

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Other Student Publications

Resources for Ministry

11-22-2024

God Loves Me Dearly: An Advent Meditation on Hymnody

Joshua Teggatz

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, teggatzj@csl.edu

Nathan Tritch

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis, tritchn@csl.edu

Jonathan Landrey

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, jonathan.landrey@ctsfw.edu

Cindy Koch

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis, kochc@csl.edu

Wesley Deiss

Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, wesley.deiss@ctsfw.edu

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/osp>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Teggatz, Joshua; Tritch, Nathan; Landrey, Jonathan; Koch, Cindy; Deiss, Wesley; Reynolds, Abigail; Hiles, Adam; Horst, Joshua; Skove, Ryan; Fry, Rory; Mcguire, Brenna; Bublitz, Nathan; Innvaer, Gunstein; Fields, Joshua; Greenhagen, Chase; Witt, Julia; Bergstedt, Jacob; Ferguson, Travis; Williams, Peter; Vue, Pamela; Rakotonirina, Solomona; Grabau, Lydia; Demlow, Nathaniel; Atlee, Chris; Raugutt, Nathan; Burnham, Grant; Pohlod, Peter; Bear, Eric; Norton, Philip; Eggerman, Joseph; Turner, Rowan; and Crowder, Sarah, "God Loves Me Dearly: An Advent Meditation on Hymnody" (2024). *Other Student Publications*. 26. <https://scholar.csl.edu/osp/26>

This Devotion is brought to you for free and open access by the Resources for Ministry at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Other Student Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Authors

Joshua Teggatz, Nathan Tritch, Jonathan Landrey, Cindy Koch, Wesley Deiss, Abigail Reynolds, Adam Hiles, Joshua Horst, Ryan Skove, Rory Fry, Brenna Mcguire, Nathan Bublitz, Gunstein Innvaer, Joshua Fields, Chase Greenhagen, Julia Witt, Jacob Bergstedt, Travis Ferguson, Peter Williams, Pamela Vue, Solomona Rakotonirina, Lydia Grabau, Nathaniel Demlow, Chris Atlee, Nathan Raugutt, Grant Burnham, Peter Pohlod, Eric Bear, Philip Norton, Joseph Eggerman, Rowan Turner, and Sarah Crowder

God Loves Me Dearly: An Advent Meditation on Hymnody
CSL-CTSFW Seminary Advent Devotion

Hymnody has a knack for proclaiming the gospel to us anew in such a way that is both simple and profound. When we join our voices in song to our Triune God, we join the voices of countless generations praising Him and singing once more the story of His salvation in Jesus Christ. These beloved hymns of the Church are a powerful vehicle by which the gospel is once more placed upon our lips, heard with our ears, and inwardly digested in our hearts, so that we might know once more the saving work of Jesus Christ for us.

The Advent and Christmas seasons are especially a time where gathering together around word and song are of utmost importance to God's people. The birth of Christ, once surrounded by so much song, continues to be surrounded today by the cries of God's faithful people, praising Him for His promises fulfilled in this babe lying in a manger and hoping in His promises which will be fulfilled at His second coming in glory.

This devotion, going through the month of December, will guide us through many of our beloved hymns of Advent and Christmas, each of which point us once more to our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to dwell among his people in the flesh so that we might dwell with him forever. Students from both our seminary communities have come together to write these devotions, each day focusing on a different hymn in our *Lutheran Service Book*, focusing on either a particular verse of the hymn, the hymn's flow as a whole, or a Scripture passage it is based on.

We encourage you to make use of this devotion for yourself and your family, following along with the hymn in the hymnal (and even singing it together!). May we join Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, the angels, all the heavenly host, and all God's people throughout the world as we sing once more:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

(Luke 2:14).

Joshua Teggatz (CSL Spiritual Life Chairman, 4th Year Seminarian)

Sunday, December 1st, 2024

“The Advent of Our King” (LSB 331)

*“The advent of our King
Our prayers must now employ,
And we must hymns of welcome sing
In strains of holy joy” (LSB 331.1).*

“The Advent of Our King” is a wonderful Advent Hymn. Look up this hymn and sing it with joy for the Incarnate Living God and King Jesus who came to die for our sin as a slave and now intercedes for us before the face of God as our High Priest. He is coming again soon on the clouds of light with Glory to Judge all flesh and to unite all His children with Him forever.

