

Historic Scripture Lessons for 🕯️🕯️🕯️ the Fourth Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT Isaiah 40:1-8 NIV Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. 5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 6 A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. 7 The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever."

Epistle

Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the LORD always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The LORD is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel

John 1:19-28 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the LORD.'" 24 Now some Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands One you do not know. 27 He is the One who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." 28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Our Savior Lutheran Church  Lakeland, FL  ELS
4th Sunday in Advent 🕯️🕯️🕯️ *Rorate Coeli: He's Near*
December 20th, 2015 ✕ 9:30 am



Woodcut illustration from a 1695 Bible – Matthew 3 (or Luke 1 or John 1)
John the Baptist appears in the wilderness proclaiming a message of repentance.

Image courtesy of the Digital Image Archive, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University
<http://www.pitts.emory.edu/dia/detail.cfm?ID=5150>

OSL OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH OSL

www.ELS.org = www.EvangelicalLutheranSynod.org

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Phone: (863) 859-3400 ~ Web: www.OSLLakeland.org

BIBLE CLASS 8:30 AM WORSHIP 9:30 AM FELLOWSHIP 10:45 AM

* A.R. Burmeister 430-5859 * Organ: Janice Thomas (813) 650-9198

December 20th, 2015 Advent-4 Rorate Coeli: He's Near

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER: If you are new to the area or Our worship and have never communed with us before, please speak with the pastor before Communing. If you are not currently a member of an ELS or WELS congregation, we ask that you please **wait to take communion until you can speak with our pastor.** Out of Christian love and consideration to you the guest, we want you to have the opportunity to learn what our church teaches about the Bible and Sacraments before you unite with us in taking Holy Communion. Thank you for your understanding. God bless your Worship.

OUR ORDER OF WORSHIP Printed in the red TLH hymnal starting at p.15.

Hymns	TLH# (v)	1 st Line of Hymn
Invocation Hymn	CW363 (4v)	<i>The King of Glory Comes</i>
Hymn of the Day	62 (4v)	Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel
Offertory Verse	85 (15)	<i>Sing vv.1,15 From Heav'n Above to Earth</i>
Distribution Hymn	315 (15)	I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table
Closing Hymn	74 (4v)	Once He Came in Blessing

Suggested Bible readings for the weekdays of the 4th Sunday in Advent (Year)

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday
 Isa. 40:1-11 Malachi 3:1-7 Malachi 4:1-6 Isa. 28:14-19 Isa. 7:1-17 Micah 5:1-5
 Matt. 1:18-25 Luke 1:39-45 Luke 1:46-56 Luke 1:57-66 Lu. 1:67-80 Matt. 1:1-17

PROPERs for RORATÉ COELI = 4TH SUNDAY of ADVENT DEC 20TH

INTROIT Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open and bring forth salvation. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. ...Psalm 90

COLLECT Stir up Your power, O LORD, and come, and help us with Your great might, that whatever is hindered by our sins may be speedily accomplished by Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

GRADUAL C: Alleluia! The LORD is near to all those who call on Him, to all that call on Him in truth. My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy Name. Alleluia! Alleluia! You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, my LORD. Alleluia!
 ...from Psalm 144

SCRIPTURE LESSONS (printed on outside back page of bulletin)

O.T. Isaiah 40:1-8 God will send His messenger of comfort, John B.
 Epi. Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the LORD always. I say again, **REJOICE!**
 Gos. John 1:19-28 John the Baptist testifies that He is *not* the Christ.

OFFERTORY VERSE Sung after offering. If able please rise. TLH #85 verses 1,15

1. From Heav'n above to earth I come
 To bear Good News to ev'ry home;
 Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
 Whereof I now will say and sing:
 15. Glory to God in highest Heav'n,
 Who unto us His Son is giv'n!
 While angels sing with pious mirth
 A glad new year to all the earth. Amen

PRAYER REQUESTS:	Member or Relation	Pray for...
Jeanette Ammann	(Donna's daughter)	Health. Pray for healing and peace
David Divine	(Vivian's grandson, serves USArmy in AK)	Health - bloodclots
Rex Headapohl	(Carol)	Rex fell, bump on head, is recovering at home
Elma & Jim Hendricks		Health - both E&J have been ill (sore throats) lately
Linda Kryszak		Linda's needs a biopsy. Also grandson Tristen had mono.
Dee Kurczewski	(David)	Dee's ongoing health. Dee at home. David helps
Mary, Pam & Karen		Friends & family of DonnaM, all battling health issues
Richard Sawyer	(Jon's dad)	Richard taken into hospital last week, at home
Vivian Temple	(Tom)	Vivian improving steadily at home - TTL. Tom helps
Janice Thomas		Janice has round three (of six) chemos Tuesday. Strength
James Vanesky & Delores		Jim back at home. Also pray for Delores' health

Volunteers	Today	Next Sunday
Greeters	Barbara Wolkens	Elma & Jim Hendricks
Treaters	Cathy A. & Carol H.	(Volunteer)
(Head) Usher	John Weber	John Weber

