

Kyrioleis

Advent moments for a crowded life

Advent (*ad*, to + *venire*, COME)

1. the period including the four Sundays just before Christmas
2. a) the birth of Christ b) second coming
3. a coming or arrival

All praise to thee, O Jesus Christ, that a man on earth thou liest! Born of a maiden, it is true, in this exults the heav'nly crew. *Kyrieleis*.

The Father's only son begot in the manger has his cot, in our poor dying flesh and blood doth mask itself the endless good. *Kyrieleis*.

Whom all the world could not enwrap, lieth he in Mary's lap; a little child he now is grown, who everything upholds alone. *Kyrieleis*.

In him the eternal light breaks through, gives the world a glory new; a great light shines amid the night, and makes us children of the light. *Kyrieleis*.

The Father's Son, so God by name, a guest in the world became, and leads us from the vale of tears; he in his palace makes us heirs. *Kyrieleis*.

Poor to the earth he cometh thus, pity so to take on us, and make us rich in heaven above, and like the angels of his love. *Kyrieleis*.

All this for us did Jesus do, that his great love he might show. Let Christendom rejoice therefore, and give him thanks for evermore. *Kyrieleis*.¹

¹ "All Praise to Thee, O Jesus Christ" 1523? LW 53, Liturgy and Hymns, Fortress Press 1965, p 240.

When the shopping malls and grocery stores start playing Christmas music before Thanksgiving, when the tinsel and toy soldiers and tanenbaums go up in the windows along main street and in the public squares before the month of December has even begun, it may seem the Christmas season of cheer and goodwill, super sales events and wrapping paper-covered wish lists arrives earlier and stays longer each year. The time of anxiously awaiting the coming of Christ gets lost in the wilderness of shopping lists and decorating, travel plans and cookies by the fireplace. Swirling in the multitude of advertisements and expectations, being told – and all too often believing – that we need this newest product or look to find acceptance among the upper echelon, it may seem that we are waiting for the coming of better credit, more impressive credentials, a ‘nicer’ wardrobe. If ever we have been in need of a Savior, it is now, for at the heart of our sales pitches, our wish lists, our shiny decorations and big holiday parties, is the hunger for community, the fear of rejection and loneliness, the struggle to make ourselves acceptable and exceptional in not only everyone else’s eyes, but in our own, and for some, in God’s. We covet strength and power because we crave importance, we want to be needed so that our position will be secure and we will not be forgotten.

So it is in this time of Advent, of coming, this start of the Church year, that God reminds us we are not, nor have we ever been, nor will we ever be, forgotten. Not just those parts of us which we proclaim with pride, but each bit of our lives is held and known by a just and holy God, by the God in Christ for whom we wait. Not only are we not forgotten, but through Christ each and all of us is re-membered. It is my hope that in these pages, in reflecting on this theme through the lens of Luther’s struggles to find acceptance in the eyes of a just God, in taking the person and nature of the Christ for whom we wait as our focus, we may come to find ourselves found amidst the clutter, loved despite our failings, and hope-fully energized as we continue to wait, praying all the while: Lord, have mercy.
Kyrieleis.

Shalom,

Angela Joy, collector of these Luther thoughts

November, 2008

Advent 1, Sunday

All praise to thee, O Jesus Christ, that a man on earth thou liest! Born of a maiden, it is true, in this exults the heav'nly crew.

Luther writes, in his sermon on the Magnificat:²

“When the holy virgin experienced what great things God was working in her despite her insignificance, lowliness, poverty, and inferiority, the Holy Spirit taught her this deep insight and wisdom, that God is the kind of Lord who does nothing but exalt those of low degree and put down the mighty from their thrones, in short, break what is whole and make whole what is broken.”

As we break bread on Sunday to share in the Lord's Supper, which makes whole our broken communities, consider these words of Luther in light of your own experience: where have you seen brokenness become something new? What sorts of brokenness in your own life and community are crying to be made whole?

