

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY
27 November
The First Sunday in Advent

HYMNS: 1 19 9 11

THE LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE

M: The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I shall raise up to David a righteous branch, a King who will reign and do what is just and right in the land.

C: **This is the name by which He will be called: the Lord our Righteousness.**

Prayer: **Lord, You let Your people wait for four thousand years while You were preparing the coming of their salvation. Send us Your Holy Spirit, that we may, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, rightly prepare for His coming into our hearts, and for His final coming. Amen.**

INTROIT: Psalm 122

I was glad when people told me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Our feet have been standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who have been built like a city that has been firmly joined together, where the tribes, the tribes of the LORD, have been going up. This is a regulation for Israel, to praise the name of the LORD.

For thrones for judgment have been set there, the thrones of the family of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you have peace! May there be peace inside your walls and security in your fortresses!" For the sake of my brothers and friends, let me say, "May there be peace in you!"

Because of the house of the LORD, our God, I shall seek your good.

COLLECT: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5 The Mountain of the LORD
Romans 13:8-14 Fulfilling the Law through love
Matthew 21:1-11 The triumphal entry

Isaiah 2:1-5 The Mountain of the LORD

¹ This is the Revelation that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw about Judah and Jerusalem. ² In the last days the mountain of the Temple of the LORD will be established as the highest of the mountains and will be elevated above the hills and all the nations will stream to it. ³ Then many peoples will come and say, “Come! Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Jacob! He will teach us His Ways, so that we may walk in His paths.”

For the Teaching will go out from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ Then He will be the Judge between the nations and will mediate between many peoples. Then they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning knives. No nation will take up a sword against another nation, and they will not learn war any longer. ⁵ Family of Jacob, come! Let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Romans 13: 8-14 Fulfilling the Law through love

⁸ Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another! For the person who loves the other person has fulfilled the Law. ⁹ For the Commandments, “**You shall not commit adultery!**” “**You shall not murder!**” “**You shall not steal!**” “**You shall not covet!**” and whatever other Commandment there may be are summed up in this: “**You shall love your neighbour as yourself!**” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to the neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the Law.

¹¹ Do this, since you know the time, that now it is the hour for you to wake up from sleep! For our salvation is nearer now than when we first began to believe. ¹² The night has advanced, and the day is almost here. Therefore, let us lay aside the works of darkness and let us put on the weapons of light! ¹³ Let us live decently as in the daytime, not in excessive feasting or getting drunk, not in sinning sexually and living wildly, not in quarrelling and being jealous! ¹⁴ Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not be concerned to gratify the desires of the sinful nature!

Matthew 21:1-11 The triumphal entry

¹ When they had approached Jerusalem and reached Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples. ² He told them, “Go to the village ahead of you! At once you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to Me! ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them immediately.”

⁴ This happened so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

5 “Tell the daughter of Zion: ‘Look! Your King is coming to you, meek and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their garments on them, and Jesus sat on them. **8** The very large crowd spread their garments on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** The crowds that went ahead of Him and that followed Him were shouting: **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!”**

10 When He had entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

11 The crowds answered, “This is the Prophet Jesus, who is from Nazareth in Galilee.”

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

Sermon for the 1st Sunday in Advent, 2022

Isaiah 2:1-5

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our First Reading from before, Isaiah 2:1-5: **This is the Revelation that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw about Judah and Jerusalem. ² In the last days the mountain of the Temple of the LORD will be established as the highest of the mountains and will be elevated above the hills and all the nations will stream to it. ³ Then many peoples will come and say, “Come! Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Jacob! He will teach us His Ways, so that we may walk in His paths.”**

For the Teaching will go out from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ Then He will be the Judge between the nations and will mediate between many peoples. Then they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning knives. No nation will take up a sword against another nation, and they will not learn war any longer. ⁵ Family of Jacob, come! Let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Book of Isaiah begins with these words, “*Hear, heaven, and listen, earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I have reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me”* (v. 2).

With the heavens and earth as jurors, God the Almighty Prosecutor presents His closing argument against the defendant, His own people, Israel. Why? *Because they had abandoned their Maker and Redeemer*. Their worship was not sincere. Their rulers were corrupt and lacked mercy. They oppressed the weak and lived solely for pleasure. What was the just sentence for their crimes? Their land would become desolate, and they would be burned with unquenchable fire. Similar words of judgment and condemnation immediately follow the text for our sermon today.

