



The Sun, Edvard Munch 1911

Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 21, 2025

Reflections

"The Christian future hope is the Advent hope. At Jesus' final appearing, his second coming, he will put into operation for the entire cosmos that Lordship which is already his by right. But this Advent hope, this second-coming hope... will be a fresh act of grace, of new creation, completing what was done in the cross, the resurrection and the ascension, but also going way beyond them in the remaking of the entire cosmos."

N.T. Wright

"Christian joy stands with its feet dug deep in the soil of real heartache and still sings 'nevertheless' - nevertheless, God is faithful; nevertheless, Christ will come again; nevertheless, hope will get the last word. Advent invites us to discover this kind of 'nevertheless' joy, a joy that does not wait for weariness to fade before it begins to surface."

Scott Sauls

"When the Curse is reversed, shrunken dreams, once mourned, will be revived and enhanced. Perhaps that's part of what it means to become like a little child and why childlikeness is necessary for Heaven. Children aren't disillusioned, hopeless, and cynical. Their dreams are great and broad. They don't list a hundred reasons why their dreams can't come true. Their dreams fuel their imagination and bring them joy. And eternal life on a New Earth means opportunity to fulfill every worthy dream. For the Christian, death is not the end of adventure but a doorway from a world where dreams and adventures shrink, to a world where dreams and adventures forever expand."

Randy Alcorn

"Many people want to go to heaven the way they want to go to Florida – they think the weather will be an improvement and the people decent. But the biblical heaven is not a nice environment far removed from the stress of hard city life. It is the invasion of the city by the City. We enter heaven not by escaping what we don't like, but by the sanctification of the place in which God has placed us."

Eugene Peterson

Order of Worship

GATHERING

Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery

Come behold the wondrous myst'ry
In the dawning of the King
He the theme of heaven's praises
Robed in frail humanity
In our longing in our darkness
Now the light of life has come
Look to Christ who condescended
Took on flesh to ransom us

Come behold the wondrous myst'ry
He the perfect Son of Man
In His living in His suff'ring
Never trace nor stain of sin
See the true and better Adam
Come to save the hell-bound man
Christ the great and sure fulfillment
Of the law in Him we stand

Come behold the wondrous myst'ry
Christ the Lord upon the tree
In the stead of ruined sinners
Hangs the Lamb in victory
See the price of our redemption
See the Father's plan unfold
Bringing many sons to glory
Grace unmeasured love untold

Come behold the wondrous myst'ry
Slain by death the God of life
But no grave could e'er restrain
Him Praise the Lord He is alive
What a foretaste of deliv'rance
How unwavering our hope
Christ in power resurrected
As we will be when He comes

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

O Lord, open our lips

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reveal among us the light of your presence

that we may behold your power and glory.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;

shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;

he has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;

you shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

"Fear not, O Zion;

let not your hands grow weak.

The Lord your God is in your midst,

a mighty one who will save;

he will rejoice over you with gladness;

he will quiet you by his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing.

I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,

so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

Behold, at that time I will deal

with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.

At that time I will bring you in,

at the time when I gather you together;

for I will make you renowned and praised

among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes

before your eyes," says the Lord.

We light these candles to remember the coming light of Christ
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

GATHERING SONG

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold Him, born the King of angels!

O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God, Light of Light,
lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten not created;

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

PRAISE SONG

God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Savior
was born on Christmas day,
to save us all from Satan's pow'r
when we were gone astray;

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,

O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heavn'ly Father
Our blessed Savior came.
And unto those in darkness
Brought healing in his name.
So spread his love and peace abroad
And sinners to reclaim.

"Fear not, then" says the Spirit
"Let nothing you affright."
The kingdom of our God shall come
By his great power and might.
To banish death and lead us all
To everlasting light.

CONFESSION & ASSURANCE

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
You meet him who joyfully works righteousness,
those who remember you in your ways.
Behold, you were angry, and we sinned;
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;

for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

But now, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Be not so terribly angry, O Lord,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.

