

Christmas Day December 25, 2016

LUTHERAN

## LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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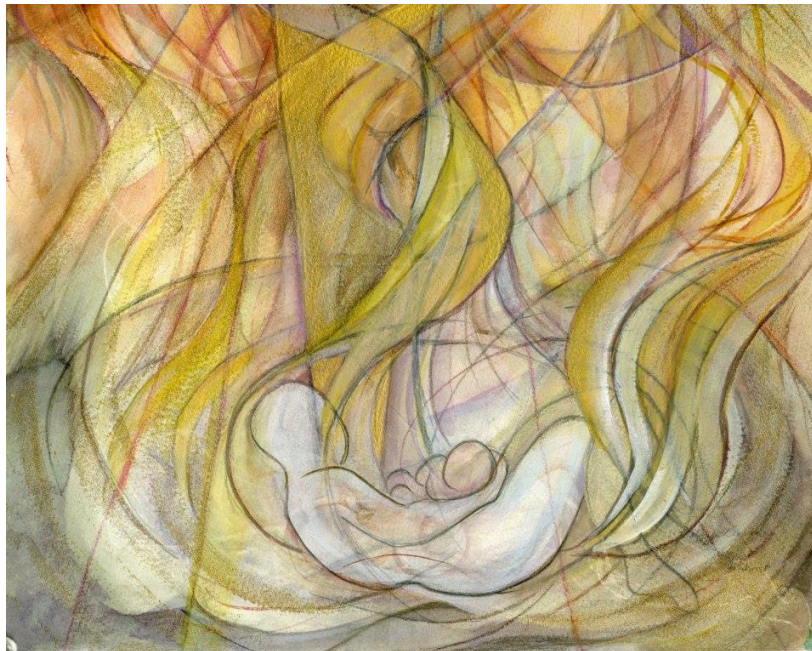
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“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

December 22 2016 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH

*(Presented as a part of the bible study/worship midweek service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, a newly formed assisted living site and used by Lutherans in Africa.*

*E-mail [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.*



<http://caitlinrussell.org/tag/john-11-14/>

### Hymn of the Day

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 389 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 105**

**“Let altogether praise our God”**

(August) Crull (translator) was a distinguished hymnologist and translated many hymns that appeared in several Lutheran hymnals. He published a German grammar and edited a book of devotions, *Das walte Gott*, based on the writings of Dr. C.F.W. Walther. His project of translating Lutheran hymns so they would be accessible to American Lutherans bore its first fruits when he published a book of English hymns at the Norwegian Synod publishers in Decorah, in 1877. --[www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/http://www.hymnary.org/person/Crull\\_A1](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/http://www.hymnary.org/person/Crull_A1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJEO63cZrzU> A light hearted sing-a-long.

Rechtstreekseinspir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=697D8g76nHc> A bit more traditional presentation. "Two settings of the chorale melody *Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, Allzugleich* by Johann Gottfried Walther are played. Let All Together Praise Our God is played by David Christensen on a Moller/Allen organ."

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Isaiah 52: 7-10; RCL (Revised Common Lectionary), the same verses (Next Week: Numbers 6:22-27; RCL, Numbers 6:22-27) The first reading will be from Isaiah through January 22.**

*"...The people are waiting -- waiting for the messenger who announces the return of the Lord, for when the Lord returns to Zion then the people too will follow. But as long as the Lord abandons Zion, the people as well will remain in exile. Returning to life is completely dependent on God's own choice to return, to return to Zion, and to return to the people.*

*The text sets up a classic scenario. From the battlefield, a messenger is sent to announce that victory has been won. The watchmen are straining to see the one who is coming and find out the news. In this case they sing the news of victory for all to hear. Despite this seemingly straightforward progression of events, upon closer look, we discover several surprises in the story..." (continued after reading)*

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,  
who publishes salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

<sup>8</sup> The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;  
together they sing for joy;  
for eye to eye they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing,  
you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his people;  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

“...Not only is a messenger coming to announce a victory from the battlefield, but God’s self is coming in triumph. The Lord returns! The battlefield is not just any confrontation between two armies but the field of history itself in which God is triumphant, for it is not only Jerusalem that is redeemed but also all the nations. Finally, the watchmen watching for the messenger cannot contain themselves! Even before the messenger arrives they recognize the news and sing it out! The news is stated in cosmic terms: “Your God reigns!”...