But here in Isaiah 2 verses 1–5, Isaiah abruptly shifts to words of mercy and a description even of Israel’s future glory. He writes, “**In the last days the mountain of the Temple of the LORD will be established as the highest of the mountains... For the Teaching will go out from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem... No nation will take up a sword against another nation, and they will not learn war any longer.**” What do these words mean? What was the LORD promising about the future?

From the prophet’s day to the present time, Isaiah’s prophecy about a mountain that God would one day establish high above all other mountains - to which the peoples would stream to hear the LORD’s teaching and out of which God’s Word would flow to the rest of the world, bringing peace and harmony - has been misunderstood and abused. Just where is the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**”?

For many of the Jews living during Jesus’ humble ministry, the mountain Isaiah was talking about was Jerusalem. That’s where God would come and deliver His people from their physical enemies and establish a literal kingdom on earth that would rule all other kingdoms. Convinced of this, the Jews had rejected Jesus, thinking He couldn’t possibly be the Messiah, the One sent by God to bring about such an earthly kingdom, since Jesus brought not glory but a *cross*, not political freedom but *forgiveness*.

Where, then, is the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**”? For

millennialists, the answer is much the same as the old Jewish one. A millennialist (millennium means “thousand”) holds that these words refer to a thousand years at the end of the world when believers will rule on this earth and defeat all their enemies. Jehovah’s Witnesses are one such religion that teaches this. They interpret Revelation 20:4, which reads, “*They began to live and began to reign with Christ for a thousand years,*” as a literal thousand-year rule on earth. So, they believe the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**” refers literally to Jerusalem, and that one day, before the resurrection of the dead, Jesus will come to set up there a central government and rule all the nations of the world for a thousand years. The godly of the world will be in charge, and the ungodly will be suppressed.

Where, then, is the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**”? For modern Judaism, it is the land of Israel. However, unlike the picture Isaiah gives us of the nations of the world streaming to Jerusalem, adherents of modern Judaism treat Israel as the *exclusive possession of the Jews*. The conversion of Gentiles to Judaism is hardly a priority, and to the extent that there are Gentile converts to Judaism, distinctions remain. A Gentile is still a Gentile.

Where, then, is the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**”? For many of the medieval popes, it was either Jerusalem, the holiest of pilgrimage destinations, or Rome, the centre of Christendom and home of Christ’s representative on earth, the pope himself. Yet, unlike the voluntary streaming of people and the conditions of peace that Isaiah describes, the popes sought to establish the kingdom of God by force - during the Crusades *through war* and during the Inquisition through *instruments of torture*.

Where, then, is the “**mountain of the Temple of the LORD**”? A key to helping us unlock the mystery is the phrase “**In the last days.**” The error of first-century Jews and modern millennialists lay in thinking that the “**the last days**” to which Old Testament believers looked forward *are still way in the future*. But what does the author of Hebrews say? “*God has long ago spoken at many times and in many ways to our fathers by the prophets, but has **in these last days** spoken to us by His Son*” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Did you catch that? “*In these last days.*” Every day since Christ’s resurrection and ascension until His Second Coming is one of the last days. There is nothing yet to be accomplished for our salvation between now and our Lord’s coming again in

glory! Remember what Paul said from our Second Reading for today? *“Do this, since you know the time, that now it is the hour for you to wake up from sleep!”* (Romans 13:11). We do know the time! We are living even now in the last days.

Isaiah also spoke of nations freely streaming to the **“mountain of the Temple of the LORD,”** where **“He will teach us His Ways, so that we may walk in His paths.”** So much for an earthly kingdom brought about by force of arms. Remember what Jesus told Pontius Pilate. *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). Jesus said that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven, instead of committing violence, *suffers* violence, and He warned against those who would try to *“take it by force”* (Matthew 11:12).

No, the **“mountain of the Temple of the LORD”** is the place where God dwells and is enthroned and reveals Himself to His people. The **“mountain of the Temple of the LORD”** is where God gathers His people around His Word. In short, the **“mountain of the Temple of the LORD”** is here, in this place, God’s Church. It is in this place where you and I have gathered. Therefore, we are part of the fulfilment of Isaiah’s 2,700-year-old prophecy!

