

# Sermon followed by Service

December 5, 2021

Psalm 24

Did you get the invite? I know you did; we all did. But then what? It sounded too good to be true, didn't it? And at Christmas time, who has time at Christmas time? What so often happens to invitations that sound too good to be true, invitations that cut into our busy times? They get crumpled and tossed, don't they? But you're here today, so I'm thinking that you haven't crumpled and tossed your invitation. What invitation am I talking about? David's invitation to meet the King!

When you get an invite to something special, do you ever wonder: "What am I supposed to wear? Jeans or pants, sweater or suit? Long dress, short dress? Am I supposed to bring something? What am I supposed to bring? What do you give somebody who already has everything?" Or maybe you wonder: "Is this invite, this party really for me? What kind of people are going to be there?" David helps us out: **"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false .... Such is the generation of those who seek him."**

So what's the dress code? Who gets to meet the King? **"He who has clean hands and a pure heart,"** a heart and soul stuck on Jesus. Our King doesn't judge a book by its cover; he has x-ray vision better than any Clark Kent, Superman, MRI, cat-scan, pet-scan. Our King isn't taken in by how we look on the outside; he isn't looking for some shallow relationship where a good look, a good life is good enough. Our King is coming to marry us! Forever! He's looking to be one with our heart and soul, together forever! So what's the right dress code? **"Clean hands and a pure heart!"** Inside and outside - a heart and soul so in love with Jesus, so looking to be connected with Jesus, that there's no thought of putting anything or anyone in his place, no thought of looking to anything or anyone but him to make life right. A heart and soul that sees Jesus - yes, Jesus with the Father and the Spirit - that sees Jesus as #1, the only 1 - the only Lord and King who can make life right for us - and he's coming to make life right for us!

So, who gets the final say in your life? Who makes life right for you? Who is it, what is it that makes life worth living for you? Do you ever have an answer other than Jesus or the God we get with Jesus? Sometimes we talk about our families that way, don't we? - that they make our life right for us. Sometimes we

treat entertainment that way - that being entertained and entertaining ourselves is what makes life worth living. What does David say? **“Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!”** Talking to Jerusalem he says: “Open the doors and let Christ come in!” Today he might say: “Clear the streets; get rid of the stop-lights; let Christ come in!” To us he says: “Lift up your heads! Wake up! Open up your hearts and minds! Who is #1, what is #1 in your life! Get ready for Christ to come!”

Why? Who is he? **The King of Glory! The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle!** Our family and friends - children, spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend - their love can make life feel so right and so worth living. Our jobs, our fun and games can help make life feel right and worth living. But what about when they're not there, when they turn against us? What about when life is a battle, a battle bigger than any of us? Our King, your King, is Immanuel - God with us, not just sometimes, not just for the good times, but God with us for all times. Our King is Immanuel - God with Us in the battles of life, God with us to make life right for us.

That's right! We have Christ the King, the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle, on our side! Against the devil, we have God with Us, the LORD mighty in battle, to put the devil in his place! Against sin and evil, we have God with us, the LORD strong and mighty, to make us strong for the fight, to make us winners in the fight. Against sickness and death, cancer and COVID, we have God with Us, the LORD Almighty in battle, to give us life. We have God with Us, the LORD strong and mighty, coming for us - to be God's champion for us, to be God's King for us, to save us and make life right for us forever and ever, world without end, amen!

And we get to meet him! We might wonder: “How?” You remember what David said: **“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”** If we're honest with ourselves, we admit: “My hands aren't clean and my heart isn't pure.” So how can we meet the King? I think of David in Psalm 32 - **“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”** I think of David in Psalm 51 - **“Create in me a clean heart, O God!”** The LORD who forgives; the God who creates clean hearts - that's the King who is coming to us, for us!

That's what Christmas and the cross are about. Jesus came and lived life with clean hands and a pure heart. Sin and evil were all around him; sin and temptation all around him; Satan himself tempting him - but Jesus, the LORD mighty in battle, kept his hands clean and his heart pure - the devil couldn't dirty him. And the cross couldn't break him - not the pain of the cross, not the injustice of the cross, not the evil of the cross, not all our evil laid on him on the cross - the LORD strong and mighty in battle took it all, kept his hands clean and his heart pure - and paid the price for the evil and the filth in our hearts and on our hands. Today that LORD comes to you in Word and Sacrament and says to you: "Forgiven. You are forgiven. Your hands and your heart are forgiven, washed clean and pure. Forgiven, washed clean and pure to meet the King!"

