

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Advent 1 - November 29, 2020

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #702 - "Prepare the Royal Highway"

**Prepare the royal highway;
The King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley
A level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory,
Foretold in sacred story:
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's Word!**

**God's people, see him coming:
Your own eternal King!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you!
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's Word!**

**Then fling the gates wide open
To greet your promised King!
Your King, yet ev'ry nation
Its tribute too should bring.
All lands, bow down before him!
All nations, now adore him!
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's Word!**

**His is no earthly kingdom;
It comes from heav'n above.**

**His rule is peace and freedom
And justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
For kindness so abounding:
Hosanna to the Lord,
For he fulfills God's Word!**

Confession of Sins:

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!**

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

First Lesson: Isaiah 63:16b-17; 64:1-8

You, the Lord, are our Father. Our Redeemer from everlasting is your name. Why do you cause us to wander from your ways, Lord? Why do you harden our heart so that we do not fear you? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your heritage. Oh, that you would rip open the heavens and come down. Mountains then would quake because of your presence. As fire ignites stubble and as fire makes water boil, make your name known to your adversaries. Then nations would quake in your presence. You did amazing things that we did not expect. You came down. Mountains quaked because of your presence. From ancient times no one has heard. No ear has understood. No eye has seen any god except you, who goes into action for the one who waits for him. You meet anyone who joyfully practices righteousness, who remembers you by walking in your ways! But you were angry because we sinned. We have remained in our sins for a long time. Can we still be saved? All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth. All of us have withered like a leaf, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. There is no one who calls on your name, who rouses himself to

take hold of you. So you hid your face from us. You made us melt by the power of our guilt. But now, Lord, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand. (EHV)

Psalm 24:

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

**The earth is the LORD's, and every thing in it,
The world, and all who 'live in it;**

**For he founded it up'on the seas
And established it upon the 'waters.**

**Who may ascend the hill 'of the LORD?
Who may stand in his 'holy place?**

**He who has clean hands and a 'pure heart,
He will receive blessing from God his 'Savior.**

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

**Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up you 'ancient doors,
That the King of glory 'may come in.**

**Who is this King of 'glory?
The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in 'battle.**

**Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you 'ancient doors,
That the King of glory 'may come in.**

**Who is he, this King of 'glory?
The LORD Almighty - he is the King of 'glory.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son
And to the Holy 'Spirit,
As it was in the be'ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

Refrain: Let the Lord enter; he is the King of glory.

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge, because the testimony about Christ was established in you. As a result you do not lack any gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. (EHV)

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Alleluia.

Gospel: Mark 13:32-37

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Watch! Be alert and pray, because you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going away on a journey. When he left his home, he put his servants in charge and assigned what each one was to do. He also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the owner of the house is coming: whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or early in the morning. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!” (EHV)

The 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.

Hymn #9 - *“Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes”*

**Jesus, your Church with longing eyes
For your expected coming waits.
When will the promised light arise
And glory beam from heaven’s gates?**

**E’en now, when tempests round us fall
And wintry clouds o’ercast the sky,
Your words with pleasure we recall
And know that our redemption’s nigh.**

**Come, gracious Lord, our hearts renew,
Our sins forgive, our foes suppress,
Our rooted enmity subdue,
And crown your gospel with success.**

**Oh, come and reign o’er ev’ry land;
Let Satan from his throne be hurled.
Let nations bow to your command;
Let grace revive a dying world.**

**Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for your appointed hour,
And fit us by your grace to share
The triumphs of your conqu’ring pow’r.**