Imagine a first-century Palestinian, thanks to some time-travelling technology, who was able to be transported into the present. He may argue that today’s world hardly resembles Isaiah’s picture of peace, how nations **“will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning knives.”** But what did the Christmas angels declare? *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people whom He favours!”* (Luke 2:14). A modern millennialist may argue that understanding Isaiah 2 in terms of the Christian Church does not take the text literally or seriously enough. But Isaiah says, **“For the Teaching will go out from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”** 2:3). Must the nations make pilgrimage to Jerusalem to hear the Word of the LORD, or does the Word itself go out from Jerusalem to the nations? The risen Christ commanded His disciples to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins *“to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47), and that’s exactly what happened: The Word - the promise of salvation through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross - went out from Jerusalem, starting with the apostles, and spread to sinners around the world. Even today, around the world, people of every nation, language,

and tribe come to the “**Temple of the LORD**” and are being converted to faith in Jesus Christ, taught by God and walking in His paths.

That same Word that began in Jerusalem comes to us today. Although we fall under the same judgment which God spoke to His people in Isaiah, the LORD God has graciously pardoned us. He has issued a stay of execution. He has done so for the sake of the One who was condemned in our place – His Son, Jesus Christ. Risen from the dead, God’s Son declares to us this day, “*Peace be with you.*” All our sins have been forgiven.

It’s true that, just as did the believers of Old Testament times, we still look forward with a sure hope to that Last Day, when God will put an end to all earthly war, remove all sin, and wipe away all tears when there will be only peace and joy in the presence of our Lord forever. But unlike the Old Testament believers, we know that the age of Christ’s Second Coming is the culmination of what has already begun. Isaiah got to view the mountain *from a distance*. We are actually dwelling on it! These *are* the last days. The Light *has come* into the world! Even now, there is forgiveness of sins and peace, peace with God and therefore with one another, and the Word of the Lord draws the nations to itself.

What a note on which to begin a new church year! Today, on the First Sunday in Advent, Isaiah reminds us that the Lord is faithful to His promises. Though we still live in a world ravaged by war and disease and other calamities, a world still in bondage to sin and death and far from glory, God dwells even now with us today and reveals Himself to us. “**Family of Jacob, come! Let us walk in the light of the LORD!**” The psalmist wrote, “*Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119:105). By faith in Jesus, we have been included in the “**Family of Jacob**”-and are encouraged to use the Word so that it may show us the path and give us power to walk as the Lord directs. May it be so! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Almighty God and Father, we thank and praise You for Your promises of mercy and deliverance, which You have fulfilled in the coming of Your Son Jesus Christ. He is indeed the Light to reveal You to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

As Your faithful people in every age have believed Your Word, grant that we, too, may believe it, and one day inherit Your heavenly promises. As Your people of old looked forward with longing to the coming of the Messiah, grant that we, too, may joyfully welcome Jesus into our hearts, and be saved by Him from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

Lead us by Your Spirit to a deep awareness of our need of repentance. Teach us to hate what is evil and to love what is good. Strengthen us when our enemies try to lead us into sin. Direct our lives in ways that are holy and right, that we may serve and glorify You in all things.

Cause Your saving light to shine in all corners of the earth, that people everywhere may know Your love in Christ Jesus, and join that great number of Your people who say: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Grant peace to the nations of the earth. Look with special favour on our own country, and on all its citizens. Guide all who rule over us, that they may learn to know You as the only true God, and may seek to do Your will in all things.

Bless all who have gathered in Your house today to hear Your precious Word. Grant strength, comfort, and understanding to those who are sick or troubled, to those who are sad and depressed, to those who are enduring hardships, and to all others who are in any bodily or spiritual need. Grant them perseverance, and the joy of Your abiding presence.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who has come to deliver us, who has died to save us, and risen to justify us, and who is always alive to intercede for us. Amen.

Article - Hope Can be Difficult

Hope can be a difficult thing to keep alive. We all struggle to keep an optimistic outlook. Not all that we hope for is realised and seen in our lifetimes. Disappointment guts the heart of our hope. We assume that what is unrealised in our time is unrealised forever. We strain to see beyond today, let alone years into the future. Even the ancients, the writer to the Hebrews tells us, “*died in faith, not having received the things promised.*” Yet the writer also tells us that they saw them and greeted them “*from afar*” (Heb. 11:13). Faith must see things as God sees them, from His perspective, in the context of eternity. Thus, the Word to which faith clings upholds faith with heaven-born promises anchored in the eternal Christ.

Abraham, who received a promise of his own much like Zechariah’s, faced the same seemingly unbelievable possibility of fulfilment. Paul tells us that “*in hope he believed against hope*” (Rom. 4:18). His body was “*as good as dead*” given his advanced age of about a hundred years. Sarah’s womb, like Elizabeth’s, was barren. No earthly hope. Yet faith believed against that dead-ended hope. It hoped based entirely upon what God could do, anchored in His word of assurance. No distrust could shake Abraham, because he was “*fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised*” (Rom. 4:19, 21).

