

Sermon followed by Service

December 12, 2021

Luke 3:7-18

I invite you to close your eyes. Imagine the sweet and soothing sounds of Advent. **“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”** **“Nachimu, nachimu, ami.”** **“Comfort, comfort, my people ... speak of peace,”** says our God. Imagine Mary’s sweet soprano: **“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”** And Zechariah’s rich baritone: **“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.”** Add Simeon: “Lord, you let your servant depart in peace!” Now imagine God’s prophet, John, named for God’s grace: **“You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee the coming wrath?”**

What are your favorite sweet and soothing sounds of Advent and Christmas?

When you hear that Advent voice, what’s your first thought? “Who does he think he is?” “Who’s he talking to?” “Why should I have to listen to talk that like?”

What was your first thought when you heard John pointing: “You brood of vipers”?

“Who does he think he is?” He’s God’s prophet John. Miracle baby of Zechariah and Elizabeth. He’s God’s promised prophet preparing the way for the Lord. “Who’s he talking to?” He’s talking to people who think they are just fine just the way they are, people content in their sin, because “what I do isn’t as bad as what they do.” He’s talking to people who wear their religion on their sleeve, but it doesn’t go any deeper than that. He’s talking to people who want to hear nice things from God; they want a God connection, as long as it doesn’t cost too much. And “why should I have to listen to talk like that” from John? Because that’s not just John talking; that’s God’s Spirit talking, God’s Spirit calling me out!

When I hear John call me out: **“You brood of vipers”** ... when you hear John, what’s the first thing that goes on inside us? The shields go up. “Who does he think he is?” “Who’s he talking to?” “Why should I have to listen to talk that like?” Our shields go up. That’s kind of a cop-out, isn’t it? Let’s say it the way it

is. Our shields don't go up on their own; we put our shields up. We deny. We blame. We excuse.

“Our shields go up” or “We put our shields up.” Which seems more true for the people around you? Which seems more true for you? What is the solution when our shields go up before we consciously think?

John knew that. He had heard it all before. **“We have Abraham as our father ... and that makes me right.”** We don't pull out the “Abraham shield,” but that doesn't mean we don't have our shields, does it? When John calls us out ... when John calls on us to step up and prove our heart is with God, what shields go up around our hearts, around your heart? They come in every shape, size and color, don't they? “I've already done my part.” “I'd do more, but the pastor or the politics or or or.” “I'm too busy; I don't have time; I have too much going on.” “All the church wants is my money.” “I believe, but I'm not much for showing it; but I believe and that's all that matters, isn't it?” Or, or, or. Our shields come in all shapes and sizes, but they all say pretty much the same thing - “Don't expect me to change. At least not any time soon. I'm fine the way I am.”

What shields do you hear from others? ... from yourself?

That's why God sent John. That's why I need John. That's why you need John. To call us out of our contentment with the way we are. Jesus is coming. I didn't say “Christmas is coming.” I said, “Jesus is coming.” And he's not carrying a big, red bag of toys slung over his shoulder to make everybody happy. He's carrying an ax, an ax to cut down and burn the dead waste of humanity that fills this world.

“So what should we do?” That's what they asked John: **“What should we do then?”** Did you notice that John didn't say: “Just believe and you'll be fine.” No, John said: “Do!” John said: “Repent! Change! If you don't want to be cut down and burned up like the dead waste of humanity around you, it's time to show you're different. Fitting in with the world will show you're fit for the fire. Show your faith. Show your love. Show that you have the heart of God.”

How? You heard what John told the people in the crowd. He didn't call on them to change the world. He called on them to be different and to show the heart of God in their living and their giving. What might he say to us? If we're students he might say: “Don't cheat. Use the gifts God gave you. Learn how to do

something useful with your life.” If we’re sales people he might say: “Don’t half-truth your way to make your deal. Help people get the deal they need.” If we work in an office, what might he say? “Get off Facebook and do your job.” Or maybe “stop the gossip and pick someone up, encourage someone with Jesus.” Or if we’re retired? “Stop thinking you’re on your time; as long as you’re alive you’re still on God’s time. Let’s do something worthwhile with the time God gives us.”