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 1, Monday

The Father's only son begot in the manger has his cot, in our poor dying flesh and blood doth mask itself the endless good.

Luther writes, in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“Paul prays God, who is a God of peace, to sanctify us not in one part only, but wholly, through and through, so that spirit, soul, body, and all may be holy.”

Consider how your spirit, soul, and body are united today. Notice how each affects the others. Contemplate what it means that *all* of you is precious to God, that *all* of you has been redeemed.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 1, Tuesday

Whom all the world could not enwrap, lieth he in Mary's lap; a little child he now is grown, who everything upholds alone.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism, on the Second Article of the Creed:

² LW volume 21

“Here we get to know the second person of the Godhead, and we see what we have from God over and above the temporal goods mentioned above, namely, how he has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing.”

Consider also the hymn verse from the second chapter of Philippians:³ “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.”

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 1, Wednesday

In him the eternal light breaks through, gives the world a glory new; a great light shines amid the night, and makes us children of the light.

Luther writes, in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“Mary says, ‘My soul magnifies Him’ – that is, my whole life and being, mind and strength, esteem Him highly. She is caught up, as it were, into Him and feels herself lifted up into His good and gracious will, as the following verse shows. . . . How much more will such a lively inclination be awakened in us when we experience the favor of God, which is exceeding great in His works. All words and thoughts fail us, and our whole life and soul must be set in motion, as though all that lived within us wanted to break forth into praise and singing.”

How glorious is our God, who renders us speechless by Beauty and Grace!

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 1, Thursday

The Father’s Son, so God by name, a guest in the world became, and leads us from the vale of tears; he in his palace makes us heirs.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism, on the Second Article of the Creed:

“These tyrants and jailers [disobedience, sin, death, and all misfortune. . . wrath and displeasure. . . eternal damnation] have now been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, righteousness, and every good blessing. He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s favor and grace. As his own possession he has taken us under his protection and

³ All Scripture texts taken from the New Revised Standard Version

shelter, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.”

And from the first chapter of Galatians: “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 1, Friday

Poor to the earth he cometh thus, pity so to take on us, and make us rich in heaven above, and like the angels of his love.

Luther writes, in his sermon on the Magnificat, that the word “magnifies’ is used by Mary to indicate what her hymn of praise is to be about, namely, the great works and deeds of God, for the strengthening of our faith, for the comforting of all those of low degree, and for the terrifying of all the mighty ones of earth.”

How has your faith been strengthened? Whose witness has given you comfort?

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 1, Saturday

All this for us did Jesus do, that his great love he might show. Let Christendom rejoice therefore, and give him thanks for evermore.

Luther writes, in the explanation of his 28th Thesis of the Heidelberg Disputation: “The love of God which lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive. . . . This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.”

Find a mirror. Look at yourself there and trace the cross of your baptism on your forehead.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 2, Sunday

All praise to thee, O Jesus Christ, that a man on earth thou liest! Born of a maiden, it is true, in this exults the heav'nly crew.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism on the third Commandment:

“For the Word of God is the true holy object above all holy objects. Indeed, it is the only one we Christians know and have. Even if we had the bones of all the saints or all the holy and consecrated vestments gathered together in one pile, they would not help us in the least, for they are all dead things that cannot make anyone holy. But God’s Word is the treasure that makes everything holy. By it all the saints have themselves been made holy. At whatever time God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints.”

And from the Gospel according to John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 2, Monday

The Father’s only son begot in the manger has his cot, in our poor dying flesh and blood doth mask itself the endless good.

Luther writes of Mary, in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“Mary, therefore, calls God her Savior, or her Salvation, even though she neither saw nor felt that this was so, but trusted in sure confidence that He was her Savior and her Salvation. This faith came to her through the work God had done within her.”

In the midst of our culture’s celebration of Christmas, have you considered how truly strange this story is? How great is God, how small an infant, who for nine months was a fetus! How odd that One of such power as to create the universe should take on so little flesh and the particular limits of place and time! How impossible this is to believe without God’s gift of faith!