...The “watchers” know of this wondrous news as they see the feet of the messenger running towards them. The “feet” is here used figuratively: beautiful refers not to the feet but to the entire messenger/message. This good news of peace is beautiful. It comes running to greet the oppressed. It is an embodied peace! The message is beautiful because it is for all creation. Zion and the towns of Judah constitute the watchmen. They hear and are glad because the Lord who reigns is the Lord who comes to deliver from oppression and from the wicked. The Lord who reigns is God over all gods, over all those forces, powers, idols, and obsessions that enslave the people. The message is peace, good news, and salvation...

...We have come full circle. From the words of the prophet that begin Second Isaiah (Comfort! Comfort!) to this victory celebration in which comfort is clearly defined as God’s own coming, God’s engagement with God’s people, the text pulls us all out of ourselves and into song...

...Today, we as well are keenly aware of the “battles” around us, the many places of death that the celebration of Christmas Day does not do away with. In fact, as we enter the twelve days of Christmas we are immediately reminded of death on the day after Christmas and the martyrdom of Stephen and then, a few days, the remembrance of the Holy Innocents, the murder of children. It is in the midst of death that a song arises, rejoicing in a promise.”  
[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1530](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1530) **Dirk G. Lange**  
Associate Dean; Fredrik A. Schiotz Chair of Missions and Professor of Worship, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

## **Psalm 2; RCL, Psalm 98\* (Psalm 8; RCL, the same Psalm)**

*“Of special interest to us are the Messianic psalms, including Ps. 2, 8, 16, 22, 24, 40, 45, 47, 68, 69, 72, 89, 93, 97, 110, 118; they refer to the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of the world, portraying more or less vividly and completely His person and work, His birth, betrayal, agony, and death, His triumph over death, His ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father Almighty...”* <http://www.kretzmannproject.org/>

## **The Reign of the LORD's Anointed**

2 Why do the nations rage<sup>[a]</sup>  
and the peoples plot in vain?

<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,  
<sup>3</sup> “Let us burst their bonds apart  
and cast away their cords from us.”

<sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.  
<sup>5</sup> Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
<sup>6</sup> “As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.”

<sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree:  
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you.  
<sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
<sup>9</sup> You shall break<sup>[b]</sup> them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
<sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

- a. [Psalm 2:1](#) Or *nations noisily assemble*
- b. [Psalm 2:9](#) Revocalization yields (compare Septuagint) *You shall rule*

“...This Psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture. (In verses 1, 2, 3) the Nations are raging; (4 to 6) the Lord in heaven derides them; (7 to 9) the Son proclaims the decree; and (from 10 to end) advice is given to the kings to yield obedience to the Lord's anointed. This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic form of the Psalm, which naturally falls into four stanzas of three verses each...”<http://www.spurgeon.org/treasury/ps002.php> “ The Treasury of David by Charles Spurgeon. The entire commentary is worth the read.

\*You might enjoy reading the comments by [James Limburg](#) on the RCL Psalm 98.  
[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1535](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1535)

As mentioned last week, parts of Handel's Messiah are prominent at Christmas time. The opening verse of Psalm 2 is one such piece. The following are various ways to listen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suUi4dROLlw> Watch the strings at work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W9J-DSo20I> Now it's your turn!

My favorite recording of Handel's Messiah <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r68P8TBWlQ>

If you would like to give a different approach try this version. It takes some thought and not all will like it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LsZpitl-cl>

**Hebrews 1:1-6 (7-12); RCL, verses 1-4 (5-12)** (*Galatians 3:23-29; RCL, Galatians 4:4-7 or Philippians 2:5-11*) *Some commentaries indicate that verses 5-12 in the RCL reading should be from Chapter 2.*

*"Many religious and ethnic communities have intricate celebrations for the declaration of a new family member's name.*

*Even for those who do not have such rituals, deciding upon and revealing the name of one's child remains one of the most important moments in the process of becoming a parent.*

*Hebrews 1, especially when it serves as the text for Christmas day, allows readers to listen in on God's announcement of the name of his Son..." (continued after reading)*

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1479](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1479) [Amy L.B. Peeler](#)

Associate Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill

## The Supremacy of God's Son

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son"?

<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

<sup>7</sup> Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds,  
and his ministers a flame of fire.”

<sup>8</sup> But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,  
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
therefore God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

<sup>10</sup> And,

“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

<sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment,

<sup>12</sup> like a robe you will roll them up,  
like a garment they will be changed.<sup>[a]</sup>

But you are the same,  
and your years will have no end.”

