

The Congregation at Prayer
The Whole Story

2025

A Daily Devotional
St. Paul LCMS, Ida Grove, IA



Week #51-The Whole Story

Fourth Week of Advent

December 21-December 28, 2025

Start Every Day

*"In the Name of the Father, and + of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen"*

recite **APOSTLE'S CREED**

VERSE: Luke 2:11 ***"For unto you is born this
day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ
the Lord."***

CATECHISM—Apostles' Creed—Second Article

And 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 sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, in my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

Sunday, December 21

- Read **Luke 1:26-38**

JOHN THE MONK: (Luke 1:30-33) Wonder! God is come among humanity; he who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the timeless enters time, and great mystery: his conception is without seed, his emptying past telling! So great is this mystery! For God empties himself, takes flesh and is fashioned as a creature, when the angel tells the pure Virgin of her conception: "Rejoice, you



- 3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the Law
In cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain
- 4 O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Refrain
- 5 O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. Refrain
- 6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Refrain
- 7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace. Refrain

*Text: Latin, c. 12th cent.; Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710, Köln; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–66, alt.
Text: Public domain*

who are full of grace; the Lord who has great mercy is with you!" STICHERA OF ANNUNCIATION.¹

Monday, December 22

- Read **Luke 1:39-56**

AUGUSTINE: (Luke 1:50-53) Who are the hungry? The humble, the needy. Who are the rich? Proud and self-important people. I will not send you far to find them. I will show you now, in one and the same temple, one of those rich who are sent away empty, and one of those poor who are filled with good things.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." ... Observe the rich man burping his undigested food, breathing out the fumes of his intoxication—with pride, though, not with justice. "God," he says, "I thank you because I am not like other men, robbers, unjust, adulterers, like this tax collector here." ...

Come, poor men—come along, hungry tax collector. Rather, stand there, where you are standing. The tax collector, you see, "was standing a long way off," but the Lord was drawing near to the humble. He did not dare to raise his eyes to

¹ Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

heaven; yet where he did not raise his eyes, that is where he had his heart. SERMON 290.6.²

Tuesday, December 23

- Read **Luke 1:57-80**

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: (Luke 1:57-58) The elderly Elizabeth gave birth to the last of the prophets, and Mary, a young girl, to the Lord of the angels. The daughter of Aaron gave birth to the voice in the desert, but the daughter of David to the strong God of the earth. The barren one gave birth to him who remits sins, but the Virgin gave birth to him who takes them away.² Elizabeth gave birth to him who reconciled people through repentance, but Mary gave birth to him who purified the lands of uncleanness. The elder one lit a lamp in the house of Jacob, his father, for this lamp itself was John, while the younger one lit the Sun of Justice⁴ for all the nations. The angel announced to Zechariah, so that the slain one would proclaim the crucified one and that the hated one would proclaim the envied one. He who was to baptize with water would proclaim him who would baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit. The light, which was not obscure, would proclaim the Sun of Justice. The one filled with the Spirit would proclaim concerning him who gives the Spirit. The priest calling with the trumpet would proclaim concerning the one who is to come

² Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Personal Prayers

pray **LORD'S PRAYER**

Luther's Morning Prayer

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Luther's Evening Prayer

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

357 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear. Refrain

ref Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

2 O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go. Refrain

himself born before all time and without spatial limitation, light from light, true God from true God. Because, therefore, the light of life rose for those of us dwelling in the region of the shadow of death, the herald of this rising says, “A savior has been born to you today.” So that being always advised by this word we may remember that the night of ancient blindness is past and the day of eternal salvation has arrived. Let us cast off the works of darkness.⁴⁸ And let us walk as children of light, “for the fruit of the light is in all justice and holiness.” HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS 1.6.⁷

Sunday, December 28

- Read **John 1:1-14**

End Every Day

Pray the *Collect for Christmas Eve*

O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

⁷ Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

at the sound of the trumpet at the end. The voice would proclaim concerning the Word, and the one who saw the dove would proclaim concerning him upon whom the dove rested, like the lightning before the thunder. COMMENTARY ON TATIAN’S DIATESSARON 1.31.³

Wednesday, December 24

- Read **Matthew 1:18-25**

CHRYSTOSTOM: (Matthew 1:23) Why then do they not call him Emmanuel instead of Jesus Christ? Because the text says not “you shall call” but “his name shall be called.” This means that the multitude and the outcome of the events themselves will cause him to be called Emmanuel. For here he puts the event as a name. This is customary in Scripture, to substitute names for the actual events. Therefore to say “they shall call him ‘Emmanuel’” means nothing else than that they shall see God among us. Admittedly God has always been among us, but never before so openly. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, HOMILY 5.2–3.⁴

³ Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Simonetti, Manlio, ed. 2001. [Matthew 1–13](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Thursday, December 25

- Read **2 Samuel 7:1-16**

TERTULLIAN: (2 Samuel 7:12-13) That new dispensation, then, which is found in Christ now, will prove to be what the Creator then promised under the appellation of “the sure mercies of David,” which were Christ’s, inasmuch as Christ sprang from David, or rather his very flesh itself was David’s “sure mercies,” consecrated by religion, and “sure” after its resurrection. Accordingly the prophet Nathan, in the first [book] of Kings [Samuel], makes a promise to David for his seed, “which shall proceed,” he says, “from your own body.” Now, if you explain this simply of Solomon, you will send me into a fit of laughter. For David will evidently have brought forth Solomon! But is not Christ here designated the seed of David, as of that womb which was derived from David, that is, Mary’s? Now, because Christ rather than any other was to build the temple of God, that is to say, a holy manhood, wherein God’s Spirit might dwell as in a better temple, Christ rather than David’s son Solomon was to be looked for as the Son of God. Then, again, the throne forever with the kingdom forever is more suited to Christ than to Solomon, a mere temporal king. AGAINST MARCION 3.20.⁵

⁵ Franke, John R., ed. 2005. [*Old Testament IV: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel*](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Friday, December 26

- Read **Luke 2:1-7**

BEDE: (Luke 2:6-7) “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” It should be noted that the sign given of the Savior’s birth is not a child enfolded in Tyrian purple, but one wrapped with rough pieces of cloth. He is not to be found in an ornate golden bed, but in a manger. The meaning of this is that he did not merely take upon himself our lowly mortality, but for our sakes took upon himself the clothing of the poor. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. Though he was Lord of heaven, he became a poor man on earth, to teach those who lived on earth that by poverty of spirit they might win the kingdom of heaven. EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 1.⁶

Saturday, December 27

- Read **Luke 2:8-20**

BEDE: (Luke 2:8-15) It is good that the angel said “has been born today” and did not say “this night.” He appeared with heavenly light to those who were conducting the watch by night and brought the good news that day was born.... He who appeared temporally in the city of David as a human being from a virgin mother was, in truth,

⁶ Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [*Luke*](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.