This stanza and the entire hymn are all sprinkled with Christ’s incarnation, suffering, dying (blood atonement) on a tree, rising, ascending, interceding for us—His mediating the New Covenant between God and man, and His soon appearing and second coming on the Last Day of Resurrection. We now employ our prayers as Christ intercedes for us now before the face of God the Father in heaven as our sacrificial Lamb, High Priest, and King. On the Last Day, Jesus will appear again—Christ will soon be coming on the clouds, and every eye will see him, and all tribes of the earth will have great mourning over Him (see Rev 1:7) and great joy for the Lamb’s slaves (Rev 22:3; see 22:1-5).

All Christians will unite from all places and will be with Him in the new heaven and new earth forever in His everlasting rule and reign with the Father and the Spirit. Here and now, we are to put off the old self and put on the new (that is your Baptism into Christ) under Christ’s Kingdom waiting for His return as we sing hymns, pray, plea for mercy, rejoice in life, work, love and serve each other in His Name, until He returns.

Lord Jesus, we employ our prayers for mercy to put away works of darkness, as You clothe us in Your righteousness, to sing hymns of joy in Your rule and reign today, and Your glorious return to come on the Last Day. Amen.

Nathan Tritch (CSL 2nd Year Seminarian)

Monday, December 2nd, 2024

“O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334)

“And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’ And the crowds said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee’” (Matthew 21:9-11).

O Lord, how shall I meet you? Paul Gerhardt poses this question in his 1653 hymn as he invites us to ponder our Lord’s advent. In the second stanza, he brings us into a heavenly scene that recalls Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. “Green boughs and fairest palms” strew his way as “joyous psalms and songs” fill the air. This is how the crowds in Jerusalem welcomed him just days before his crucifixion, yet they did not understand who he was or what he came to do. Their messiah came not to overthrow the Romans as they supposed, but to be crucified on a Roman cross. Their very God had come in human flesh to overthrow Satan and reconcile them to himself. With those crowds we may shout, “Hosanna, save us!” knowing that we are indeed saved by his blood. With the heavenly host we may also rightly sing to him, “Glory to God in the Highest!” With all the saints, we eagerly await his reappearing, crying, “Come quickly, Lord Jesus!” How shall we meet him? We shall meet him as Lord.

Lord Jesus, as we consider your incarnation this Advent season, keep our hearts and minds fixed on the purpose of your coming—on the cross and empty tomb. Remind us also of your second advent, that we might not become entangled or distraught in the cares of this world but live in constant hope of the world to come. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Jonathan Landrey (CTSFW 1st Year Seminarian)

Tuesday, December 3rd, 2024

“O Bride of Christ, Rejoice” (LSB 335)

*“O bride of Christ, rejoice;
Exultant raise thy voice
To hail the day of glory
Foretold in sacred story.
Hosanna, praise, and glory!
Our King, we bow before Thee” (LSB 335.1).*

What an awkward entry, when the Lord of Creation arrives in Jerusalem. Humble and lowly, it's not the way a King of power should show up and take charge. But his praise-paved path is the beginning arrival that induces the eternal end.

The humble beast called Christ,
Comes weak and meek and kind.
O Bride, His life - your treasure
He will make your grave surrender.

Upon a donkey. They sort of knew. They must have heard. They were witnessing the journey of the Promised Someone that was meant to come. So, the crowds went wild.

In their mind, the people thought great things. In their heart, they wanted this to be the King that should make everything better. Economic policy, equality, a better way of life. “Hosanna!” They voted with their voices. Popularly received. They believed. “Hosanna! Save us now!”

But what did they really know? What did they really say? The eternally-chanted theme: save us now. The vast mass-repeat: make Jerusalem great! As the King of Creation marched slowly down the aisle. Straight towards his bloody sacrifice, O bride of Christ.

Rejoice.

