

Sermon followed by Service - December 1, 2024 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Are you up for a dangerous sermon? Or maybe I should say “a dangerous prayer.” I’ll tell you my first answer to that question - “No. No, I’m not up for a dangerous sermon. It’s already December, and I’m not ready. It’s only the first of December, and I’m already tired. So, no. I’m not up for a dangerous sermon.” Then I remembered reading something the pastor puts in our newsletter - **“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”**

And then I remembered what the pastor usually reads on Thanksgiving: **“I can do all things ... I can handle anything ... through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** And **“My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”** (One advantage - some would say disadvantage - of being the pastor is that I get to hear what the pastor says over and over.) And then I thought of Paul writing our lesson to the church at Thessalonika. Do you remember Paul’s visit to Thessalonika? People were so worked up against the message of Jesus Christ, against Paul and Silas, that Paul and Silas had to escape in the dark of night. Even after Paul and Silas left town, the Christians there faced so much persecution they thought the end of the world was coming, that Jesus just had to be coming soon to save them.

In some ways we might feel that same way. We hear our beloved Jesus mocked, his truth twisted. We hear our Christian way of life ridiculed and rejected. We see enemies of Christ and his church attacking Christ’s church, spewing their lies and hatred and violence around the world. More and more our world looks like scenes from the book of Revelation. More and more we see the church under attack. More and more we see danger around us. More

and more we see people stepping back from Christ's church to keep up with the world. And it can be easy to think: the end of the world is coming, Jesus just has to be coming soon. So we might pray: "Come, Lord Jesus, and save us out of this evil world."

That's not the dangerous prayer I was thinking of. That's not the dangerous sermon I was thinking of. Paul wasn't thinking or praying for escape and deliverance. Paul was thinking of going back ... he was praying for the opportunity to go back to the danger zone.

Why? Paul didn't just see Thessalonika as a danger zone; Paul saw the Thessalonians as a ministry zone. He knew the Thessalonians' faith was under attack. So Paul was praying for the opportunity to minister to them, to serve them, to give them the faith boost they needed.

It's easy to see the danger there for Paul, isn't it? People in Thessalonika wanted to squash Paul; they wanted to quash Christianity. But where in our lesson is the dangerous sermon, the dangerous prayer for us? Well, what if we were to pray like Paul? ... that God would reconnect us with old ministry opportunities? ... that God would clear the way for more ministry, for new ministry opportunities?

What if we were to pray for our renewed outreach program to reach out to our community, and not just to reach out, but to make real and personal connections? What if we were to pray for a renewed Shepherding program to reach out to our wandering? What if we were to pray for a renewed Sunday School so that our children would know their Bible lessons as well as they know their video games and tv shows? What if we were to pray that God would help us fill our classrooms? ... that God would give us new opportunities for

ministry? What if we were to pray like that? What would be the danger in praying like that?

Or instead of “us praying for our St. John ministry,” what if you were to pray for the opportunity to reconnect with that someone you know who is wandering from Jesus? Instead of “us praying,” what if you were to pray for the opportunity to restart a Jesus conversation with someone who doesn’t know Jesus as Savior? Instead of “us praying,” what if you were to pray for the opportunity to share a Christmas invitation with a friend, a neighbor, someone at work? What if instead of “us praying,” you would pray: “God use me, my talent, my time, my wallet”? What if you were to pray like that? What would be the danger in praying like that?

The danger probably isn’t like the danger Paul faced in Thessalonika; we really aren’t in that much danger of being clubbed over the head, whipped, and thrown into jail for being Christian. So what is the danger? The danger might be that God will answer our prayers! The danger is to our comfort zone, our busy-ness, our down-time, our fun money - all of which will soon be gone anyway.

It’s easy to think of the danger of ministry - less time for ourselves, less fun-money for ourselves, less ease for ourselves. What sometimes gets lost in that danger is the joy, the privilege of ministry. For Paul that joy overflowed: **“How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?”** Paul didn’t see ministry and more ministry as an expense, as an unreasonable sacrifice. Paul saw serving people with Jesus as his joy before God. Paul couldn’t thank God enough for the opportunity to serve people with Jesus.

To tell people the real miracle of Christmas, that we have God with us ... to tell people the love of God on the cross ... to share the promise of Easter life with the grieving and the dying ... to help people to be strong with Jesus for Judgment Day, so they are found blameless and holy on the day Jesus returns ... how can we thank God enough for that privilege!

To hear for ourselves, “Jesus is born for you,” and then to teach someone else why that baby was named Jesus - **“because he will save his people from their sins”** ... To hear for ourselves how Jesus died on the cross for us, and then to share Jesus’ peace with someone else torn up by guilt - “You are forgiven; you get to have peace in Jesus!” ... to hear for ourselves, to hear Jesus say: “I have a purpose for you in life; I have a place for you in my church; I have time for you, talent for you, treasure for you;” and then to put that time and talent and treasure to work with Jesus, to work together in Christ’s church, to see Jesus work his blessing ... to hear for ourselves, to hear God’s people encouraging us and praying for us, and then to know that the people you are encouraging, the people you are praying for - you are helping them to heaven ... how can we thank God enough for that privilege!

