

WHAT LUTHERANS BELIEVE

THE BIBLE – We believe that EVERY word in the Bible is inspired by God, and therefore the whole Bible is the true, unalterable Word of God, clearly teaching the way of salvation. (2Ti. 3:15-17).

GOD – We believe that God is ONE (Dt. 6:4) and that He has revealed Himself in three distinct Persons (Mt. 3:13-17), the Father, our Creator and Preserver; the Son, Jesus, Who is both God and Man, and our only Saviour; the Holy Spirit, Who creates faith in our hearts and enables us to live a God-pleasing life.

MAN – We believe that God created man with body and soul, in His image, but man of his own free will lost this image through sin. (Gn. 1:27; 2:7; 3.)

SIN – “Sin is the transgression of the Law.” (1Jn 3:4). There are two kinds of sin: original (inherited) sin (Ps. 51:5) and actual sin (sin in thought, word and deed) (Mt. 15:19). Man is subject to death and eternal damnation by reason of the guilt that attaches to sin.

REDEMPTION – We believe that God out of pure love and mercy redeemed mankind from sin through the all-sufficient sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus, and His resurrection shows that God was satisfied with the work of Christ. (Jn 3:16; 1Jn 2:2; Ro. 4:25).

FAITH – We believe that the sinner must personally receive the merits of Jesus for salvation and trust that, “Jesus died for me.” (Jn 17:3; Ja 1:21; Ps. 31:14).

THE CHURCH – We believe that the church, established by Christ is the whole number of believers in Christ, for only believers are members of the church. Jesus Christ is its one and only foundation (Ep. 2:19-22). The church is found wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution.

SACRAMENTS – We believe that Christ instituted two sacraments, and when Baptism is administered to infants and adults, according to the command of Christ, God offers His grace and forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). In the Lord’s Supper communicants receive in, with and under the bread and wine also Christ’s body and blood. Communicants believing this word of promise receive this for the forgiveness of sins (1Co. 11:24-25).

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST – We believe that Christ will return visibly to earth (Acts 1:11) on the Last Day (Mk. 13:32) to judge the world (Acts 10:42). The believers will go to heaven, to be with God forever (1Th. 4:13-18). The unbelievers will go to hell, eternally separated from God (Mt. 25:32, 46).

RESURRECTION – We believe that on the Last Day believers in Christ will rise from the dead, their souls reunited with their earthly bodies and glorified by Christ (Jn 14:19; 17:24).

Fourth Sunday in Advent December 24, 2023

INTROIT

Psalm 19:1, 4c, 5-6; Antiphon: Isaiah 45:8a, b

Shower, O heavens, from above,

and let the clouds rain down righteousness;

let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.

The heavens declare the glory of God,

and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,

and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,

and its circuit to the end of them,

and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

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.

Shower, O heavens, from above,

and let the clouds rain down righteousness;

let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit

COLLECT OF THE DAY

P *Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

C **Amen**

GRADUAL

Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your king is coming to you,

righteous and having salvation.

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

From the house of the Lord we bless you.

RESPONSE FOR PRAYERS

After each petition:

P Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 (ESV)

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ² the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” ³ And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

⁴ But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, ⁵ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?’ ⁶ I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. ⁷ In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” ⁸ Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹ And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD

declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

Romans 16:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative

Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Romans 16:25–27

Luke 1:26–38

The Lord Builds a House for David: Jesus Christ Who Comes in the Flesh

When King David “*lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies,*” he piously supposed that he would build a house for God (2 Sam. 7:1–2). But the Lord would turn it around: He would establish a house for David, and an everlasting throne. This He has done, not only for David, but also for all His people, in the Son of David, Jesus Christ, “*conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary*” (Apostles’ Creed). That holy Child, the incarnate “*Son of the Most High,*” receives “*the throne of His father David*” and begins to reign “*over the house of Jacob forever*” (Luke 1:32–33). Having given Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, His Body is the true and eternal Temple of God in which His people have their own place of peace and rest. That is “*the Mystery that was kept secret for long ages*” but is now “*made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God*” in order that we may have faith and life in Christ (Rom. 16:25–26).

Next Week’s Readings from God’s Word:

December 31: First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10–62:3; Psalm 111 (v.9a,b); Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:22–40