

WELCOME

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

ADVENT MIDWEEK 1

DECEMBER 3, 2025



AS WE GATHER

“Prepare!” is often the watchword of the season as the world gets ready for another celebration of Christmas. An integral part of any preparation is decoration. We see decorations everywhere this time of year. The world may not comprehend the real meaning of Christmas, but even secular preparations use many of the same decorations beloved by Christians—an appropriation we shouldn’t mind at all, because these decorations point us to Christ. This year, as we look forward again to the coming of the Messiah, we take a fresh look at how the adornments of the season draw our eyes to Jesus, that we may more richly behold the love, peace, joy, and hope He comes to bring as this beauty is set before us.

Tonight, we focus on evergreens. Perhaps the most innocuous decorations in the eyes of the world, their prickles remind us of the crown of thorns, and the berries of the holly evoke the blood-stained brow of our crucified Lord. Above all, the steadfastness of their green in the midst of death symbolizes life amid death—and the life eternal Jesus won for us on the cross.

OPENING HYMN “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”
LSB 340

VERSICLES AND GLORIA PATRI *Isaiah 40:3b,c, 5; Psalm 118:26*

P Prepare the way of the LORD;

C **make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

P Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

C **We bless you from the house of the LORD.**

P And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

C **and all flesh shall see it together.**

C **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.**

SALUTATION

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

PRAYER

P Let us pray.

Lord of all beauty, You made the heavens and the earth; the world and all its fullness are Yours. Thank You for giving us life and filling creation with signs that declare Your glory. As we behold beautiful evergreens this season, fix our eyes on their thorny leaves and red berries that we may give thanks for the crown Your Son wore and the cross He bore for us. Abide in us always, as we abide in Your Word and take heart in the

promise of eternal life with Jesus, who lives and reigns with
You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C Amen.

FIRST READING

Hosea 14:4–8

P A reading from Hosea, the fourteenth chapter.

⁴I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for My anger has turned from them.

⁵I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;

⁶his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.

⁷They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

⁸O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
from Me comes your fruit.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

SOLO-Tabra Gomski “All Is Well”

Michael W. Smith

RESPONSIVE READING

John 15:5–11

P I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

C **If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.**

P If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

C **By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.**

P As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.

C **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.**

P These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you,
C **and that your joy may be full.**

SECOND READING

John 11:17–27

P A reading from John, the eleventh chapter.

¹⁷Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met Him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said

to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORY

Revelation 22:1–2; Psalm 92:12–15

P Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

C **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

P The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD, they flourish in the courts of our God.

C **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

P They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

C **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

HYMN “The Tree of Life”

LSB 561

SERMON

Rev. Dr. Timothy Oswald

OFFERING

LORD’S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:
C **Our Father who art in heaven,**
 hallowed be Thy name,
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
 give us this day our daily bread;
 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

ADVENT LITANY

Hebrews 10:25

P In peace, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
P For eyes to behold the Father's hand in all creation, let us pray
to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
P For awareness of beauty and the living traditions of the church
that bring Christ to our eyes through arts and crafts, let us pray
to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
P That we may see the signs of Christ's return even as we
celebrate His birth and encourage one another all the more as
we see the Day drawing near, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
P That we may be living testimonies of new life in Christ through
our loving service to our neighbor—both in word and in deed,
let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may be thankful for the bountiful harvest we enjoy amid the many festivities of this season, and be generous to the poor, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may love one another as God so loved us, forgive one another, and work together in the unity we have in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may not be lured into temptation or despair or be distracted by the false Christmases around us, but always hold the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

CLOSING PRAYER

P Lord of life,

C You sent Your Son to bring back to life all the children of Adam.

P Grant that we may view the evergreens of this season through the eyes of faith

C so that in a world still filled with death we may be of good courage, knowing that, just as the evergreen prevails over death in winter, we prevail over the winter of our sin and will rise to life eternal on the Last Day;

P through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

BENEDICTION

John 15:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17

P These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you,

C **and that your joy may be full.**

P Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

C **Amen.**

HYMN “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

LSB 357

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Pastor: Rev. Dr. Timothy Oswald

Organist: George Kelm

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT ADVENT SUPPERS AND WORSHIP ON DECEMBER 10 AND 17 BEGINNING AT 6:00PM.

ALSO PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR CHRISTMAS WORSHIP:

Wednesday Dec. 24 6:00pm Christmas Eve Worship

Thursday Dec. 25 10:00am Christmas Day Worship

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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