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 2, Tuesday

Whom all the world could not enwrap, lieth he in Mary's lap; a little child he now is grown, who everything upholds alone.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism on the first Commandment:

“Although much that is good comes to us from human beings, nevertheless, anything received according to his command and ordinance in fact comes from God. Our parents and all authorities – as well as everyone who is a neighbor – have received the command to do us all kinds of good. So we receive our blessings not from them, but from God through them. Creatures are only the hands, channels, and means through which God bestows all blessings.”

Have you been surprised lately at an unexpected blessing? Keep your eyes open today.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 2, Wednesday

In him the eternal light breaks through, gives the world a glory new; a great light shines amid the night, and makes us children of the light.

Luther writes in the Smalcald Articles on Justification:

“I cannot change at all what I have consistently taught about this until now, namely, that ‘through faith’ (as St Peter says) we receive a different, new, clean heart and that, for the sake of Christ our mediator, God will and does regard us as completely righteous and holy. Although sin in the flesh is still not completely gone or dead, God will nevertheless not count it or consider it.”

Consider your present self in light of years past and see how you have grown and changed. Surely God who has been with you this far will continue to guide you in the days ahead.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*.

Advent 2, Thursday

The Father's Son, so God by name, a guest in the world became, and leads us from the vale of tears; he in his palace makes us heirs.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism on the first Commandment:

“Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol... Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.”

Are you Christmas shopping today? Going to a class or a meeting or to work? Imagine putting it all down for an instant - God will not lose you in the clutter; pray not to lose sight of God in the busy days ahead.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 2, Friday

Poor to the earth he cometh thus, pity so to take on us, and make us rich in heaven above, and like the angels of his love.

Luther writes, in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“Now, we described above at length how lowly was the estate of this tender Virgin and how unexpectedly this honor came to her, that God should regard her in such abundant grace... For not her humility but God’s regard is to be praised.”

And from the first letter to the Corinthians: “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe... For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength... He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 2, Saturday

All this for us did Jesus do, that his great love he might show. Let Christendom rejoice therefore, and give him thanks for evermore.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism on the fifth commandment:

“Here God, like a kind father, steps in and intervenes to settle the quarrel before it turns into real trouble and one person kills the other In short, God wants to have everyone defended, delivered, and protected from the wickedness and violence of others, and has placed this commandment as a wall, fortress, and refuge around our neighbors, so that no

one may do them bodily harm or injury... God wishes to remove the root and source that embitters our heart toward our neighbor.”

How easy it is to forget God loves even those we would bear grudges against. Pray today for someone who has hurt or angered you.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*



Advent 3, Sunday

All praise to thee, O Jesus Christ, that a man on earth thou liest! Born of a maiden, it is true, in this exults the heav'nly crew.

Luther writes in the Small Catechism, on the second article of the Creed:

“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being.”

Re-read these two quotes aloud, slowly. What word(s) or phrase(s) catch your attention? Sit with that awhile.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 3, Monday

The Father's only son begot in the manger has his cot, in our poor dying flesh and blood doth mask itself the endless good.

Luther continues on the second article of the Creed:

“He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.”

Do you have any scars? Look at your hands and consider what second Isaiah writes, in chapter 49: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands...”

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 3, Tuesday

Whom all the world could not enwrap, lieth he in Mary's lap; a little child he now is grown, who everything upholds alone.

Luther finishes his small catechism explanation of the second article:

“He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.”

Consider for a moment the diversity of religions in the world, the broad spectrum of communities within the Christian tradition, the expansive range of cultures and ecosystems on this earth throughout history. God who is greater far than all entirely loves and desires to spend eternity with you, to be your Lord. Breathe a moment in this thought.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 3, Wednesday

In him the eternal light breaks through, gives the world a glory new; a great light shines amid the night, and makes us children of the light.

Luther writes in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“For the word ‘mighty’ does not denote a quiescent power, as one says of a temporal king that he is mighty, even though he may be sitting still and doing nothing. But it denotes an energetic power, a continuous activity, that works and operates without ceasing.”