**The Sermon: Mark 13:32-37
 “Eagerly Watch For The LORD’s Return”**

Today we are entering into the **festival** half of the church year, and the season which we call **Advent**. Advent is a time when we change our church paraments to **blue**, when we bring out a **wreath** with special **candles** on it, and when people (especially children) get really **excited** - because **Christmas** is just around the corner. Advent is a time of joyful **anticipation**, but it is also a time of patient **waiting**. It’s a time when we eagerly **prepare** to celebrate the **birth** of our Savior on Christmas morning. But it’s **also** a time when we patiently **wait** for Him to return **again** on the **Judgment Day**, as He **promised** He would. One way or the other, **Jesus is coming**, and, as we’ve been hearing here at Trinity the last few weeks, we want to be **ready**. The thought of **getting ready** for a big occasion, like

a visit from **Jesus**, can leave us with many different **feelings** inside. In some ways you never really **feel** as though you are totally **prepared**. It's kind of like when there is going to be a **baptism**, or a **confirmation**, or a **wedding** in your family - so many people are going to be **visiting** - everybody in the family gets **stressed** and **uptight** - and **everything** in your house needs to be **cleaned** or **updated** or maybe even given a complete **make-over** before the big event arrives.

It also occurred to me that in another way the Advent season is like the feeling which a husband and wife experience, as they wait for the **birth** of a **child**. When you know you are having a baby (or grandbaby), it's a very **happy** and **exciting** time. And yet, while you have approximately nine months to **prepare** for the little arrival, the day-to-day **waiting** - especially if that baby stubbornly goes **past** its **due date** - can be very **nerve-wracking** and **frustrating**. We **hate** to **wait**. We want to know **when** - **exactly** when that little visitor is going to **arrive**. And that becomes **especially** true when the visitor who is **coming** happens to be **Jesus** - a visitor whose arrival will mark the **end of the world** as we now know it!

But while Jesus makes it very clear to us that He definitely **will** return, He also makes it very clear that it's not possible for us to know **when** He will return. Our text today begins, "*No one **knows** about that day or hour, not even the **angels** in heaven, nor the **Son**, but only the **Father**.*" Even Jesus' **disciples** had been **curious** about when He would return to the earth. But, our heavenly Father has made that knowledge **His** business **alone**. God the Father has reserved to **Himself** the exact date and time of the **Last Day** - the **Judgment Day**. Besides, the Lord Jesus assures us that the **timing** of the Last Day is not something for us to **worry** about. It's far **better** for us to be concerned about **using** the time we have **profitably** - however **long** or **short** that time may be. So, in our text today, Jesus uses a story about a man and his servants, to **illustrate** that we are to **Eagerly Watch For The LORD's Return**. Such watchfulness will do two things for us, and **both** of them are **profitable** for us. As we eagerly watch for our Lord's return, Jesus will provide us with **security** against the forces which try to lead us **away** from Him, and He will also provide us with opportunities to **exercise** our **faith**, so it will remain **strong** and **viable**.

Jesus' story begins like this: "*It is like a man going away on a journey. When he left his home, he put his servants in charge and assigned what each one was to do. He also commanded the **doorkeeper** to **keep watch**.*" Let's focus on this **doorkeeper** for a moment. About the only places you can find doormen **today** are in luxury **hotels**. The **function** of a doorkeeper is to provide **protection**. He needs to **keep watch** to make sure nobody gets into the **building** who isn't **supposed** to

be there. On a more **local** level, we might use **security guards** or sophisticated **alarm systems** to provide protection for our **homes** and **businesses**. But, can you imagine anyone putting in a **security** system that **didn't work**? Can you imagine anyone installing an **alarm** system which was **not capable** of sounding an **alarm** - either audibly, visibly, or even silently? That wouldn't make much **sense**, would it? It would be like purposely hiring a **security** guard who would regularly **sleep** on the job, or getting yourself a **watchdog** that can't **bark**. That wouldn't provide much **security**, **would** it? It's the very **purpose** of a security system - whether it is **electrical**, or **human**, or **animal** - to **keep watch** at all times, and to **sound** the **alarm** when it's needed.

As followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and members of His Church on earth, we are also **doorkeepers**, and as such, we've been given the responsibility to **keep watch**. The Psalmist viewed this particular profession as a very **desirable** one. He wrote, "*I would **rather** wait at the **doorway** of the house of my **God** than **dwell** in the tents of the **wicked**.*" Our **souls** and our **faith** must be constantly **guarded** against the foes who would try to **harm** them. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh continually strive to lead us into situations which are **dangerous**. If you don't think that can **happen** to **you** or to the people **around** you, then you are probably not being a very good **watchman**. Jesus exhorts us to **open** our eyes - to **look around** and **see** all the people whose lives are being **devastated** by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs - to observe the **loneliness** and **confusion**, the **stress** and **frustration**, the inability to **cope** with the **rigors** and **temptations** of daily life - **all** of which lead many people into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful **sins**. And recognize that if it can happen to **others**, it can also happen to **us**. And perhaps **worst** of all, we don't know **when** it will happen. We need to be **on guard** against the evils of this world - always **watchful** for things which pose a danger to our souls - always **rooted** in God's **Word** and **Sacraments** - always **ready** to **sound the alarm** at a moment's notice. We must be **good doorkeepers** in the Lord's house.

But, notice that Jesus' story involves **more** people than just **doorkeepers**. **Each** servant has his own special **task** to perform while the homeowner is away - perhaps one does the **cleaning**, another prepares the **meals**, yet another keeps the house in good **repair**, and so forth. Each servant is required to focus on his particular **job**, so that **all** the jobs will get done, and so that there won't be any **wasted time** because of an undue **overlap** in their efforts.

Doing our assigned tasks gives **each** of us the opportunity to **exercise** our **faith**, and to keep it **strong** and **viable**. I'm sure you all realize that there are **lots**

of different ways to **exercise** your **body**. Some people will **run**, others will **swim** - some will lift **weights**, others will do **calisthenics** - some will be able to do these things on their **own**, others will need a **personal trainer**, or a membership at a local **health** club. Each person will **customize** their exercise program, in order to do **whatever** it takes for **that person** to stay fit. And yet, when it comes to staying **spiritually** fit - to keeping our **faith** strong and viable - God says there is only **one** way to do it. It's the **same** way that keeps us **safe** from the spiritual dangers that surround us. It only happens through the **faithful use** of God's **Word** and **Sacraments**.

Keeping those **Means of Grace** as the **most important** tools in our lives will help us to be **watchful** and **alert** as we anticipate our Lord's **return**. Our text **concludes** with these words, "*Therefore **keep watch**, because you **do not know** when the owner of the house is coming: whether in the **evening**, or at **midnight**, or when the **rooster** crows, or early in the **morning**. If he comes **suddenly**, do not let him find you **sleeping**. What I say to you, I say to **everyone**: **Keep watch!***"

A **quick** reading of these words might leave us with the impression that all of this man's servants were **lazy** and **slothful** - that they wouldn't **carry out** their assigned tasks until the **last** possible moment. But a more **careful** reading would indicate that the homeowner simply **expects** his servants to be **faithful**. **Watchfulness** demands **activity** at all times. So, regardless of whether the homeowner would return in broad **daylight**, or even during one of the four watches of the **night**, he would expect to find his servants **working** - **performing** the various tasks which had been assigned to them.

Our Lord Jesus expects **no less** from **us**. He has left **us** with the responsibility and the privilege of taking care of His **house** - His **business** here on the earth. That means He has left each of us with some **tasks** to perform. What **are** those tasks? Well, by God's **design**, there are different **tasks** for different **servants**. But while our **tasks** are **different**, our **purpose** is still the **same**. **Each** of us is to **contribute** to the good of the entire **household**, by **using** the gifts which God has given to us - and by using those gifts **now**, **before** He returns.

