

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalms 119:105
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

December 2015

The Star of Bethlehem

Matti Niskakangas

Rauhan Sana, December 1940; translated by T.M.K.

There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Numbers 24:17

ACCORDING TO THE KNOWLEDGE of the scholars, this prophecy of Balaam became known to the heathen nations in the east. There in the circle of the wise men, the starry sky was studied with keenness.

There appeared in the sky of Christmas one new bright star among the thousands of other stars. This interested the wise men. They were amazed at this extraordinary star, a shining bright star which commenced to move. The wise men began to follow the star's course, following its light day after day. Presently they arrived in Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, and they inquired there where the new king was. In Jerusalem they were all astonished at the wise men's inquiry.

Let us examine the Bible, which is the most important and best book of knowledge. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)* This corroborates the belief of the wise men, although on the other hand it may have felt disappointing. The high priests of Israel had no knowledge of this matter. The scribes and high priests had to be abandoned. The star in the sky indicated the way.

They continue to follow the star's course. It guides them to the town of Bethlehem and halts above a low building. They know they are in the correct place, having been guided by the star. They do not take notice of the outer appearance of the house, nor of the inside. They had found the King, which is the most important to them. Their joy is exceedingly great! They worship Him and present Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Let us yet take into careful consideration the star of the Gospel where it shines. There is the King, where the Gospel is preached according to the Scriptures. There Jesus is found, the King of God's kingdom. Where the Gospel is proclaimed without limitations and stipulations of people, without abating anything from the Gospel, there the Church of God is located. Its most precious treasure is the Lord and King Jesus. We do not adore the Church, for if the Church adores itself, or if the private members adore the Church, then adoration and worship are in false

places, the King is forgotten, and sermons are transformed to the praising of the Church. The King, the Lord Jesus, is the delight of our souls. Recall, dear brother and sister, how you felt when Jesus was revealed to your soul. What a great discovery it was when the brightness of the Gospel shined into your dark soul that was stained by sin. You found Jesus, the reconciler of your sins, your own Redeemer, Lord and King.

On this journey you may at times wander on obscure roads, as the wise men went to Herod and the high priests. In anguish you struggle and it seems so dark. There is the fear that Jesus has disappeared and you wonder if you will find Him anymore.

You may begin to search for Him in the company of the high priests, but without results. Disappointment may be felt in your heart, fearing that you may have become lost.

The star of the Gospel is yet guiding! The light shines into your soul from there. Let us adhere to the light of the Gospel, where we always find Jesus. In the Gospel there shines a sweet warmth into your cold soul and you find yourself in the same house where Jesus is. Let us solely adore the Lamb of God. He tends His flock and will take them to the end of the journey, which is in heaven. ~



Christmas Gifts

Pastor Mark Matson
Pasco, Washington

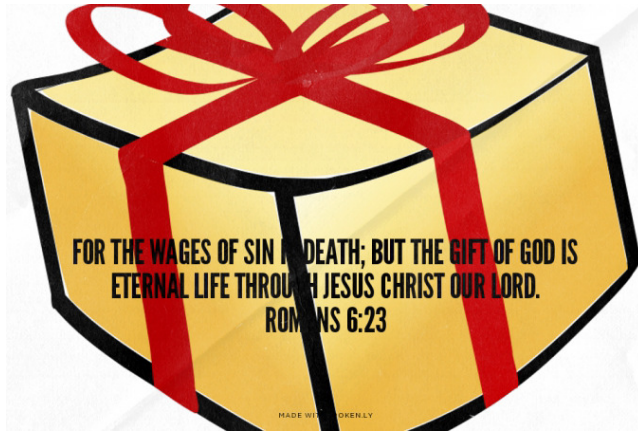
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

JESUS IS GOD'S LOVE TO US. Jesus has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Jesus born under the law became one with us. From the manger to the cross, a perfect life He lived with no sin, not even one! Jesus stood in the place of judgment on our behalf. Jesus tasted death for every man so that we shall not die but live. From the cross the word of life is spoken, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34) Jesus rose bodily and ascended to heaven. As the word of life He intercedes at the right side of the Father and is always with His Church, interceding on behalf of each member of His body on earth through the Gospel.

There are many gifts to mankind from the greatest gift ever given, Jesus.

