

Possible Prayer of Church 🕊️ **2nd Sunday of Advent & New Church Year Dec. 7**

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

LORD of hosts, You have given all judgment over to the Son of Man, our Incarnate LORD, Jesus Christ. Make us ever mindful of His coming, and keep us steadfast in the Word of Christ, that in accord with Him, we may live in harmony with one another and together glorify You. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer*

Almighty God, You send Your prophets and apostles, pastors and teachers in all times to call sinners to repentance and comfort them with the healing of the Sun of righteousness. Give strength to the congregations and ministers of Your Church, especially our Synod president; our circuit visitor; and all pastors in Christ. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Holy Lord, preserve Your gift of marriage against the ravages of sin, the schemes of the devil and the raging of the world. Bless the couples and families of our congregation. Strengthen them in love and care for one another, and establish them on the foundation of Your Word. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Father of all concord, it is Your will that Your children live together in harmony. Defeat the plans of all who would stir up violence, destroy the weapons of those who delight in bloodshed, and, according to Your will, end all conflicts in our nation and our world. Search our hearts by Your Word and Spirit to root out the evil that would lead to strife and discord, that we may be at peace with all people. Fill us with zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone can bring the peace that is beyond all understanding. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

LORD of hosts, graciously regard all for whom we pray suffering in body, mind or soul [*especially **Faith & Our Savior Prayers***] Restore to health in Your Gracious Will. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing. Grant repentance and firm trust to all who commune this day, that receiving Your true body and blood, they may be forgiven and abound in hope, able to stand with a clean conscience before Your judgment throne. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Into Your Hands, O LORD, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

ADVENT-2/B Luke 21:25-36 LIFT UP YOUR HEADS! CHRISTIANS 12.7.20 F.OS.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHIN/S-UP Our text for today is the Gospel lesson just read, with focus on the words of Jesus, **Lift up your heads, for your Redemption draws near.** Last week we heard from the Lord how His Path of Righteousness is set by Him and how He (triumphantly) entered. This week we hear **where that path leads**, and how His **Second** (and Final) **Advent** for you and me will be a day of **great joy and happiness.**

POSTURE Let's talk about **posture** for a minute. [Tell story of **good** and **bad** posture: ... My brother Aaron had such **good posture**, implying mine was **bad**?!] [Tall] Teenagers, especially girls, sometimes have to be told to "stand up straight" – be proud of your height. "Don't slouch," [don't be ashamed]. Which brings us to: **What kind of people and things STOOP(?) and what kind STAND UP?**

AN-TI-CI-PA-TION Advent is a time of **anticipation.** We look forward to presents and gifts. We look forward to family and friends joining us for the holidays, and yes, we look forward to Christmas and the coming of our Savior in the flesh. But anticipation is not all positive. The downside of anticipation is that it can be **tense and frustrating.** Anticipation means: **you are not in control** of the future. **The future has to come to you.**

H.O.P.E. In order that we may know the path we take and not lose heart, our LORD gives us His very Word. As **Saint Paul** writes [in today's **Epistle**], "**Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have HOPE.**" [Romans.15:4]. Now if ever there was an Advent word, it is that little word = **HOPE.** Hope is what drives the Christian faith. Hope for things to come. Hope for the **coming of the Christ Child.** Hope that **our sins are forgiven** for Jesus' sake. Hope that **He will come again in glory and bring us to Himself in Heaven.** That is what Advent is all about.

THING ABOUT HOPE... I guess that's what's hard about the Advent journey we take. **It is about hope.** And hope, by its very nature, means that we can't see it, touch it, taste it or smell it. It's out there. You can't prove it, but **it is real nonetheless.** **Hope.** As the **hymnwriter** exclaims:

***O Morning Star, O radiant Dawn,
When will we sing your morning song?
Come, Son of God! Without your light
We grope in dread and gloom of night. (v4)***

FORK-IN-THE-ROAD You are now faced with **two paths**. Satan's goal and sole desire is to get you to look **down** at the journey. Think of how long and how hard a journey it has been. It will never end. Yours sins *weigh you down*. All of the trials and struggles of this life seem to have no end. This is certainly the season to get weighed **down**, to try and find your own path or an easier one. Will you continue to "*grope in dread and gloom of night*"?