As servants of our Lord, we are **all** required to be **watchful** - to be **active** and **prepared** for His return. Jesus our Savior is coming! We don't know how **soon** it will be, but every day that **passes** is one day **closer**. And **whenever** Jesus returns, may He **not** find us **sleeping** - resting on our **laurels** so to speak. Rather, may He find us actively **using** the gifts and talents which He has so graciously provided. May He find us faithfully **doing** the things which He has commanded us

to do. Dear friends, **Eagerly Watch For The LORD's Return** - be **faithful** in your use of His **Word** and **Sacrament**. And in **doing** so, you will be kept **safe** from the dangers that threaten your soul, and you will be **exercising** your faith to keep it **strong** and **viable**. Amen.

Prayers:

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in this Advent Season we are reminded so much of the precious gift of **salvation** which Your divine love has given us. Stir up in our hearts a deep sense of brotherly **love**, and cause us to be **concerned** about the **welfare** of others. Give each of us a spirit of **generosity** toward all those who are in need.

Holy Trinity, **bless** us - the lambs and sheep under Your care - with **every** needful blessing. Grant us good **health** this winter season, and keep every kind of **disease** and **illness** from harming us. Watch over our **children**, and protect them from all **harm** and **danger**. Keep under Your mercy and special care, the **aged** and those who are **feeble**. Give aid to the **needy**, and bring comfort to the **distressed**. When the winter weather becomes **severe**, keep us safe and warm. Protect us at all times in our **travels**. Stand guard over our **homes** and **schools**, our **churches** and places of **employment**. Grant these and all **other** needful blessings to us, according to **Your** good pleasure.

O God, **forgive** our many sins, for it was **because** of them that Jesus had to come down among us to **live** and **die**. Let Your **Word** dwell in us **richly** in all wisdom, and grant us continual growth in **grace**, and in the **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we **Eagerly Watch For His Return**. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (sung to "Away in a Manger")

Our Father in heaven all praise to Your name!
Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same
By mortals and angels. Come, Lord reign alone;
Oh, hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.

The bread that we yearn for provide us each day;
As we forgive others, our sins take away;
In times of temptation, to lead us; be near.
From evil deliver Your children most dear.

**For Yours is the kingdom, o'er all things You reign.
And Yours is the power; all things You maintain.
To You be the glory, resounding again
From all of creation, forever! Amen.**

Hymn #32 - *"When Sinners See Their Lost Condition"*

**When sinners see their lost condition
And feel the pressing load of sin
And Jesus comes on his blest mission
To heal the sin-sick heart within,
All grief must flee before his grace,
And joy divine will take its place.**

**When Jesus enters meek and lowly
To fill the home with sweetest peace,
When hearts have felt his blessing holy
And found from sin complete release,
Then calm and joy within shall reign,
And hearts divided love again.**

**When Jesus enters land and nation
And changes people with his love,
When, yielding to his kind persuasion,
Our hearts his truth and blessing prove,
Then shall our life on earth be blest;
The peace of God on us shall rest.**

**When Jesus comes - O blessed story -
He works a change in heart and life;
God's kingdom comes with pow'r and glory
To young and old, to man and wife.
Through sacrament and living Word
Faith, love, and hope are now conferred.**

**Oh, may he soon to ev'ry nation
Find entrance where he is unknown,
With life and light and free salvation,
That Satan's pow'r be overthrown,**

**And healing to all hearts may come
In heathen land and Christian home!**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: Amen.

Hymn #17 - "God's Own Son Most Holy"

**God's own Son most holy
Came a servant lowly,
Came to live among us,
Came to suffer for us,
Bore the cross to save us,
Hope and freedom gave us.**

**Still he comes within us;
Still his voice would win us
From the sins that hurt us,
Would to truth convert us
From our foolish errors
Ere he comes in terrors.**

**Thus, if we have known him
And will not disown him
Nor have loved him coldly
But will trust him boldly,
He will then receive us,
Heal us, and forgive us.**

**Those who then are loyal
Find a welcome royal.**

**Come, then, O Lord Jesus,
From our sins release us.
Let us here confess you
Till in heav'n we bless you.**