

December 14th, Lectionary Notes

The Readings on This Day

***[Click on the links for the Bible Verse\(s\)](#)

Advent



The origin of Advent as a season of fasting to prepare for baptisms at Epiphany is particularly evident on the third Sunday. Whenever God comes—in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things—a reorienting of our life is called for. The lectionary’s readings stand in stark contrast to our society’s partying and shopping for Christmas. The coming of Christ means to transform the world, saving all who are in need.

[Isaiah 35:1-10](#)

Sometimes in the lectionary, the first reading presents the full citation that is referred to in the gospel reading. This Sunday, the first reading is the oracle from Isaiah that Jesus cites in today’s gospel reading. On Sunday, Christians praise the resurrection of Christ as just such a joyous transformation of all things. The Sunday liturgy means to celebrate that transformation.

The Psalm for the Day

Two options are given for the response to the first reading. [Psalm 146:5-10](#) is the second half of a song of praise that echoes the first reading of Isaiah 35. With the ancient Israelites we hope in God, who promises to bring justice, food, freedom, healing, and support to the needy, and as Christians in Advent we praise God for already fulfilling in Christ the prophet's hopes.

The second option is the Song of Mary, [Luke 1:46b-55](#). *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes a number of versions: pages 314-315 and # 234, 235, 251, 573, 723, and 882. Isaiah 35 has promised that God will reverse the natural order of things with divine mercy, and Christians join Mary in praising God for just such a reversal come to the earth through Christ. We receive that mercy in today’s word and sacrament, and we pray to God to continue its transformative power throughout the world.

[James 5:7-10](#)

The Old Testament and gospel readings that promise wondrous signs of the presence of the Lord are held next to this New Testament call to patience. In Advent, we join the early church in waiting, perhaps impatiently, for the coming of the Judge and for the end of suffering and evil.

Matthew 11:2-11

The gospel of Advent 3 responds to the gospel of Advent 2: last week John the Baptist predicted the coming judgment, and this week Jesus, also citing the prophet Isaiah, speaks of the transformative power of his ministry. Each week we hear more about what the presence of God means for the world, today and at the end of time. That coming begins here, in word and sacrament.