Why don’t we hear John, Peter, Paul, Mary, Jesus, et al calling on us to change the world?

What might John say to us?

When do I get to be done asking: “What should I do then?”

Are you wondering what happened to “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” ... “Comfort, comfort, ye my people”? Are you ready for some of those sweet sounds of Advent? So were the people at the time of John. They had heard the promise of a Champion to crush the devil’s head, but evil was all around them. They had heard the promise of a Prophet greater than Moses to bring them God’s Truth, but year after year, no prophet - it was as if God had turned his back on them. They had heard the promise that the Kingdom of David would reign forever, but for centuries foreigners ruled them, squeezed them, crushed them. They still had a temple, one of the most glorious temples in all the world, but most everything that went on in and around it was corrupt; for so many, their religion left them feeling guilty and dirty. But they still heard the promise of a Messiah who would stand up for them and make life right. So now they were waiting. Now they were hoping. And now they were thinking that John might be that Messiah.

For these people, John’s message was more than “do or doom.” John had good news! God was stepping into the history of his people! The promised Messiah was coming to deliver his people! For a hurting and broken people, for a hopeful and faithful people, John promised a new life with God. As he baptized crowds of people into this new life, he promised them the forgiveness of their sin. And as he baptized and promised the forgiveness of sin, he called God’s people to live new lives, changed lives, to live and give with the heart of God.

Now we still hear the voice of John. At times it is sharp, calling us out of our self-satisfaction. At times, John’s voice is hard - “**The ax is ready ... Jesus is coming with winnowing fork in his hand.**” We need to know - Jesus means business. And when we put our shields and our excuses down, and know that Jesus

means business, we get to hear the voice of John point to Jesus sweet with words of promise - **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** Your sin has been paid for. Yes, Jesus is coming with life and love for you! Amen.

We usually don't think of John as a “Good News” preacher; we usually think of John as more “fire and brimstone.” Where do you hear “Good News” in the accounts of John the Baptist?

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

Pastor Kevin Raddatz
Principal Jon Woldt
501 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
847-362-4424
www.StJohnsLib.com

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH



December 11 & 12, 2021

SERIES THEME

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 ENEMIES

Last week we saw that the Lord sends messengers to call us to repentance. This week we learn that those who refuse to heed that call to humble themselves will be humbled anyway. The Lord who once came near in flesh and now comes near in Word and sacrament will one day come near with consuming fire and judgement. The Lord will humble his enemies. This truth does two important things. First, it adds urgency to God’s Advent call to repentance. Second, it gives us comfort when we, as God’s people, experience opposition from the world. Those who oppress and harm God’s people will face justice.

The Service

OPENING HYMN

“Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates”

Hymn 306

Lift up your heads, you mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits.
The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here.

How blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes!

Fling wide the gates; prepare your heart to be a temple set apart
From earthly use for heaven's employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! We open wide Our hearts to you; here, Lord, abide.
O enter with your grace divine And cause your face on us to shine.

Eternal praise, unending fame We offer to your saving name.
Your Holy Spirit guide us on until our glorious goal is won.

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.

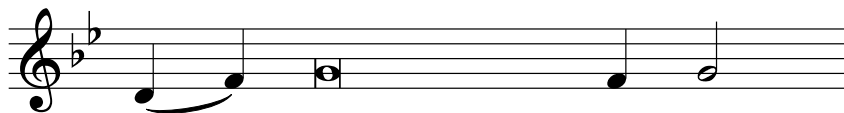
Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

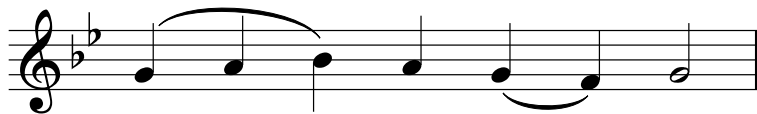
Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son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

Amen.