To know that people we stepped out of our comfort zone for in this world, will stand up with us on the day Jesus returns ... to know that the time we give, the money we offer, the heart we put on the line for Christ’s church isn’t lost ... to know that people we shared Jesus with in this world, will share Jesus with us forever in heaven ... how can we thank God enough for that joy!

How? Instead of just counting the danger or the cost of ministry, we count the joy! Amen.

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see so many reasons to pray “thy kingdom come” and “deliver us from evil.”

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are encouraged to pray a more dangerous prayer - “In these end times of distress, use me to share your mercy and peace!”

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

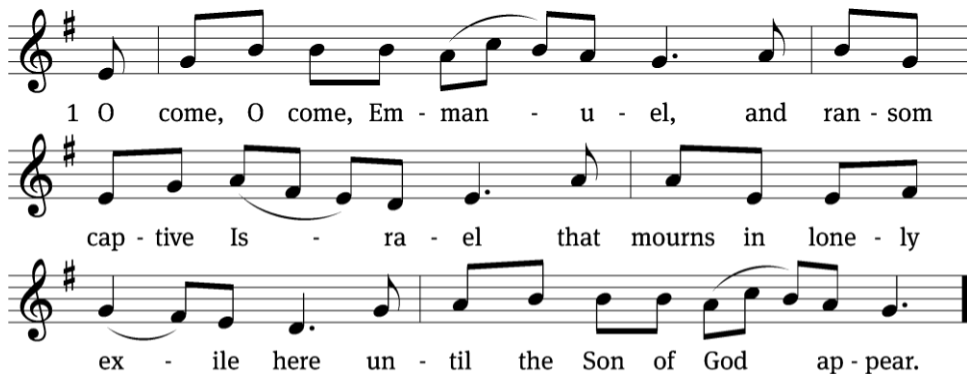
C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF SINS AND LIGHTING RITE

M: When God created the world, he made the crown of his creation - the human race - in his image (Genesis 1:26). Perfect people lived in a perfect world in a perfect relationship with God.

C: **But mankind rebelled against God, bringing sin into the world and death to all. God declared the wages of sin to be death (Romans 6:23). We too are guilty, and we confess our sinful thoughts, words, and actions.**

M: However, God - who is Love - did not want to be separated from his children forever. He promised a Savior who would bear the punishment for sin, defeat the devil, and break the bonds of death.



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
cap - tive Is - ra - el that mourns in lone - ly
ex - ile here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.

Refrain

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el
shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

M: When the time had fully come, God sent his Son. Jesus, our Savior, has paid the ransom for your debt; your sins are forgiven (Galatians 4:4,5). In view of God's mercy, today we light the hope candle. The Spirit declares through the psalmist, "Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption" (Psalm 130:7).

C: **We wait for the Lord, and in his word we put our hope (Psalm 130:5).**

O, come, our Hope, who has de - clared "Sal - va - tion's won; do
not de - spair." Help us be - lieve that once for all
You bore God's wrath, re - deem - ing all. Re - joice! Re - joice!
Em - man - u - el Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

M: In the hope of God we go to the world - to our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors. We regard no one from a worldly point of view. If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5: 16-18).

C: God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for us; in him we have become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

Refrain

Re - jice! Re - jice! Em - man - u - el
shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The first staff contains the melody for the words 'Re - jice! Re - jice! Em - man - u - el'. The second staff contains the melody for 'shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!'. The music is written in a simple, accessible style with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength, and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 33:14-16

“ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.

“ ‘In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved
and Jerusalem will live in safety.

This is the name by which it will be called:
The LORD Our Righteous Savior.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 25B

1 I lift my soul to you, LORD, I trust, O God, in you.
 2 Your cov - e - nant and mer - cy are with me all my days

Send forth your truth to guide me, and teach me what to do.
 to com - fort and to bless me, to keep me in your ways.

Re - mem - ber your great mer - cy, your ev - er - last - ing love;
 When - ev - er I look up - ward, I find you wait - ing there,

for - give me, God, my Sav - ior, my guilt and sin re - move.
 to bear me and to keep me all safe be - neath your care.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 21:25–36

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

“Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending”

Hymn 487

Lo! He comes with clouds descending, once for ev’ry sinner slain;
thousand thousand saints attending swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Christ reveals his endless reign.

Ev'ry eye shall now behold him robed in glorious majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him, pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
shall their true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation to his ransomed worshipers.
With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture,
gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, amen, let all adore thee high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory, claim the kingdom as thine own.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Thou shalt reign, and thou alone!