- a. [Hebrews 1:12](#) Some manuscripts omit *like a garment*

“...The poetically beautiful first sentence of the Epistle to the Hebrews (yes, all four verses comprise only one sentence!) proclaims the magnificence of the Son of God in incomparably majestic prose. The sentence tells his story from time immemorial before the creation of the world up to his present reign during the time of the author...

...Once the author introduces the Son, he appends a series of phrases (seven of them) to describe the Son. First, the author proclaims that God has appointed him as heir; just what one would expect a father to do for his son. The striking thing about Jesus' inheritance is that it is completely comprehensive. He is heir of all things! When one is the Son of God supreme this incomparable inheritance makes sense...

...It seems then, that Jesus, as the Son of God, inherits the name of his Father, just as our sons and daughters inherit our family names. Since God is known as theos kurios his Son bears the same name. The author of Hebrews allows us to hear God announcing his name. The awesome thing Christmas celebrates is that the little baby born in a simple village as a displaced peasant bears the very name of God.”

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1479](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1479) [Amy L.B. Peeler](#)

Associate Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill

“The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1st Chapter”

“Glory to You, O Lord”



## John 1:1-14 (15-18); RCL, verses 1-14 (Luke 2:21; RCL, Luke 2:15-21)

*“Each of the gospels begins with an account of Jesus’ origins. Mark introduces Jesus to us as an adult, telling us that Jesus was “a man from Nazareth” whose advent fulfills the arrival of God’s salvation as foretold by the prophet Isaiah.*

*Matthew and Luke’s narratives begin earlier still, rooting Jesus’ very conception and birth in the prophecies of old and God’s will to deliver humanity.*

*John, however, pushes his account of Jesus, the Word, back to the beginning of time itself. Before anything else had been created, he was...”*

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1960](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1960) [Karl Kuhn](#) Associate Professor of Religion, Lakeland College, Sheboygan, Wis

### The Word Became Flesh

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life,<sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own,<sup>[b]</sup> and his own people<sup>[c]</sup> did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son<sup>[d]</sup> from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- a. [John 1:4](#) Or *was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him*
- b. [John 1:11](#) Greek *to his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people
- c. [John 1:11](#) *People* is implied in Greek
- d. [John 1:14](#) Or *only One, or unique One*

**“This is the Gospel of the Lord”**      **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

“There are so many themes worth exploring in the Prologue to the Gospel of John that it can be difficult to decide just where to land for a sermon. Do we make the connection between the first verse of John and that of Genesis, calling attention to John’s audacious claim to be writing a new Genesis? Do

we let our gaze settle instead on the fourteenth verse, John's Christmas story and the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation?...

...Each year at just about this time, you see, I wish Christmas would last a little longer. We give Easter seven weeks, Pentecost three times that much, and even Lent and Advent six and four Sundays apiece, but Christmas is only twelve short days. And, truth be told, because of the shortness of our cultural attention span and the rise of New Year's Eve as a significant holiday, Christmas barely gets a week of our attention before it is lost in the shuffle of resolutions and bills and all the rest. But these verses remind us that Christmas isn't just a season, it's a way of life. Christmas isn't over when we reach Epiphany, it is only newly launched once again. While the season may pass, the hope and life it promises are just beginning...

<http://www.davidlose.net/2014/12/christmas-2-b-christmas-continued/> **David Lose** President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Penn.

Additional thoughts by President Lose

“...Here are three thoughts toward preaching the kind of sermon that punctures through ordinary, everyday time with the extraordinary news of Christmas:

First, notice that John's “Christmas story” dallies not with angels or shepherds and seems to know nothing of a young mother or magi. Indeed, John's story is hardly about the birth of Jesus at all but instead focuses on the difference that birth makes for all of us...

...But that's not all John offers, which brings me to the second thing that invites our consideration. Because, as I mentioned, while John sums up the Christmas story in just two lines, he spends more time on the significance of Christmas by shifting attention from Jesus' birth to ours. In fact, John is actually less interested in the birth of a babe at Bethlehem than he is in the birth of you and I as children of God...

Which brings me to the third thing I want to suggest for a Christmas sermon in early January. I'd like you to invite your people to begin on this day and continue for the rest of January a simple but profound exercise.

Once every day -- and it will be easier if it's the same time each day -- look in the mirror and say the following: “I am God's child, deserving of love and respect, and God will use me to change the world...” <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=2980>



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