Many of our hopes come from mere wishes and desires for temporary enjoyments. As we get older, we understand how to handle the disappointments that come when they are not realised; so our hopes are conditioned. You just know some things are no more than wishful thinking with little basis in reality. But some of our hopes arise out of moments of crushing crises like serious sickness and impending death. We need certain hopes to come true. We try to hope when calamity strikes and leaves our lives in shambles and shattered fragments. We pray fervently. We hope with every fibre of our spirit. We try to hang on to optimism despite repeated disappointments. Time passes. Hours turn into days. Days turn into weeks. Weeks turn into years. How long can we hope?

But hope born of faith fights doubts only when it is anchored in Christ. And such hopes transcend our own limited desires. Zechariah and Elizabeth could

hardly imagine how their long-hoped-for son would become the very forerunner of God's own Son. They would learn that when God sends a heavenly messenger like Gabriel from the very presence of God Himself, the promise will not be the foundation of small and limited hopes. You and I, as those baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ, live within great and grand hopes, Christ-filled hopes, hopes that concern the defeat of death and the gift of abundant life. Gabriel's message therefore comes also to us, concerns each of us in our own disappointments. Look beyond this moment, the messenger tells us. Look beyond your own personal and limited desires. Look to the larger story, the greater plan. Look to the grand plans God has for you in Christ's death and resurrection, plans like those announced to the prophet Jeremiah in his own difficult times: "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I shall hear you. You will seek Me and find Me*" (Jer. 29:11-13). Yes, God has plans for each of us as well. And these plans in Christ are for our greater good, a good we often cannot even begin to imagine in the darkness of our struggles.



Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at draelc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Children's Message:

God's Megaphone

Do you know what a megaphone is? A megaphone is something you use to make your voice louder so people can hear you better.

One of today's Bible readings is from a book written by a man named Isaiah. Isaiah is known as a prophet, because God sent him to tell God's people things they needed to hear. A prophet was basically a megaphone for God, someone that God spoke through.



Can you think of some people today who are basically like a megaphone for God, who share God's Word with you so you can hear it better? Perhaps you could think of your parents, your grandparents, your pastor, or your Sunday School teacher - all of them speak God's Word to you. This week maybe thank those people for speaking the Word of Jesus to you 😊. Thanks to them, you know God and believe in Him; thanks to the people who brought you to be baptised, your own parents, you have become God's child and a member of His kingdom.

As I said, Isaiah was one of these people God used to speak for Him. We're going to hear from Isaiah not only today but for the next three Sundays in church. Isaiah is one of the men God especially used to tell people what we're talking about these upcoming Sundays. These Sundays, this season, we call Advent, when we talk about God's Son coming into our world. Isaiah's going to tell us why Jesus has come: God the Father does not like it when we sin, but He has sent Jesus to take our sin away, sending Him to be born as a baby at Christmas, then to grow up and be our Saviour by dying on the cross.



Let's pray. *Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You that You have come into the world to save me. Thank You for all the people who preach your Word to me. Help me to hear You. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS**COMING SERVICES**

4 December 2 Advent	11 December 3 Advent	18 December 4 Advent
10.00am HC & Downs Children's Christmas Service at Greenwood.	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA HC (note time) 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN PR Harvest Festival & Baptism 7.00pm MARBURG Children's Christmas Program	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC 7.00pm Carols Evening at Toowoomba
Sunday, 4 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10;	Romans 15:4-13;	Matthew 3:1-12
HYMNS: 12 13 2 622		
Sunday, 11 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10;	James 5:7-11;	Matthew 11:2-15
HYMNS: 15 17 739 (325 290) 510 GRN: 276 15 809 (from the LSB) 17		

Tonight, 6.30pm. Advent Tea at Aubigny. Could each family please provide a plate and something for dessert? An Advent program will be held after tea.

Next Sunday, 4 December. Could the Sunday School children please be at the church at 9.00am for a practice run through of the program? Also, members, please bring something for a shared lunch.

Saturday, 10 December, 10.30am. The bookclub are meeting at the manse. Members, remember, we were to read up to page 69.

Please take home with you today a copy of the Advent Devotions booklet.

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.

Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.

If there are any late changes to be made to divine services, these will be listed immediately on the website, and a text sent out to members.

If you are unsure, please contact pastor.