, great champion of our salvation, we praise You for ascending to heaven after Your stunning victory over sin, Satan and the grave. We praise you for completing your Father's rescue plan and for receiving from Him all authority in heaven and on earth.

C: Assure us each day that because you live and reign, our sins are forgiven, life is worth living, and death holds no terrors.

M: Lord Jesus, living head of the Church, we praise You for gathering us around Your good news to be joined to You and united with one another. We praise You for the many dedicated servants of the Word who proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to people from all nations, also to us. Equip us to be instruments of Your peace in our time and place.

C: Open our mouths to speak Your good news, and change lives so that we reflect the beauty of the teachings of God our Savior in everything we do.

M: Lord Jesus, mighty judge of the universe, we praise You for Your promise that You will return to our world, not as humble servant but in full majesty, to take us to live with You. We praise You for the certainty of our promises and the justice of Your judgment. Prepare us for the day when You will come again; give us hearts that trust You more fully, hands eager to serve, ears opened to the music of Your gospel, and lips to speak the truth in love.

C: Keep us devoted to our common tasks in his life, yet keep our minds on things above, where our life is hidden with You, so that when You appear, we too will appear with You in glory.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us Lord as we bring You our private petitions.

Silent prayer

M: Lord hear us, for You have ascended and intercede before the Father for us. Amen.

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.

AARONIC BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

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

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

C: Amen

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*

Christian Worship #334
Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711, abr.