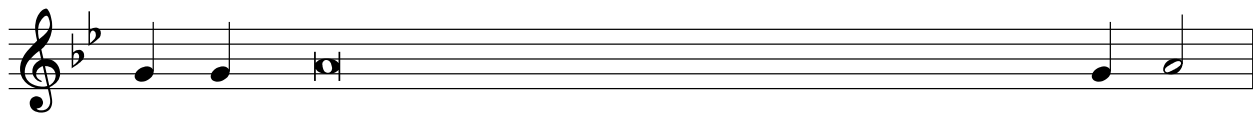
LORD, HAVE MERCY (KYRIE)



In peace let us pray to the Lord.



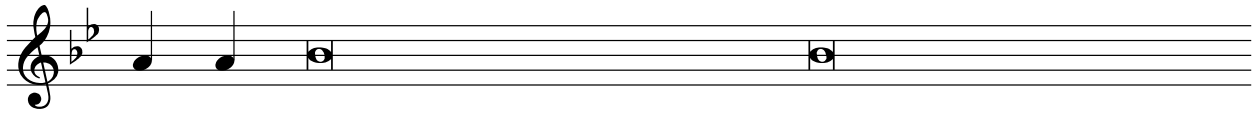
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



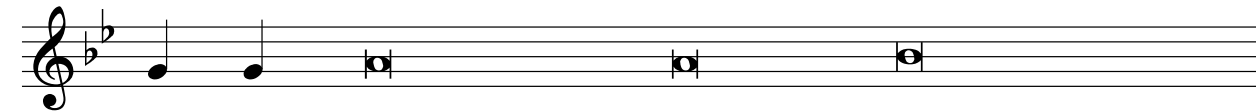
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of



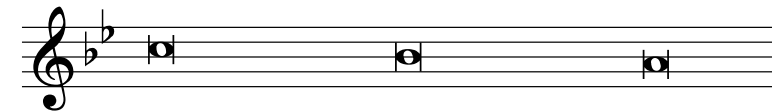
God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



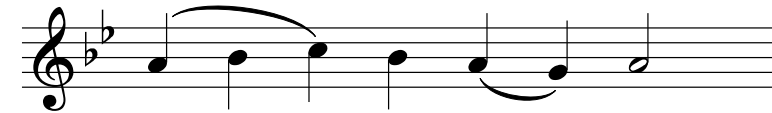
Lord, have mer - cy.



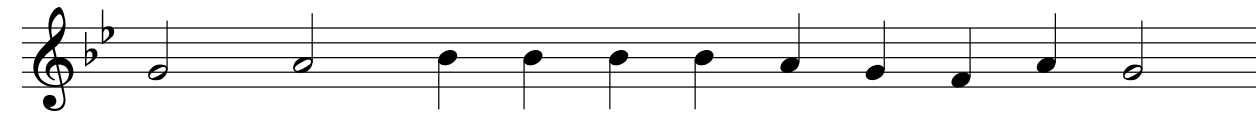
For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and



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.

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts and fill us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 3:14-17

The prophet Zephaniah urges us to rejoice. Not only has the Lord taken away our punishment, but he will defeat all the enemies of God's people.

Sing, O Daughter of Zion;
shout aloud, O Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
O Daughter of Jerusalem!

The LORD has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.

The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.

On that day
they will say to Jerusalem,

Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands hang limp.

The LORD your God is with you,
he is mighty to save.

He will take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with his love,
he will rejoice over you with singing."

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

CHOIR

“Light of the World”

*Light of the world, you loose the bonds of night.
Once we walked in darkness; now bursts forth your light.
Christ, in your glory, come to light the way.
Teach us how to follow.*

*Light of our paths, you walk with us in strife.
Where conflict darkens, bring the light of life.
Christ, in your mercy, show us love.
Teach us how to follow.*

*We must be your hands, lent to heal and bless.
We must be your light, rending wide the darkness.
Christ, in your image, we'll greet the world;
this is how we follow.*

*Light of our days, we feel your dawning call;
send us forth to serve and bring your light to all.
Christ, you have claimed us; you have made us one.
We will always follow!*

*Christ, you have claimed us; you have made us one.
We will always follow!*

SECOND READING

Philippians 4:4-7

When the world opposes Christ and his Church, Christians do not respond with anxiety or anger, but gentleness. We bring all our concerns to God in prayer and rest in his peace of knowing the Lord will humble his enemies in due time.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your

requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

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

Refrain

GOSPEL

Luke 3:7-18

Who is Christ's enemy? Anyone who refuses the gifts of his grace, received humbly in repentant faith.