1. Matchless love
2. Matchless grace
3. Matchless faith
4. Matchless hope
5. Matchless forgiveness
6. Matchless wisdom
7. Matchless righteousness
8. Matchless sanctification
9. Matchless redemption
10. Matchless peace
11. Matchless victory
12. Matchless justification
13. Matchless mercy
14. Matchless joy



These are just a few of the gifts we receive from the unspeakable gift Jesus Christ our Lord. *Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.* (Psalm 150:6)

God's peace and joy fill each of you as we celebrate the greatest Gift ever given! ~

Comfort That Will Not Fade

Pastor Travis Seppala
Greer, South Carolina

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

COMFORT IS OFTEN A MOMENTARY FEELING injected into an otherwise difficult reality. After the feeling wears off, however, the peace that came with it fades away, leaving one to wonder if there ever was any comfort to begin with. The only evidence of its brief existence is an aching longing to once again be comforted, however short-lived the return may be. Even in acknowledging this, we identify the underlying problem with most things that bring us peace and comfort, and that is that they are unable to change our lives permanently. A lasting happiness is an idea foreign to our existence because, no matter what brings it to us, experience has taught us that our comfort will not last forever.

The Lord's message to Isaiah, though, is a message of peace meant to bring a lasting comfort to humanity. What makes this message so encouraging is that it addresses our existence and does not offer empty words or gifts that will one day wither away. Instead the Lord gives a promise to His people, and this promise is the reason there is contentment to be found in an otherwise meaningless reality. The declaration He makes is that iniquity had been pardoned and that payment has been made for sin. This statement gives comfort to the human soul and allows peace to reign in our lives. "Our sins have been forgiven!" is the announcement that this message brings.

This announcement is not an empty promise because Jesus the Christ has indeed come and has indeed died and risen again for our forgiveness and justification. There is nobody so great that they do not need to hear this message, and no human being is too lowly or too worthless to be comforted by this work of God. It has been done for all, and for this reason all can rejoice and be comforted. Regardless of station, nationality, past mistakes or current torment, the Lord has sent His Son as promised, and comfort is ours.

This comfort will not fade away or wither, but it will stand throughout eternity. When we find peace in the work of His promised Messiah, we no longer have to look for another source of comfort to ease our struggle or pain, because this source will never run dry. ~

The Power of the Word of God

Martin Luther

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Luke 2:15-20

THE FIRST AND PRINCIPAL FRUIT of the power of the Word is faith. For had not these shepherds believed the angel they would never have gone to Bethlehem, they would moreover never have done one of the things related of them in this Gospel.

One, however, might say: Yes, I would also gladly believe if an angel thus from heaven were to preach to me. This is very foreign to the subject. Whoever does not receive the Word for its own sake, will never receive it for the sake of the preacher, even if all the angels preached it to him. And he who receives it because of the preacher does not believe in the Word, neither in God through the Word, but he believes the preacher and in the preacher. Hence the faith of such persons does not last long. But whoever believes the Word does not care who the person is that speaks the Word, and neither will he honor the Word for the sake of the person; but on the contrary, he honors the person because of the Word, and always subordinates the person to the Word. And if the preacher perishes, or even falls from his faith and preaches differently, he will forsake the person of the preacher rather than the Word of God. He abides by what he has heard, although the person of the preacher may be what he will, and come and go as he may.

The true difference between godly faith and human faith consists also in this, that human faith cleaves to the person of the preacher, believes, trusts and honors the

Word for the sake of him who spake it. But godly faith, on the other hand, cleaves to the Word, which is God Himself; he believes, trusts and honors the Word, not because of him who preaches it; but because he feels it so surely the truth that no one can ever turn him again from it, even if the same preacher were to try to do it. This was proved by the Samaritans, John 4:42, when they had heard first of Christ from the heathen woman and upon her word they went out of the city to Christ. After they themselves heard Christ, they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Moreover, all who believed Christ because of His person and His miracles fell from their faith when He was crucified. So it is in our day and so has it always been. The Word itself, without any regard to persons, must be enough for the heart; it must include and lay hold of man, so that he, as if taken captive, feels how true and right it is, even if the world, all the angels, all the princes of hell said differently, yea, if God Himself spake otherwise; as He at times tempts His own elect and appears as if He were different than He had before declared. So it was with Abraham when commanded to offer his son Isaac; with Jacob, while wrestling with the angel; and with David,

when persecuted by his son Absalom; and other like examples.

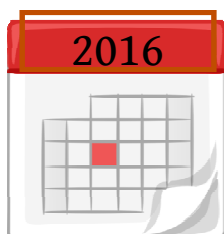
This faith triumphs in life and death, in hell and heaven, and nothing is able to overthrow it; because it rests upon nothing but the Word without any regard whatever to persons.