That brings up a question: How do we meet him? What do we bring him? What do you give the King who has everything? David tells us - "**The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.**" Everything in the world, everything we have, every thing we could give already belongs to the LORD. So, what do you get someone who has everything? "**Clean hands and a pure heart.**" The hands and heart that Jesus has forgiven to be clean and pure. Hands like Jesus' hands - hands to help and hold and bless like Jesus. A heart in tune with Jesus' heart - even when Christmas plans go haywire, even when family get-togethers get stressed ... a heart so filled with God's love and God's giving that we want to love and give like he does ... a heart so in tune with Jesus that we make his work our work - at home, with his church, out in his world ... a heart so in love with Jesus, so fired up on Jesus that we wear our Christmas best, we sing our Christmas best, we give our Christmas best - all to show how great it is to meet our King! So what do we bring our King? Hands and a heart that live and love like Jesus.

And what do we get to take home? Not just stuff. Even though everything in all the world is his; he has better for us than just stuff. David says: "**[You] will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God [your] Savior.**" With Jesus, you have the LORD to bless you. With Christ as your King, you have God himself vindicating you, that is, in the face of all that is wrong, you have God himself calling you right! And not just calling you right, setting you right for life with God!

What does that mean for us? With Christ as our King, every day we can wake up knowing - no matter what we need, the LORD who owns everything is our King to bless us and take care of us! With Christ as our King, every day we can

head into the world knowing no matter who or what is against us, our King is the LORD Almighty, strong and mighty, to make life right and safe for us! With Christ as our King, we can even face death, knowing that our King has life right for us in heaven. That means, with Christ as our King, we have everything we need - not just for Christmas Day, but for everyday! And we are invited to meet him!

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
*A Family Connecting in Christ*



**W H E N   T H E**  
**L O R D**  
**C O M E S   N E A R**

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December 4 & 5, 2021

### SERIES THEME

#### *WHEN THE LORD COMES NEAR*

“Advent” comes from a Latin word that means “coming.” The season of Advent is the four week period before Christmas that the Church uses to connect the two “comings” of Christ. The first time the Lord came into our world it was as a tiny, helpless baby, born in a manger in Bethlehem. However, when Jesus comes again, it will be in all his power and glory with his angelic army behind him. He will be coming as judge at the end of time. Let us use these four weeks to see how the events of Jesus’ first coming remove all our fears about his second coming. We can hold our heads high when the Lord comes near.

### THEME OF THE DAY

#### *WHEN THE LORD COMES NEAR, HE HUMBLER HIS PEOPLE*

People tend to feel a lot of pressure this time of year. We want our houses to look good for our-of-town guests. We want to impress people with the thoughtfulness of our gifts. What a welcome relief, therefore, to hear what is required to meet the Lord: only repentance. You see, Jesus is not someone we need to impress with our good works. Indeed, repentance is the opposite of work. Repentance is the humble admission of our sin combined with the joyful trust that everything needed to bring us close to God has already been done by him.

### OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan  
this code with your mobile device.*



# The Service

## OPENING HYMN

*"Arise, O Christian People"*

**Hymn 310**

Arise, O Christian people! Prepare yourselves today;  
Prepare to greet the Savior, Who takes your sins away.  
To us by grace alone The truth and light was given;  
The promised Lord from heaven To all the world is shown.

Prepare the way before him, Prepare for him the best;  
Cast out what would offend him, This great, this heav'nly guest.  
Make straight, make plain the way: The lowly valleys raising,  
The heights of pride abasing, His path all even lay.

The humble heart and lowly God raises up on high;  
Beneath his feet in terror The haughty soul shall lie.  
The heart sincere and right, That heeds God's invitation  
And makes true preparation -- It is the Lord's delight.

Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus; Turn not from me aside,  
And help me to receive you This blessed Adventtide.  
From stall and manger low Come now to dwell within me;  
I'll sing your praises gladly And forth your glory show.

## INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## CONFESSION

If we claim to be without sin,  
we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just  
and will forgive us our sins  
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Holy God, gracious Father,**

**I am sinful by nature**

**and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.**

**I have not loved you with my whole heart;**

**I have not loved others as I should.**

**I deserve your punishment both now and forever.**

**But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins**

**with his innocent suffering and death.**

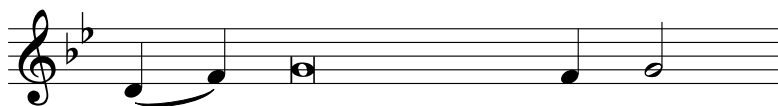
**Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

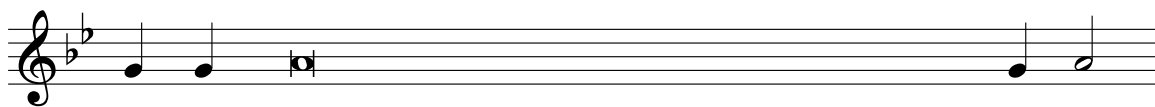
### LORD, HAVE MERCY (KYRIE)



In peace let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**

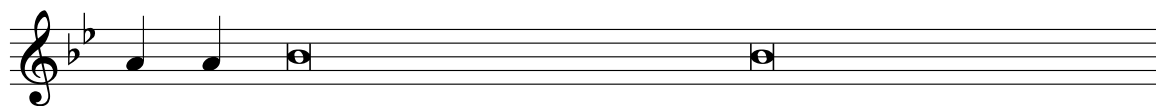


For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**

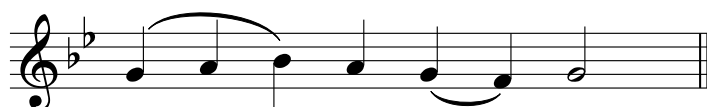




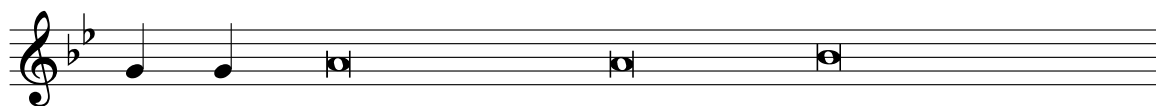
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of



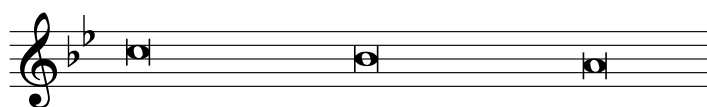
God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and



praise, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



Help, save, com - fort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



**A - - - men.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; through

your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

**Malachi 3:1-7b**

*Through God's Word and the messengers who proclaim it, the Lord humbles his people, purifying our hearts so that we might stand on the Last Day.*

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

"So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM OF THE DAY**

**Psalm 24B (CW21)**

*Refrain*

Welcome the King of glory, each tribe and nation!

He is the LORD Almighty, bringing salvation.

1. See, all the earth is God's, its people and nations;  
God built it on the deeps and laid its foundations. *Refrain*
  
2. Who can go up this mountain, who stand in praising?  
Those who are pure, who come with clean hands upraising. *Refrain*
  
3. They shall receive forgiveness, and have God's blessing  
If they will search for God, their Savior confessing. *Refrain*
  
4. Come, lift your voices high, be lifted to glory;  
The LORD our God approaches, come, shout the story. *Refrain*
  
5. Who is this glorious one, for whom we are waiting?  
We wait the mighty LORD, our God celebrating. *Refrain*
  
6. Come, lift your heads with joy; come, lift up your tower;  
The King of glory comes in full might and power. *Refrain*
  
7. Who is this King of glory of whom we're singing?  
Our God, this LORD of hosts, the vict'ry is bringing. *Refrain*

## SECOND READING

## Philippians 1:3-11

*Producing love and humility within us is God's work. He began his good work at our baptism and will carry that work to completion.*

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is

best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*The cantor/choir sings the refrain and verse.*

*The congregation joins to sing the final refrain*

*Refrain*



Come to us, Emmanuel;  
come and set your people free.