Isaiah 64:1-9

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:26b-28

RENEWAL SONG

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way
with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

PASSING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST

May the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

CHILDREN DISMISSED

LIFE TOGETHER

PREACHING OF THE WORD

“Til He Comes Again: The Wonder of His Coming Again”

Ethan Smith

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Revelation 21:1-8

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

Sermon Notes

RESPONSE

SONG OF RESPONSE

Come Light Our Hearts

For You, O Lord our souls in stillness wait

For You, O Lord our souls in stillness wait

Truly our hope is in You

Truly our hope is in You

Truly our hope is in You

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERTORY

Father Let Your Kingdom Come

Hallelu, hallelujah,

Father, let Your kingdom come.

May the works of my hands bring You joy.

May the works of my hands bring You joy.

May the works of my hands bring You joy.

May the works of my hands bring You joy.

May the words from my mouth speak Your peace.

May the words from my mouth speak Your peace.

May the words from my mouth speak Your peace.

May the words from my mouth speak Your peace.

You make all things new

You make all things new

In places we don't choose

You make all things new

DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

COMMUNION SONG

Love Divine All Loves Excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of Heav'n to earth come down!

Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown;

Jesus! Thou art all compassion: pure, unbounded love Thou art;

Visit us with Thy salvation; enter ev'ry trembling heart!

Breathe! O breathe Thy loving Spirit into ev'ry troubled breast!

Let us all from Thee inherit; let us find the promised rest!

Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be!

End of Faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty, to deliver: Let us all Thy life receive!

Suddenly return, and never, nevermore Thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing, serving as Thy hosts above,

Praying, praising without ceasing, glorying in Thy precious love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be:

Let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee!

Chang'd from glory into glory till in heav'n we take our place,

Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise!

SENDING

SENDING SONG

Joy to the World

Joy to the world; the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King!

Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
and heav'n and nature sing;
And heav'n and nature sing; and heav'n and nature sing!

Joy to the earth; the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks,
hills and plains repeat the sounding joy;
Repeat the sounding joy; repeat the sounding joy!

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found;
Far as the curse is found; far as — far as the curse is found!

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
and wonders of His love;
And wonders of His love; and wonders of His love!

BENEDICTION

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.... Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus!”

from Revelation 1:4 and 22:20

LIFE TOGETHER

CHURCH LIFE

MRFM \$500,000 Matching Gift - Now- Dec 31: Gifts + increased/new commitments.

Children's Ministry Assistant - Position opening. See Looking Up for details.

Church Directory - Families who joined the directory can pick up between services.

Winter Break - Dec. 14-Jan 4: 9am and 10:45am Worship; 10:15am Hope Cafe.

- Dec. 28: one service at 9am. Check website for updated service times.

Christmas Lights Run - Dec. 21 4:45pm: Run/walk + pizza - RSVP to Margo Brown-
margobrown718@gmail.com

Christmas Eve Services: 4pm Family Service and 9pm Candlelight Lessons & Carols.

Office Hours: Closed Dec. 26 and Jan. 1-2

Discovering Hope: Friday, Jan. 23, 7:30pm-9pm; Sundays, Jan. 25 - Feb. 22, 10am

Quito Missions Trip: Info packets in back of sanctuary and registration open.

PARENTS & CHILDREN

MS Great Wolf Lodge: Feb. 13-14. Registration is now open! See Looking Up.

Kids Connection - *December Verse* - For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

FINANCIAL UPDATE AS OF DECEMBER 16TH, 2025

	Actual to Date	Budget through 12/31	Difference	
Income	\$1,275,436	\$1,482,783	-\$207,347	-13.98%
Expense	\$1,308,711	\$1,482,783	-\$174,072	-11.74%
Surplus (Deficit)	-\$33,275	\$0	-\$33,275	

ANNUAL MINISTRY BUDGET: \$1,482,783

Making Room for More	Campaign Goal	Campaign Commitments	Gifts Received
	\$8.6 million	\$5,243,302	\$3,479,286