These shepherds possessed such faith; for they agree with and cleave to the Word so fully that they forget the angels who declared it to them. They do not say, Let us go and see the word that the angels made known to us, but the word that the Lord hath made known unto us. The angels were soon forgotten and the Word of God only seized and

retained. In like manner St. Luke speaks in the text of Mary, that she kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. Without doubt she did not let the humble appearance of the shepherds trouble her, but esteemed all as the Word of God. Not only Mary, but all the others who heard these words from the shepherds, and wondered, as the text says. All clung to the Word. ~



The Adoration of the Shepherds, James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons



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You may now order the ALCA calendar for the year 2016. The price for each calendar is \$5.50 to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Do not send your payment with your order. An invoice will be included with the shipment for payment to be mailed to the Federation accountant.

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Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

Jesus is Born, the Savior of Mankind

Gwen Wilson

Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children near and afar,

How time goes so quickly! We are fast approaching the Christmas season, that special time when we read and hear about Jesus being born into the world. I thank God that we have that opportunity again, so let us look into the Bible and set our minds and hearts on the Christ Child.

LONG AGO THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN, and long before the New Testament, the Old Testament was written. Some prophecies from the Old Testament spoke of the Messiah who would be born.

Old Testament:

Psalm 89:3-4: I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.

New Testament:

Jesus had been teaching the people and many thought He was a Prophet. *John 7:41-42: Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

OT: Isaiah 7:14:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Jesus was to be born of a virgin.

NT: The angel Gabriel had visited the virgin Mary who was to be married to Joseph. The angel told Mary she would conceive and bring forth a son and call Him Jesus. *Luke 1:35: And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

OT: *Isaiah 9:6-7: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

NT: Joseph and Mary had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. This was God's plan as to where Jesus His Son would be born. *Luke 2:7: And she*

brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

An angel announces this Good News to shepherds out in the field. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:11-12)*

Another Old Testament book prophesies that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem.

OT: *Micah 5:2: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* Children, we see that Jesus was from the beginning. He is from everlasting to everlasting. God had a special time when He would send Jesus to earth to save the people from their sins.

NT: *Luke 2:15: And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. When the shepherds went back to their sheep, they told everyone they met about the child and they glorified God.*

There are also prophecies in the New Testament:

Matthew 1:21: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Luke 2:21: And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. At this time Jesus was taken to the temple where He was presented to the Lord and an offering was given.

Forty days after Jesus was born, a man in Jerusalem named Simeon was led of the Spirit to the temple. On this day Joseph and Mary came there with Jesus. Simeon took the baby in his arms and blessed Him. Simeon was ready to die now as he was old, and this day He had seen the prophesied Messiah with his own eyes. He had waited so long to see the Messiah and now he was ready to leave this earth. He was so happy to have seen Jesus.

A prophetess named Anna was always serving in the temple. She came in to see Jesus and praised and thanked God for this child.

(continued page 5)





(continued from page 4)

Our Savior had been born into the world, and the world has never been the same! One day Jesus is coming to this world again. Then He will take all who believe in Him to be forever in heaven with Him. I pray that Jesus will forever live in your heart.

O, come to the manger And see who lies there.
O, come to the manger The good news to share.
The Babe in the manger Came for you and I.
O, come to the manger; Do not pass quickly by.
O, come to the manger And bow on the knee.
The Lord lies before us; He loves you and me.
The Babe in the manger, As small as He is,
Came to redeem us; Praise God we are His. ~GW
I wish you all a happy blessed Christmas, with God's peace.

Our Blessed Heritage

From the New York Mills Dispatch, June 23, 2015 edition

Read by Pastor Elmer Yliniemi at the 2015 convention in New York Mills, Minnesota

THE APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH of America was organized in the United States in 1873 by early Finnish immigrants. The earliest Finnish immigrants before 1880 came mainly from areas of Finland, Sweden and Norway which were above the Arctic Circle, where the Finnish language united the immigrants. In Scandinavia it is known as the Laestadian movement. The spiritual heritage traces back to Pastor Lars Levi Laestadius, the great revival leader in the northernmost parish of the state church of Sweden in the midst of the 1800's. The name Apostolic Lutheran was adopted officially in 1879 in the United States.