SERMON

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

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 truly 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 acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Father, throughout the centuries you repeated and affirmed your promise to send the offspring of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Through your prophets of old, you continually directed the eyes of your people to the advent of their Savior.

We praise you, O Lord, for keeping your promise and sending your Son to destroy the works of the devil.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our King, use your mighty Word to shatter our pride and to rouse us from spiritual slumber and apathy.

Move us to take to heart the words of John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful, and give hope to the despairing. In these days before Christmas, spare us from the stress of deadlines and the frenzy of commercialism.

Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.

Direct our eyes not only to the manger but also to the skies, where we will see your Son coming again, not as a lowly child but as the Lord of lords.

Lift up our hearts in joyful anticipation of that day.

Hold in your care, Lord, those who are experiencing physical and emotional pain and all who are afflicted by disease or facing death. [Especially bless... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Pour out your compassion on the grieving and comfort the mourners who miss someone they loved.

Move us to pray for these brothers and sisters and to help when we can.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, in your grace, in your power, and in your glory.
Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

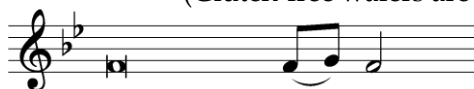
LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)



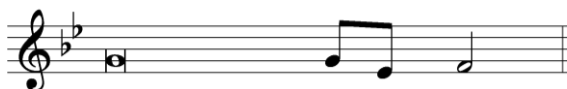
The Lord be with you.



And al - so with you.



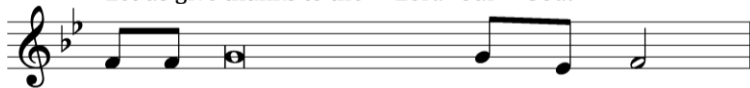
Lift up your hearts.



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, whose way John the Baptist prepared when he called people to repentance and pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY - SUNG

CW 184

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

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 – SUNG

CW 186

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your
peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

“Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring”

Hymn 319

Jesus came, the heav’ns adoring, came with peace from realms on high;
Jesus came to win redemption, lowly came on earth to die;
Alleluia! Alleluia! came in deep humility.

Jesus comes again in mercy when our hearts are worn with care;
Jesus comes again in answer to an earnest, heartfelt prayer,
Alleluia! Alleluia! comes to save us from despair.

Jesus comes to hearts rejoicing, bringing news of sins forgiv’n;
Jesus comes with words of gladness, leading souls redeemed to heav’n.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Hope to all the world is giv’n.

Jesus comes on clouds triumphant when the heav’ns shall pass away.
Jesus comes again in glory; let us, then, our homage pay,
Alleluia! ever singing till the dawn of endless day.

CLOSING 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

“Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes”

Hymn 313

Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long;
let ev’ry heart prepare a throne and ev’ry voice a song.

He comes the pris’ners to release, in Satan’s bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace to enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, your welcome shall proclaim,
and heav’n’s eternal arches ring with your beloved name.

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Congregation Communication

We asked: “What is good congregation communication?” At our Open Forum, you answered with at least nine sets of responses. At our Ministry Council meeting, we gave serious thought and time to discuss and digest your answers. We distilled your responses to four action items for a New Start on Good Communication:

- Website - develop a Members Only Page as an online source of church and school news and information. This page could include:
 - 1) an archive of News and Reminders, our monthly newsletters and ???,
 - 2) a combined church/school calendar,
 - 3) a Who is Who? Who Does What? directory, and
 - 4) ??? If you would like to help develop a plan for that page, or simply have ideas for that page, please let Pastor know.
- News and Reminders (our weekly news update tucked into our worship Folder) - find a way to differentiate between new news and “old” news. If you have ideas for this action item, please let Pastor or Amy know.
- Monthly Newsletter - seek feedback on format (digital or paper), sharing (digital or mailing), art (b/w or color) If you would like to help with this action item, or simply have ministry advancing ideas for newsletter improvement, please let Pastor know.
- School News - give our congregation members the opportunity to be included in the weekly School Note (email). If you would like to be on our school email list, please let Amy know.

Thank you for your input! If you think we may have missed your point, please let us know!

Join Us This Holiday Season!

Christmas Decorating Party

Sunday, December 1, after Family Bible Hour

Advent Wednesdays

December 4, 11, & 18

3:30 and 6:30 pm

Advent Dinners at 4:30 pm

Women's Christmas Party

Sunday, December 8 – 2 pm

Piano Recital

Tuesday, December 10 – 6:30 pm

Christmas HouseWalk

Saturday, December 14 – 4 pm

Children's Christmas Service

Sunday, December 15 – 3 pm

All German Christmas Song Service and Fellowship Meal

Sunday, December 22 – 4:30 pm

Christ the King Lutheran Church

100 W. Michigan Ave, Palatine, IL

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - 5 pm

Christmas Day Festival Service - 9 am

New Year's Eve Service/Lord's Supper - 5 pm

Join us for our annual Game Night after the service!