Statistics	Sunday + Wed.	Year to date / Avg.
Sunday Attendance / Communion	33 + 13 / - -	29 / 25
Bible Class Attend / Sunday School	7 / -	10 / 0
Last Sunday Offering / Year To Date	\$ + \$	\$
Average; Actual Expenses / Budget	Need/wk\$	\$ / \$

Calendar of Events		
Sunday, 12/20	8:30 am	Bible Study Ministry o' Keys, Confession
Fourth Sunday of Advent and Year	9:30 am	Worship (WITH Communion)
	10:45 ff...	Fellowship, Coffee ...Please stay & talk
Thursday, 12/24	7:00 pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Friday, 12/25	9:30 am	Christmas Day Festival Worship (w/LS)
Sunday, 12/27	8:30 am	Bible Study Ministry o' Keys, Confession
First Sunday after Christmas	9:30 am	Worship (NO Communion)
	10:45 ff...	Fellowship, Coffee ...Please stay & talk

Our Savior Elders are: Jim Vanesky 644-7807; John Weber 853-5458 & Don Wienke 815-8892. Please contact them with your concerns.

- * 2015 OSL Christmas Week Schedule: (Next) Sunday 27th Christmas-1 Worship
- * Thursday, 24th Christmas EVE: 7:00 pm Family Christmas at Our Savior;
- * Friday, 25th Christmas DAY: 9:30 am Festival Christmas Worship at OSL.

Thursday: 12/24 Christmas EVE (Special Program) TLH #s 102 62 94 646 106

Friday: 12/25 Christmas DAY (W/ L.S. p.15) TLH #s ELH-139 647 79 85 94

Sunday 12/27 Christmas-1 (No L.S. p.5) TLH Hymn #s 90 103 79 92 87

ADVENT-4C John 1:19-28 "GOD PREPARES 4 CHRISTMAS W/ JB" 12.20.15 OSL

In the Name of the One to Whom John was faithful, Dear Fellow-Redeemed:

INTRODUCTION Christmas is for kids, so people like to say. We have or had high hopes for our children. Years ago, an Angel visited a couple both of whom were past child-bearing age and told Zacharias: *Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.* In **Luke 1** we read that Zechariah had high hopes for his son. He might have hoped he would become a great leader or hero. **But his child would be a servant.** That doesn't seem like much to look forward to, not much for which a father to be proud. And yet, his son, John who baptized is part of the reason why we are here. For billions of Christians, he is a major part of Christmas. THEME:

GOD PREPARED FOR CHRISTMAS SENDING A SERVANT.

John was faithful in his confession and in his work. In his witness, John was a most faithful servant. A good servant, he claimed no credit for himself. He resisted glory. He was not like a (Republican or Democrat) **politician eager for every television interview or the Kardashians.**

Everyone has pride. John was no different. We like to think we are special, important. We may envy the famous. Few have the chance for fame. Few are known far and wide. John could have had glory. Our Bible section opens with these words, **verse 19:** Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, **"Who are you?"** He was becoming famous. Jewish leaders sent an investigating team. People were hearing about him. Here is a temptation. People try all kinds of outrageous deeds to get noticed. They want to go viral. People kill to make the news ...(sadly) *literally.*

John could have gone for glory. The scene was set. We read, As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ. (**Luke 3:15**) Many followed him. But when He was interrogated by the priests: **"Who are you?"** He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, *"I am not the Christ."* And they asked him, **"Who then? Are you Elijah?"** He said, *"I am not."* **"Are you the Prophet?"** And he answered, **"No."**

He was **God's servant. He was a man of humility.** He saw his glory only in light of the greater glory of the One Whose way He was preparing. He confessed for all to hear: The One who is mightier than I is coming. I'm not good enough to untie his shoe straps. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

The sin of pride tugged at his heart as ours but like us, he celebrated the birth of the One Mightier. With John, we must give our pride to Jesus in confession. **We are servants. God is God.**

God gave John courage to confess this truth. It took courage. It wasn't quite the same but similar to little Christian children under ISIS being told to renounce Jesus. It was something few of us have suffered. We have not been investigated by the higher authorities concerning our faith. But friends, neighbors, some-times even relatives put us on the spot about our faith. **It takes courage** to answer, **"Who are you? Are you a Christian?"**

John relied on the One greater. God's servant confessed: I am *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."* God did send him to do something big, make the way ready for Jesus. **John told the truth.** John attacked pride and self-righteousness in others, even the powerful leaders of the church of his day. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his Baptism, he said to them, *"Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Nowadays, **Christians don't like their preachers condemning other preachers.** We misunderstand Jesus' command: **Judge not, lest ye be Judged.** God sent John to prepare souls for Jesus. **John judged.** He called all, the great and the not so great to repentance, to give their sins to Jesus. Only by repentance are we ready for Christmas.