Laestadianism played a crucial role in the formation of the immigrant communities in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the farming communities in Minnesota and the Dakotas, as well as Washington and Oregon. New York Mills, which could be reached by train, was one of the earliest communities to organize an Apostolic Lutheran Church which met for the first formal worship service in a log cabin home on June 19th, 1877. A few years later, as new immigrants arrived, they ventured north to Wolf Lake and Menahga areas and established churches. The Spruce Grove Apostolic Lutheran congregation of Wolf Lake is a sister congregation to the New York Mills church, and today people of many nationalities are included in the membership rolls of the Apostolic Lutheran churches as mission efforts have made it an international movement.

The movement has divided into several church bodies over the years. The first convention of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America was held in 1908, at Calumet, Michigan. Therefore, this year will be the 107th convention. The New York Mills congregation has hosted the convention a number of times, beginning in 1908. It is recorded in history that in 1930, about 8,000 people attended the convention held in New York Mills. In recent years, convention attendance has been approximately 1,500-2,000.

This is the third convention being hosted by the Spruce Grove congregation of Wolf Lake. The first one was 1995, 2005 and 2015. Since Wolf Lake does not have facilities for a group of this size, they have hosted in Menahga, Park Rapids, and this year in New York Mills.

Each congregation in the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America is autonomous. It is organized as a Federation with a nine member National Board. Also, there is a Western Mission, Eastern Mission and Southern Mission boards, which coordinate domestic mission activities. The Foreign Mission sends missionaries to a number of countries around the world. Other Federation activities include the National Sunday School, the Book Concern, and a monthly publication of Christian writings called the *Christian Monthly*.

The annual business meeting is held each year at a location and is decided by the previous annual meeting. Four days of worship services are conducted in conjunction with the annual business meetings of various boards. ~

LOOKING AHEAD: The 2016 Annual Convention will be hosted by the Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church of Greer, South Carolina. Devotional services will be held in the morning, afternoon, and evening, beginning on Thursday, June 23rd through Sunday June 26th at the Spartanburg Expo & Event Center. Ministers, members, and the general public are invited to participate in these services. Information regarding our service schedule and lodging information will be posted on the www.apostoliclutheran.org website, as well as our Facebook page ALC Convention 2016.



Text on photo: "Finnish Apostolic Luth Church Convention of America at N. Y. Mills, Minn, 6-9-13-30 Attendance 8000"

Words of Comfort

John Ruotsala, Foreign Mission Administrator
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Isaiah 40:1

THE 40TH CHAPTER IS AS IT WERE the beginning of the Gospel story as written by Isaiah. This wonderful book has 66 chapters, the same number of books as the Bible. There are 39 chapters before this one, the same as the Old Testament, and 27 chapters after, including this chapter. It is amazing how God has allowed this to be such a great picture to us, even showing us in this book of Isaiah a glimpse of His complete salvation story for us!

Comfort ye...

These words were written not only for God's people of that day whom Isaiah was addressing, but I believe a much broader audience was intended, including each of us today. Do you ever need words of comfort? Are you ever worried about the future, wondering how there will be enough money to pay the bills or enough food to feed the family? Do you have sickness in your family or children not believing in Jesus Christ as their Savior? Do you have neighbors and friends you love who are backsliding, or refusing God's free gift of salvation? The Word of God says be comforted! As Christians we have no need to be worried. Apostle Paul said: *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.* (2 Cor 4:8)

Who then should be comforted? My people! God calls His believers My people! There is no getting around the fact that a true meaningful comfort is only available to those who are the ones believing by faith. How amazing it is to be called by God, MY PEOPLE! Oh, what joy this should instill in our hearts! God knows us, we are His. We are a child of THE KING, the one who made the entire universe and all that is in it. We are HIS! 1 Peter 1:5 says that believers are those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. There is no other power by which I want to be kept than by the power of God!

Look at who God calls "My people," the ones to be comforted! The next verse, Isaiah 40:2 says: *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.* These are to be comforted, those who believe in the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:18: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

It is so very clear that Isaiah is here talking about the Savior, our Lord Jesus, who paid the price so that we can be saved. We also know that God created all peoples, and that Jesus came to die for all peoples, but some people have not turned to Him in repentance unto faith. Isaiah 1:18 says: *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

Let us not be ones who refuse to be comforted! Also, let us not be ones who look for comfort in any other place than Jesus. Let me give you a brief natural example of comforting words that do not work. Let us say that a man owes the bank much money on his home. The man gets hurt and cannot work, so he is many months behind on payments. If we go to this man and say, be comforted, and tell him all will be fine, will he be comforted? No, he will not be since we do not have the power to release him of that bill, only the banker does. However, if the banker came and pardoned the debt, this man would surely be very comforted and joyful!