They go - the Lord to meet.
Stripped, tunic at his feet.
They laid their hopes before him.
While spit and shame adorned Him.

He came to his own and they did not know him. Since this King must advent - first - in death.

O Bride of Resurrection. You now know why he has come.

Rejoice.

*Hosanna, praise, and glory!
Our King, we bow before Thee. Amen.*

Cindy Koch (CSL PhD Student)

Wednesday, December 4th, 2024

“Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending” (LSB 336)

“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:27-28).

Dark nights are lengthening their dominion over our autumnal landscape, and sharp air bids us to flee its probing fingers. The weather is only a shadowy reminder of more corporeal problems. As the year has grown old and is passing away, we too are growing old and dying just as God said would happen. This isn't the time of year we often gaze at the sky in hopeful anticipation of our Savior's return. How we long to see Him! Does He remember us here? Warm your hearts, brothers and sisters! Jesus Christ will advent to us still bearing the marks of His crucifixion – those dear tokens of His passion. He will never cease to remember you. Not only has He atoned for your sin, but He will come again to bring you to everlasting life. With great anticipation, we sing this heart-warming hymn.

O LORD Jesus, Creator of all things; Light of the glory of the Father in heaven: I thank Thee with my whole heart that Thou permittest me again to see the joyous sunlight. O Bright Sun of Righteousness, arise and shine in my heart, also; that, in Thy brightness, I may walk as a child of light as in the day, and finally behold Thee blessed in the eternal light of joy everlasting. Amen.
(Prayer from Wilhelm Loeh)

Wesley T. Deiss (CTSFW 2nd Year Seminarian)

Thursday, December 5th, 2024

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” (LSB 338)

*“Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.*

*By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne” (LSB 338.1-2).*

God brought the long-expected savior in the most unexpected way.

Christ was “born a child and yet a king.” Jesus’ humble birth is just one instance of how God doesn’t meet our expectations – or even exceed them. Christ brings our expectations crashing down. In Jesus, God “brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate” (Luke 1:52). He sets us free from sin and fear by taking on that humble estate. God in man was lifted up on the cross so that we can be raised to his glorious throne.

God answers the longings of our hearts and brings the joy we desperately need. But often he does this in a way we don’t expect. Since Jesus’ birth in a smelly stable in a crowded town, he has been meeting us in places we wouldn’t think to look for him. During Advent, as we longingly anticipate the joy and celebration of Jesus’ birth, - and as we look forward to Christ’s coming again – let’s also look for him in the here and now. He’s with us in the holiday rush hour, the busy stores, the family gatherings. Jesus is with us not just in the happy moments of the season, but in the hard ones too. He’s there with you under your own cross, whatever it is, helping you bear its heavy burden.

Dear Father, you constantly defy our expectations according to your wonderful wisdom. Thank you for coming down to us, for sustaining us with your presence now, so that we can be with you forever. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Abigail Reynolds (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Friday, December 6th, 2024

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates” (LSB 341)

“Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory!” (Psalm 24:7-10).

We join with the angelic choir in singing, “Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits.” In the same way, we speak what the angels speak: “Who is this King of glory?”

The question must be asked, because the King of glory is an infant! While it is a bewildering thing to see the infant Christ as the Lord mighty in battle, it is no less bewildering than what the angels speak of in Psalm 24, when the ascended Christ returns to the Heavenly courts, yet different than when He left. Now, He bears holes in His hands and side; marks of triumph over sin, death, and the devil. Despite this glorious sight, the angels know as well as we do that His heroic course began with His incarnation, in humble human birth.

As incredible as it is, the destiny of the child we sing of is to die on the cross for the salvation of mankind; equally incredible is that the risen, ascended Son of God could ever have been a child!

Yet this is who your Lord is: He is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord of hosts, Mary’s son yet David’s Lord; He is the King of glory.

O Lord, lift up our heads, to see our King of glory as He is: our incarnate Lord, who came in humility, to bring us to His glory. Lift up our hearts to gladly sing of the life and salvation He brings. Amen.