He is ranked with other courageous preachers who told the bold truth even when others didn't want to hear it. **John's "reward" - he lost his head.** The courage to boldly preach God's word got him dead like others who came after and boldly preach God's word: **Stephen, Peter, Jan Hus.** He served God. Jesus said, *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* It is **not** for **John's** sake or for **Luther's** sake. It is **for JESUS' sake we do not have to fear** the only Being who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. God forgives us. God takes care of us. He took care of our biggest problem by sending His only-begotten Son Jesus. This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

John was a faithful servant in his work. He did what God sent him to do. A servant, John exercised God's authority. The authorities are under attack today. And they are sinners. They do bad things. But those with God's authority are to be heeded, to be obeyed. Authorities are to be respected especially those who serve God. **John represented the Holy God.** God gave him the authority to point people to Jesus. When asked why he baptized John answered them, saying, *"I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. I baptize you with water, but He will Baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

John and all faithful ministers prepare us for the coming of Jesus. They do this in a God appointed way. John and all faithful ministers call us to

the water of Baptism. In repentance, God would drown our sins, our old nature in the water that regenerates us in Jesus. Jesus said this about repentance. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick God calls us to repent so we will recognize we are sick. We need a divine physician. If we think nothing is wrong, we will think we do not need the help from the One sent on Christ as Savior. And John explained repentance. It is more than words. True repentance includes the **God-given desire to change**. People who came to John asked: What should we do? John told the **greedy**, *"He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."* To **businessmen** he said, *"Collect no more than what is appointed to you."* To **soldiers**, *"Do not intimidate, accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."* Repentance includes the desire to turn from sin.

True repentance doesn't end here. Once we know who we are under God's law, God points us to Jesus and all He has done for us. When John saw Jesus for the first time: He said, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* Know what that means. If you drink too much, Jesus, the Lamb of God took away your sin. If you are full of hate, Jesus, the Lamb took hate. If you are an adulterer, greedy, a thief, or murderer, **Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away all our sin.**

John is most famous as being the Baptizer. He, even, reluctantly baptized Jesus saying: *"I need to be baptized by You and are You coming to me?"* But Jesus answered and said to him, *"Let it to be so now, because it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* During the Baptism, John had a vision. And John bore witness, saying, *"I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a Dove and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to Baptize with water said to me, 'The One on Whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He Who Baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."*

On Christmas we celebrate the Birth of God in human Flesh. God in human flesh came to take away our sin. What could it mean that God's perfect Son got down into the water of Baptism? While we know that no simple water could cleanse our conscience or wash away our sins, we also know that **Jesus was sent to be our righteousness.** He was sent to be our holiness. He took our sins away. He also got down into the water of Baptism. **He had no sin to be washed away.** Because He went into the water of Baptism, **He empowers Baptism.** He did what God commanded us to do. He did it for us all. He makes us holy in spite of ourselves.

CONCLUSION John pointed us to Jesus because **Jesus is Life.** He took John's sin. He gave him holiness. He took our sin. He gave us His holiness. Jesus calls us all to serve in humble repentance and faith.

People ask: **Are you ready for Christmas(?)**. We have been to the font of Baptism. We have been washed, sanctified, justified in Jesus and by God's Spirit. We **are** ready for Christmas. **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**

Our Savior Lutheran Church Lakeland, FL USA 4th Sunday of Advent/Year **"Salvation Is Near!"**

Possible Prayer of Church + 4th Sunday of Advent (Roraté Coeli) December 20

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. (Possible Brief silence)

For the whole of Christ's Church, that we would in joy bring to Him all our concerns in prayer and thanksgiving, and so know the peace that passes understanding, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our nation (USA) and all those who serve to protect and defend it, including **David & Rachel Divine**, and for the nations of the world, that in every place people who delight in war would be scattered and peace be established, that the hungry may be fed with good things, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For **Our (Savior Lutheran)** parish, that as we anticipate with joy celebrating our Savior's birth, we might all have the faith of blessed Mary to believe everything that the Lord has spoken to us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the schools of the Church and all the educational efforts like Sunday Schools, Confirmation Classes and Bible Instruction, that our young people may be taught to delight and treasure the Word of God above all riches, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are ill and those who are suffering, [especially OSL.]

PRAYER REQUESTS: Member or Relation	Pray for...
Ammann (Donna's daughter)	Health. Pray for healing and peace
Rex Headapohl (Carol)	Rex fell, bump on head, is recovering at home
Elma & Jim Hendricks	Health – both E&J have been ill (sore throats) lately
Linda Kryszak	Linda's needs a biopsy. Also grandson Tristen had mono.
Dee Kurczewski (David)	Dee's ongoing health. Dee at home. David helps
Mary, Pam & Karen	Friends & family of DonnaM, all battling health issues
Richard Sawyer (Jon's dad)	Richard taken into hospital last week, at home
Vivian Temple (Tom)	Vivian improving steadily at home - TTL. Tom helps
Janice Thomas	Janice has round three (of six) chemos Tuesday. Strength
James & Delores Vanesky	Jim back at home. Also pray for Delores' health

that the love of Christ may surround and sustain them and bring them whatever healing is in accord with His own perfect Will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who eat today of the Feast of Joy, that in the Savior's Body and Blood they may be granted a blessed foretaste of the Feast to come, for the strengthening of their faith and the growth of their love, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, *through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Then, Lord's Supper (p.24)*