*Refrain*

### GOSPEL

**Luke 3:1-6**

*In grace, God sent his messenger, John the Baptist, to prepare people to meet the Lord.*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the desert,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.  
Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.  
And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"*

**Hymn 316**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Come, then, and listen, for he brings Good news about the King of kings.

Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin And furnished for a Guest within,  
And let us all our hearts prepare For Christ to come and enter there.

We hail you as our Savior, Lord, Our refuge and our great reward.  
Without your grace we waste away Like flow'rs that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore, And lift us up to fall no more;  
O make your face on us to shine, And fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son, Whose advent has our freedom won,  
Whom with the Father we adore And Holy Spirit evermore.

**SERMON**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH**

**NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius**

**Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We believe in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

#### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**P:** Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that you forgive our sins in Christ. Lead us to see clearly the path you have laid out for us.

**C:** **Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.**

**P:** Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach your Word. Fill them with a love like yours as they proclaim your grace to us and all people.

**C:** **Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.**

**P:** Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single, and make them a blessing to others.

**C:** **Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.**

**P:** Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

**C:** **Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.**

- P: Give us passion to share the story of your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief, and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven.
- C: **Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in you.**
- P: Extend your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. *Pour out your special blessing on . . . (here name the person and the cause of the petition).* Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying.
- C: **Lift the eyes of the distressed to your love in Christ.**
- P: Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.  
*Silent prayer*
- P: Gracious God, you govern and direct all things and you love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in your wisdom and grace.
- C: **In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

## THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)  
(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

*The following responses may be spoken or sung.*

The Lord be with you.

And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**Sanctus**



Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er, God of  
 might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho - san - na  
 in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the  
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est,  
 ho - san - na in the high - est!

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Lord God, you are worthy to receive thanks and praise from all people. You created the world and all who live in it, and in your mercy you saved us. We give thanks to you for the grace of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Though in very nature God, he took the nature of a servant and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. He offered himself as a sacrifice for sin and redeemed us from its curse and penalty. He rescued us from the terrors of death and restored eternal life with you. He conquered our enemies and gained for us the kingdom of grace and glory.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood, and lead us to remember his suffering, death, and resurrection. Forgive our sins and fill us with the hope of new life in heaven. Hear our praise and receive our thanks as we worship you— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**Amen.**

## JESUS, LAMB OF GOD

## Agnus Dei

The cantor/choir sings the first phrase.

Je - sus, Lamb of God; you take a - way the  
sin of the world, have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God; you take a - way the  
sin of the world, have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God; you take a - way the  
sin of the world: grant us your peace.

## DISTRIBUTION

### PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### BLESSING

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.

**Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

## *"There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying"*

Hymn 308

There's a voice in the wilderness crying, A call from the ways untrod:  
Prepare in the desert a highway, A highway for our God!  
The valleys shall be exalted, The lofty hills brought low;  
Make straight all the crooked places Where the Lord our God may go!

O Christians, you bring good tidings; Get up to the heights and sing!  
Proclaim to a desolate people The coming of their King.  
Like the flow'rs of the field they perish; Like grass their works decay.  
The pow'r and pomp of nations Shall pass like a dream away;

But the Word of our God is eternal; The arm of the Lord is strong.  
He stands in the midst of the nations, And he shall right the wrong.  
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, The lambs shall gently hold,  
To pastures of peace shall lead them, And bring them safe to his fold.

### Acknowledgments

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## **Join Us For Wednesday Advent Worship! De-Stress from December Distress**

**Wednesday, December 8, at 3:30 and 6:30:**

**Distressed with Money Stress?**

**De-Stress with True Treasure in Jesus!**

- Advent Supper at 4:30 pm - Hosted by Kris Murphy

**Wednesday, December 15, at 3:30 and 6:30:**

**Distressed with Family Stress?**

**De-Stress with Jesus as Your Brother!**

- Advent Supper at 4:30 pm - Hosted by St. John Youth Group



*Advent*  
**SUPPER**