Observe light today. How does it play on shape and color, in bright and shadow, how does it change throughout the day? Can it be made into a metaphor for God’s work in the world?

We pray: *Kyrieleis*.

Advent 3, Thursday

The Father’s Son, so God by name, a guest in the world became, and leads us from the vale of tears; he in his palace makes us heirs.

Luther writes in his sermon on the Magnificat:

“When a prince takes a poor beggar by the hand, it is not the beggar’s lowliness but the prince’s grace and goodness that is to be commended.”

Often in times of struggle, but occasionally in times of blessing, the question comes up “why me?” When we go to worship or increase our giving, it is God’s goodness being expressed, God’s grace flowing through us. And thank God for that, because my ability to give and to love is so inconsistent, but God is constant.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*.

Advent 3, Friday

Poor to the earth he cometh thus, pity so to take on us, and make us rich in heaven above, and like the angels of his love.

Luther writes in his sermon for the first Sunday in Advent:⁴

“If Christ had entered in splendor like a king of earth, the appearance and the words would have been according to nature and reason and would have seemed to the eye according to the words, but then there would have been no room for faith. He who believes in Christ must find riches in poverty, honor in dishonor, joy in sorrow, life in death, and hold fast to them in that faith which clings to the Word and expects such things.”

Make a ‘thanks’ list today, for both tangible and intangible gifts you have received.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*.



Advent 3, Saturday

All this for us did Jesus do, that his great love he might show. Let Christendom rejoice therefore, and give him thanks for evermore.

Luther writes further in his sermon for the first Sunday in Advent:

“God must lay the first stone and begin with you, if you are to seek him and pray to him. He is present when you begin to seek. If he were not you could not accomplish anything but mere sin, and the greater the sin, the greater and holier the work you will attempt, and you will become a hardened hypocrite.”

Find a creative way today to communicate your first memory of God. This can include, but is not limited to: poetry, journaling, sculpture, music, drawing, photography, finger-painting...

We pray: *Kyrieleis*



⁴ Luther’s Church Postil, Gospels, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany Sermons

Advent 4, Sunday

Come, the heathen's healing Light, humbly known a maiden's child, fill with wonder all the earth God should grant it such a birth.⁵

All praise to thee, O Jesus Christ, that a man on earth thou liest! Born of a maiden, it is true, in this exults the heav'nly crew.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 4, Monday

Not of flesh, or of man's blood was incarned the Word of God. By the Holy Ghost alone blossomed forth the virgin's womb.

The Father's only son begot in the manger has his cot, in our poor dying flesh and blood doth mask itself the endless good.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 4, Tuesday

Maiden she was found with child, chastity yet undefiled; many a virtue from her shone, God was there as on his throne.

Whom all the world could not enwrap, lieth he in Mary's lap; a little child he now is grown, who everything upholds alone.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Advent 4, Wednesday

From the chamber of her womb, from the royal hall he came. Very man and God of grace forth he comes to run his race.

⁵ The following week's verses are from "Come, the Heathen's Healing Light" LW 53.

In him the eternal light breaks through, gives the world a glory new; a great light shines amid the night, and makes us children of the light.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 4, Thursday

From the Father came his road, and returns again to God; unto hell his road went down, up then to the Father's throne.

The Father's Son, so God by name, a guest in the world became, and leads us from the vale of tears; he in his palace makes us heirs.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 4, Friday

Equal with the Father, win vict'ry in the flesh o'er sin. Let the health which thou hast brought in our mortal flesh be wrought.

Poor to the earth he cometh thus, pity so to take on us, and make us rich in heaven above, and like the angels of his love.

We pray: *Kyrieleis.*

Advent 4, Saturday

Shine thy manger bright and clear, sets the night a new star there; darkness thence must keep away, faith dwells ever in the day.

All this for us did Jesus do, that his great love he might show. Let Christendom rejoice therefore, and give him thanks for evermore.

We pray: *Kyrieleis*

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.