SIN STOOPS US OVER That is the nature of sin itself. Sin constantly wants you looking **down** upon yourself. Sin makes us look down, stoop down, hunker down. What did **Adam & Eve** do once they had committed (the first) sin? - They looked at themselves, were ashamed, got down, and **hid** from God. Sin wants *you* to be the center of *your universe*. Because as long as it is all about *you* and *your* problems and trials, then it is not about God and what He does for you with the coming of His Son Jesus Christ into your flesh. This is what they hymnwriter speaks about when he says:

*Sin's dreadful doom upon us lies;
Grim death looms fierce before our eyes.
Oh, come, lead us with Mighty Hand
From exile to our promised land. [v5]*

POSTURE ALL OVER *Let's look at the "posturing" in all [3] of today's readings [I see 10?:] OT Micah, 1) "lifted up above hills" 2) "Come, let us GO UP to the Mtn..." 3) v4 "but they shall SIT every man..." 4) v5 "but we will WALK in the Name of the LORD forever..." EPI. 5) v12 "The root of Jesse will COME, 6) even He who ARISES to rule the Gentiles" & in the GOS. 7) v26 people FAINTING with fear" 8) But when these things LIE before you, there is a better way. Christ says to you this day, 9) LOOK UP and LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, because 10) your Redemption DRAWS NEAR.* When the trials and tribulations of this life hit their worst, when the world comes crashing **down** upon you, when the pressures of this day seem to be worse than ever, it is *then* that Christ comes to you, forgiving your sins and drawing you into His eternal presence.

PRESENT & FUTURE ADVENTS Christ's coming in the **Flesh on Christmas** really *only* has meaning for us if we believe: 1) He comes **today to forgive our sins**, and that 2) He is **coming again in glory to judge** the living and the dead, as we confess in the Creed. Look closely at our text – there are **all kinds of things predicted**. Signs in the sun, moon and stars. Fear and expectation. The very earth itself will be shaken. And the Son of Man will come in Glory.

ALL OF THE ABOVE So, **When** is Jesus talking about here? Is He talking about the signs **at His Birth**? Remember the **star**, the **fear** of

the shepherds, the angelic **choirs**. Is He talking about **His death**? **Earthquakes**, the **dead** raised, **fear** fell on all of Jerusalem and the world on that dreadful day. Or is He talking about the **End of the World**? The answer, of course is, **YES**. **All three of these fold together** and almost become **one event** for the Christian.

IT IS COMING We are in the **End times** today, whether you want to admit it or not, the signs in the world remind us of **His Birth**, His **death** and **Resurrection**, and His **Coming again** in great glory. All of these things that happen are good things, because they are signs of His Return. That is why we pray the great prayer of Advent: [that we say with the crowds from Palm Sunday] "**Hosanna! Save us now! Unlock the gates, the doors break down; Unbar the way to Heaven's crown!**"

[NOT] PRETTY We have a picture in our text of Christ's coming that is **not the quiet and serene picture** we usually have when it comes to Christmas time. **But this IS good for you and me**. Christ takes your problems and trials very seriously. He doesn't simply pat you on the head and pretend that they will all go away. No, He rather **breaks into our world of sin and darkness**, and **delivers you** with His mighty Arm. He delivers you by coming into your flesh, by taking on your very sin and death, and by giving you His very life. ...And, speaking of posture: It is because Jesus "**stooped**" **down** [drooped down], He lowered Himself - His "Heavenly posture" - down to **our** position. *He* was the One, **where we should have been**, to droop [and hang] even from a Cross, and stoop down to **death**, the death that we deserved. And He did that for us so that **we** can **Rise up** with confidence, and anticipate meeting our Heavenly Father, our Judge, with heads held high, chins-up in confidence that now we have been declared righteous to **stand-up** on the Last Day and enter the Eternal Bliss of Heaven.

POWER OF THE WORD And, How does He do this?... He does it by the Power of **His Word**. He tells us, "**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away**. His Word to you is true, and He has come into your life **at great price**. But because He has paid the price, **Eternal Life is your reward**. Hallelujah! [*So we pray:*]

Blessed LORD, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Your Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed HOPE of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. [Collect for the Word]

[Rom. 15:13] "*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*"
IJ'N, Amen. SDG