Adam Hiles (CTSFW 4th Year Seminarian)

Saturday, December 7th, 2024

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” (LSB 344)

*“Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin;
Make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.*

*Lay on the sick Thy healing hand
And make the fallen strong to stand;
Show us the glory of Thy face
Till beauty springs in ev’ry place” (LSB 344.2,4).*

This hymn invites us to arise, to wake up, and hear the tidings that Jesus is indeed very near to us! Just as John the Baptist announced these glad tidings, let this be an invitation to prepare yourself by praying and filling yourself with God’s Word.

Verse 2 exhorts us to be cleansed from sin. This means to make way for Jesus to reach further into you, into your heart. Cleansing of a life means rooting out our idols, to prepare the throne room of your heart for its true Ruler.

Prepare for the coming of Jesus by praying the Psalms. Remember Psalm 51, “Create in me a clean heart, O God ...”. Surely even this little phrase is among the best prayers we may repeat throughout the day.

At last, in verse 4, Jesus is dwelling with us! He is close enough to touch us and make us “strong to stand.” The hymn asks to see the glory of Jesus’ face until we see His glory, and the beauty of a new heavens and earth, an unmarred creation.

Gracious God, our coming King, we ask Your mercy on our lives this day, that You would cleanse our hearts from sin and dwell in us as our Ruler. Increase in us a desire to pray and to read Your Scriptures faithfully, that we would be further prepared to receive You. May the glory of Your face advance to fill our entire vision, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Vicar Joshua Horst (CSL Third Year Seminarian)

Sunday, December 8th, 2024

“Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding” (LSB 345)

*“So, when next He comes in glory
And the world is wrapped in fear,
He will shield us with His mercy
And with words of love draw near” (LSB 345.4).*

Advent is a liminal season where we recognize that God has positioned us with one foot in the past and one in the present. We look back with expectation through the eyes of the saints of old.

We join with Zechariah and Elizabeth in their longing for God to act again to save His people from their sins. We join with the Church today in her longing for the final coming of Her Bridegroom. We look back and see promise after promise fulfilled by the God who saves. And we look forward with a great hope that has been planted in us by the God who keeps His word.

In this liminal space between past and future let us examine ourselves and confront our own sinfulness: the bad habits that we have let creep in, the pain that we have caused those we should love. We can do so in honesty and in hope because of the liminal space God placed us in. For we know that just as He acted in the past, He has promised to do so again, and when we finally gaze upon our Savior, we know that “He will shield us with His mercy and with words of love draw near.”

Lord Jesus, since You have brought us to this Advent season, lead us through it by Your love, give us a memory filled with Your saving works, and grant that we may eagerly await Your final coming; in Your mighty name we pray, Amen.

Ryan Skove (CTSFW 1st Year Seminarian)

Monday, December 9th, 2024

“Comfort, Comfort Ye My People” (LSB 347)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

We are creatures who crave comfort. From the food we eat to the vacations we enjoy, we seek it out. We spend our life’s savings on it. We work ourselves to the bone for it, and this is a problem because that which we seek in this life ultimately fades. In time it ceases providing. Be it a warm meal or sunlit beach water, it will inevitably fail to deliver.

The only thing that never will is the love of Christ. The ever-giving Gospel. The reality that your Savior came for you. That your sins are forgiven. That you are washed in baptism. That you are fed in the Supper where “anxious consciences are cheered and comforted.”¹

This is what we celebrate this Advent season. Even more so, this is what the preacher proclaims week after week. Comfort has come and continually comes in the person and work of Jesus Christ. All else fades, but he never will.

Comfort, comfort ye my people,
speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
comfort those who sit in darkness
mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them!
Tell her that her sins I cover,
and her warfare now is over (LSB 347.1).

God Almighty, our hearts seek out so many things. Teach to trust in you and the comfort which comes only through faith in your Son. Amen.

Rory Fry (CSL SMP Vicar)

¹ AC XVI:30, in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, edited by Paul T. McCain, 2nd edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 49.

Tuesday, December 10th, 2024

“The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns” (LSB 348)

“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:17, 20).