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 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."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."

Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

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

HYMN OF THE DAY

"O Lord, How Shall I Meet You"

Hymn 324

O Lord, how shall I meet you, How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, My hope, my heart's delight.
O Jesus, let your Word be A lamp to light my way,
To show me how to please you, To guide me ev'ry day.

Love caused your incarnation; Love brought you down to me.
Your thirst for my salvation Procured my liberty.
Oh, love beyond all telling That led you to embrace
In love, all love excelling, Our lost and fallen race!

Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o'er joys departed And tremble at your doom.

Despair not; he is near you, He's standing at the door
Who best can help and cheer you And bids you weep no more.
Sin's debt, that fearful burden, Let not your souls distress;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon And cover by his grace.
He comes, for you procuring The peace of sin forgiv'n,
His children thus securing Eternal life in heav'n.

He comes to judge the nations, A terror to his foes,
A light of consolations, And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing. O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth your beams most cheering, And guide us safely home.

SERMON

CONFESSION OF FAITH

APOSTLES' CREED

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

**I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there 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.**

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.**

HYMN

"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"

Hymn 524

Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

The Lord, our Savior, reigns, the God of truth and love;
When he had purged our stains, he took his seat above:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail, he rules o'er earth and heav'n;
The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus giv'n:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come
And take his servants up to their eternal home:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

PRAYER

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning.
May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being
strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the
blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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.

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

"The Advent of Our King"

Hymn 309 v. 1, 3-6

The advent of our King Our prayers must now employ,
And we must hymns of welcome sing In strains of holy joy.

The everlasting Son, In flesh content to be,
Himself a servant's form puts on To set his servants free.

O Zion's Daughter, rise To meet your lowly King,
Nor let a faithless heart despise The peace he comes to bring.

As judge, on clouds of light, He soon will come again
And his true members all unite With him in heav'n to reign.

Before the dawning day Let sin's dark deeds be gone,
The old self all be put away, The new self now put on.

All glory to the Son, Who comes to set us free,
With Father, Spirit, ever one Through all eternity.

OFFERING

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



Acknowledgments

*Texts and music covered under OneLicense.net #A-712373 and CCLI Copyright License 11194382, Size A and CCLI Streaming License CSPL059933, Size A. Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ *The Service: Setting Two. From Christian Worship* © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House *The Service: Setting Two* Music by Marty Haugen © 1984, 1985 GIA Publications, Inc. *The Advent of Our King* Text: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749; tr. John Chandler, 1806-1876, alt. Tune: Aaron Williams, 1731-1776; setting: Efred Bloedel, 1924-2020 Setting: © 1993 Efred Bloedel, admin. Northwestern Publishing House *Light of the World* by Karen Marroli, MorningStar Music, ©2018*

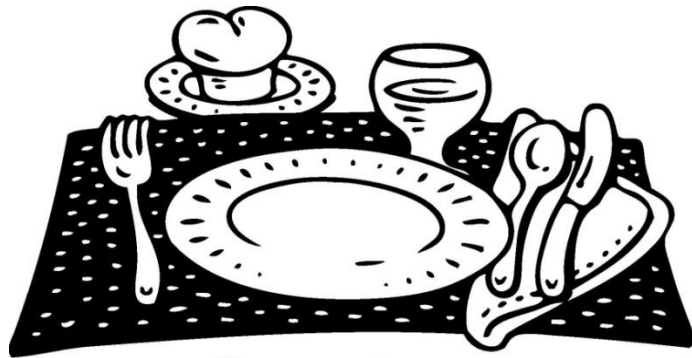
Join Us For Wednesday Advent Worship! De-Stress from December Distress

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