Let us know who has pardoned our sins! Let us be comforted in the proper way, by the power of the name and blood of Jesus. If we do not believe that our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb and that we are made white as snow, Lord, give us the strength to repent and believe in this Savior and in the redemptive work that He has done for each of us. Revelation 7:13-14 says: *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

It was for me He died. For me! Oh, that each could believe this by faith, and be open and available to be truly comforted. Lord, allow us to believe Thy Holy Word and in Thy Son Jesus Christ for our salvation. 2 Timothy 1:8: *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.* Today is the day of grace. Today is the acceptable day. Come and dine on the feast Jesus has prepared for His own! ~

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Advent: Behold, He Comes!

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

THE FOUR SUNDAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS are celebrated in the Church year as the season of Advent. We contemplate with the whole Christian Church the arrival of the Christ Child, born of a virgin in Bethlehem so many years ago. It is a time of waiting with expectation, as we read the prophecies of old that were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus as a human baby to this earth. We read of the birth of the Messiah, the Anointed One, Son of God and Son of Man. We rejoice to hear again that God has fulfilled His promise to redeem mankind from the clutches of sin, death and the devil.

The Oxford dictionary defines “advent” as “the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.” Jesus is certainly The Most Notable Person, but His arrival on earth was without pomp and circumstance. Luke writes: *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:4-7)*

Born in a stable in an obscure town to a virgin mother, the arrival of this King of Kings warranted no grand pronouncement from a palace. The media were not waiting outside for news of the blessed event. There were no first sightings or first family photos to be broadcast on social networks. Yet this Child was God in human flesh, arriving to carry out His Father’s will, worthy of more glory and praise than any earthly king.

The word “advent” in Latin means “to come.” Jesus came at the proper time, the time appointed by the Father. The Apostle Paul writes: *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7)*

Christ’s first coming to earth was with great humility. The Master of All came as a servant, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us who were enslaved

under that Law. And we were adopted, no longer slaves to the Law, but children and heirs of the Most High God.

He came. He fulfilled the Father’s will. Then He ascended to glory, to His Father’s side.

And today we live in the second Advent. Jesus is coming again, but not as a humble servant. Christ’s second coming will be with power and great glory. The trumpet of God will sound, and the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

As with the first Advent, the second one is also a time of waiting with expectation. We await the opening of the eastern sky and the glorious appearing of the ascended Lord. We know neither the day nor the hour, so we wait and we wonder. Will it be today?

Seated at His Father’s right hand, the Son also awaits the time appointed by the Father. Only the Father knows the perfect time for His Son to return to receive His Bride, the Church, to catch her up and carry her home.

We know it will be soon. The Apostle John wrote: *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21)*



Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;
Behold, the King of glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near;
The Savior of the world is here! (Catharine Winkworth)

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Christmas Tidings

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1-7



Adoration of the Shepherds, Gerard van Honthorst
Wikimedia Commons

IF CHRIST HAD ARRIVED WITH TRUMPETS and lain in a cradle of gold, His birth would have been a splendid affair. But it would not be a comfort to me. He was rather to lie in the lap of a poor maiden and be thought of little significance in the eyes of the world. Now I can come to Him. Now He reveals Himself to the miserable in order not to give any impression that He arrives with great power, splendor, wisdom, and aristocratic manners. But upon His return on that Day, when He will oppose the high and the mighty, it will be different. Now He comes to the poor, who need a Savior, but then He will come as a Judge against those who are persecuting Him now.

Martin Luther

A Prayer for Christmas Morning

The day of joy returns, Father in Heaven, and crowns another year with peace and good will.

Help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wisemen.

Close the doors of hate and open the doors of love all over the world...

Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil, by the blessing that Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be Thy children.

And the Christmas evening bring us to our bed with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Henry Van Dyke

Ring the bells, the Christmas bells;
Chime out the wondrous story;
First in song on Angel tongues
It came from realms of glory;

Peace on earth, good-will to men,
Angelic voices ringing—
Christ the Lord to earth has come,
His glorious message bringing.

Ring the merry Christmas bells;
Chime out the wondrous story;
Glory be to God on high,
Forevermore be glory.

Mary C. Seward