Many of us do not immediately think of the book of Revelation during the Advent season. The focus is on the first advent of Christ, His infant body wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (Luke 2:12). “The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns” is a hymn which leads us toward anticipation of His second advent, when, as we confess in the Nicene Creed, “He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead.”

Christ and His Church beckon to those who come seeking Life. For in His Church we find our thirst quenched and our hunger satiated by His very own Body and Blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. In His Church, we are adopted as sons through the waters of holy baptism.

We beggars respond, praying, “Come quickly, King of Kings!” (st. 4). We do not beg in vain but know full well that we shall see His face, this time not as the infant mild, “But crowned with glory like the sun / That lights the morning sky” (st. 2).

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant so that all might be saved from sin, death, and the power of Satan. As we reflect on His first advent with joy and thanksgiving, keep us vigilant in these gray and latter days as we await His glorious second advent. Amen.

Brenna McGuire (CTSFW 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Wednesday, December 11th, 2024

“Hark the Glad Sound” (LSB 349)

*“He comes the pris’ners to release,
In Satan’s bondage held.
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield” (LSB 349.2).*

Singing does not come naturally to everyone. In fact, singing can be quite challenging and to some may seem impossible. Unfortunately, our sinfulness comes much more naturally than our voices, as we are bound prisoners chained around the feet with iron fetters. Thanks be to God; He naturally desires to burst these bars with a loud sound of His cry for you on the cross. God, in His great love, has sent you His Son to be your Savior, to bear your sins, and free you, a prisoner in bondage. He then rose and now we cling to the promise that He will come again, and we await this glorious coming of our Lord by preparing our hearts with song. We can and should sing not because our voices are beautiful, but rather because by the treasures of God’s grace He has redeemed you and every heart leaps for joy at this news. Our joy explodes off our tongues because He has brought our broken hearts together and loudly bursts our prison chains of sin. Hark! The Savior has indeed come and is coming again for you to fulfill the promise planned for you from before you were born. As we move through this Advent season, let your voice sound in loud gladness as you are a prisoner set free by Jesus who has come and is coming again.

*Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that you did not leave us in the bondage of sin, but by your all-powerful Word and sacrifice you freed us to sing your praises and glorify your name. As we await your second coming, guard our hearts from Satan and our own evil desires, so that we may rejoice with glad sounds now and for all eternity. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

Nathan Bublitz (CSL 2nd Year Seminarian)

Thursday, December 12th, 2024

“Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come” (LSB 350)

“Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’” (John 14:23).

Who is the speaker in this hymn? Is it the baptized Christian? One would probably think that he would already have Christ in his heart. This would suggest that it is the seeking unbeliever, being drawn by the Father (John 6:44) that prays Christ to enter his heart. We have all been without God in our hearts, some only a few weeks or days, others many years. But why are we still singing this, then? Do we still have waiting hearts? Is not Christ already here?

Though Christ already has come to us, we must still remind ourselves that he is still coming, for we confess, “He will come.” But he is not only coming to us in the future sense, but also in the present sense. “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” This is through the word of Christ. Through his word Christ keeps coming to us, and to keep his word with us, we must hear and read it again and again, lest we forget it and consequently forget our God. For through his word he makes his home, his dwelling, with us. And so, we can still pray: *“Enter now my waiting heart, Glorious King and Lord most holy. Dwell in me and ne’er depart, Though I am but poor and lowly. Ah, what riches will be mine When Thou art my guest Divine.” Amen.*

Gunstein Innvær (CTSFW M.A. Pastoral Exchange Student)

Friday, December 13th, 2024

“Creator of the Stars of Night” (LSB 351)

Our One Hope

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17).

As I meditate on this beautiful hymn, two intertwined themes strike me. Beginning with references to Genesis in verses 1 and 2, the author establishes an eternal vision of Christ by swiftly shifting between past, present, and future. Christ the “spotless Victim” comes moments after Christ “the Bridegroom,” and is followed quickly by Christ the “dread” Judge. The development is purposely non-linear so as to evoke a vibrant yet unified portrait of Jesus, as both Redeemer and Judge, Sovereign and Victim. Although our curse and foe are “ancient,” Christ is preeminent: He alone has the power to save.

