



# ABOUT THE PROPERs

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## Third Sunday in Advent

December 14, 2025



### Imminent Arrival of the Messiah

The Third Sunday in Advent is traditionally known as “Gaudete” Sunday. The Sunday derives its name from the Latin words of the Introit (i.e. the opening verses) of the day: “Rejoice (*Gaudete*) in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). The focus of this morning’s readings, as well as the pink/rose Advent candle, fit with the mood of the day: joy in Jesus Christ.

The Messiah is an important person. “Messiah” is the same word as “Christ” or “Anointed One.” He is someone who has been anticipated for a long time. Now we look at a time when his arrival is imminent! As we reach the midway point of Advent, we ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to rejoice in faith because God fulfills all his promises in the Promised Messiah.

#### First Reading<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah 35:1-10

The coming of the Messiah would change everything. A world destroyed by sin is filled with sorrow and sighing. But things are not always what they seem: A desert is a latent pool; thirsty ground is a future streambed; the blind are future seers, and the lame future leapers. Our certain knowledge that the earth is the Lord’s and that he controls everything in it gives us patience and courage to wait for God to make what we see match what we know. Be strong, do not fear; your God will come. His promise to come strengthens feeble hands and fearful hearts. He will come with vengeance and retribution to redress the wrong and with redemption and rejoicing for God’s people. Jesus fulfilled these words of prophecy in his acts of ministry so that God’s people could see how near God’s kingdom had come!

#### Second Reading<sup>1</sup>

James 5:7-11

Knowing what we do about Christ’s coming kingdom, we want it now. God’s encouragement, however, is for us to be patient. A farmer’s fields may look fallow or dead, but things are not always what they seem. The seed waits inside the earth for the rains and then bursts forth to life. When Christians face persecution or suffering, life can seem like a fallow field. While we wait for the rain, we struggle with questions and doubts. James reminds us that the fallow parts of our lives are simply waiting for God’s timing to bring forth fruit in our lives. The Christian patiently waits for the Lord’s coming, when what we see will finally match what we know.

#### Gospel<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 11:2-11

Things were not what they seemed. John languished in prison for preaching righteousness. When he saw the works of Jesus questions rose in his mind and doubt filled the hearts of his followers. John knew that Jesus was the Christ, but where were the acts of judgment promised? Why did John look like a failure and the wicked look like they were winning? John sends his disciples to the right place, to Jesus. When we take our doubts and questions to Jesus, he drives the darkness from our hearts and fills us with light. Jesus pointed to his works as signs from God fulfilling the words of the prophet and marking him as the Coming One. Jesus was far more than he appeared to be: he was the Messiah who makes the blind see, the dead live and the poor evangelized. Jesus then points to John and shows greatness hiding behind the cross and persecution. Though John did not seem it, he was the second Elijah and a prophet without peer.

#### Psalm of the Day<sup>4</sup>

Psalm 146 A

“I Will Praise the LORD All My Life”

The Church sings Psalm 146 in services that encourage trust in the Scriptures because they testify about Jesus. It gives particular attention to God’s love for the lowly. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 146 is a psalm of thanks to God for helping in time of need. It teaches us to trust in God and not in princes or other human beings, as people do over and over. God is the only one who can truly help us in our times of need, and only his help can truly be called help. Human help is uncertain and does not last.”

## Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 11:10

“I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” Speaking to his disciples, who were sent by John the Baptist to ask if Jesus was “the one to come,” Jesus confirmed his identity as the promised Messiah. He then pointed to the Baptist as the one prophesied by Malachi (3:1), who would be sent ahead of the Messiah to prepare his way (quoted by Jesus in Matthew 11:10). Jesus points to John who points to Christ and his work to save us.

## Prayer of the Day

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts, and fill us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## Hymn of the Day

324 “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676)

During the season of Advent, we focus on Christ’s coming in the flesh at Christmas and his glorious coming when he returns on the Last Day. Both events fill us with joy. We rejoice that our God would take on human flesh to save us and that our Lord will come again to rescue us from this world of sin and sorrow. *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You* echoes these themes of Advent. We rejoice in our salvation. We marvel that God sent his one and only Son to save us from our sins. Our hearts are filled with the joyful knowledge that our sins and guilt have been washed away. Because of Christ’s death, we look forward in joyful anticipation to the great and glorious day of our Lord’s return.

## Church Year Season<sup>3</sup>

Advent

Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh as a baby in Bethlehem, his return in judgment on the Last Day, and his present coming to us in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in a single word that defines Advent worship: “Come!” Throughout the prayers, hymns, and readings that single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus!

## Colors & Symbolism

Blue

The traditional color for Advent is purple. Advent is a penitential season of preparation for Christmas; thus the color purple which symbolizes sorrow and repentance (along with royalty). Since another theme of Advent is hope and anticipation, the color blue (the sky) has come to be used in many churches to symbolize the believer’s hope and expectation of Jesus’ Second Coming.

## Traditions & Customs

The Advent Wreath

A tradition of the Advent season is the lighting of candles on a wreath. Each light reminds us of Jesus, the Light of the world (John 8:12). Each Sunday we light an additional candle, providing a visual countdown to the celebration of Christ’s birth. On Christmas Eve we light the center candle, remembering Jesus’ nativity and the light and life that he brings (John 1:4,9).

## Nain Paraments

Advent

Superfrontal: “Come Lord Jesus” is the Advent (meaning “coming” or “arrival”) prayer of Christians who await Christ’s promised return (Revelation 22:7,12,20) on the Last Day (Revelation 22:17,20), and who desire to eagerly receive Jesus now in the Gospel. The stars are representative of the Church’s anticipation of Jesus’ return when he will “appear in the sky...with great power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The stars also remind us of God’s creative work. They especially remind us of Jesus, the bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16) and Light of the World (John 8:12) who came to save us from the darkness of sin and death.

Lectern antependium: Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16).

Pulpit antependium: Alpha (Α) and Omega (Ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13).

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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