The second thing that strikes me is the rapid interplay between cosmic and human perspectives.

The entire hymn is framed by an invocation of “Creator of the stars of night,” who is also a “Light” to His people; Jesus grieves the “doom” of a “universe,” before curing “our ruined race;” He owns *all* things, both “celestial” and “terrestrial.” Through this structure, the hymn echoes what Paul once proclaimed: that the redemption of Creation hinges on the redemption and glorification of the “children of God” (Romans 8:20-21). Our Hope is also the Hope of the earth and all stars: Christ, our “bright morning star,” who ushers in the new and final Day (Revelation 22:16).

Lord Jesus, in You alone do we find our beginning, and our end. Guide us always by your everlasting light, and preserve us in Your grace, away from apathy and slumber, as we await Your glorious coming. Amen.

Joshua Fields (CSL 1st Year Seminarian)

Saturday, December 14th, 2024

“Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord” (LSB 352)

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

In Genesis two and three, we read about a war over words. After God created man, He commanded him not to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil... for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” God’s Word spoken to Adam and Eve was good. Chapter three introduces for us another word-bearer: the serpent. Unlike God’s good and perfect Word, the serpent’s words are full of deceit, for he is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). “Did God really say...?” Today, the wicked serpent attacks us in the same way: “Did God really say...?” Like our first parents, we have been misled by the devil’s lies, and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

The serpent did not get the last word. God, in His mercy, promised, “He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” The Word spoken to Adam and Eve took on human flesh in the person of Jesus. In the wilderness, Jesus overcame the devil’s lies with the words, “It is written...” And by dying on the cross, Jesus crushed the serpent’s head once for all. The Church still proclaims this victorious Word. All who believe and are baptized have already died and receive new life in the Word made flesh.

Jesus Christ, bruise for us the serpent’s head, that set free from doubt and dread, we may cling to you in faith, safely kept through life and death. Amen.

Chase Greenhagen (CTSFW 4th Year Seminarian)

Sunday, December 15th, 2024

“Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring” (LSB 353)

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)” (Matthew 1:23).

During the holiday season, we tend to spend a lot of time looking back. We reminisce on the stories of Christmas past and reflect on our year’s accomplishments. And of course, once the nostalgia of Christmas passes, we move into New Year’s, looking ahead to the world we want to see and who we want to become.

As a church, we are also guilty of falling into the holiday season’s back and forward reflection.

The entire advent season is dedicated to looking towards Christ’s coming, both the one that happened in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, and the one that is yet to come. This is a good and right thing to do.

But how often do we stop and reflect on how Christ is with us today? The hymn “Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring” does this very thing. Jesus hears us and answers us when we pray (verse 2). He offers forgiveness and redemption (verse 3). He even comes to us as a great counselor, understanding our every hope and fear (verse 4). Therefore, we can take comfort in this season and all times not only from the Jesus who came, or the Jesus who will come again, but also in the Jesus who is with us right here and now.

“Jesus come in joy and sorrow, share alike our hopes and fears. Jesus come again in mercy, when our hearts are worn with care. Alleluia! Alleluia! Hope to all the world is giv’n. Amen”

Julia Witt (CSL Deaconess Year 2)

Monday, December 16th, 2024

“Arise, O Christian People” (LSB 354)

*“A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken’”
(Isaiah 40:3-5).*

How does one prepare to meet God? Isaiah 40:3-5 tells us that a voice cries to prepare the way of the Lord, that His glory shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. Then Isaiah immediately contextualizes this in the following verses by declaring how immeasurably greater God is compared to man. That voice cried out to demand repentance of our sins (Matt 3:1-3).

How could I, a sinner unworthy of the holy God who created all things, possibly prepare a way for Him? I am as all men who wither like grass, but the Word of God stands forever (Isa 40:6-8). It is the Word of God that prepares us to receive Him (1 Thess 2:13). Having heard His Word with thanksgiving we then prepare for the Light of the world to shine among those who dwell in darkness, with the lamp of faith always burning. Prepared by God’s Word of promise, Israel awaited Christ’s advent and we await Christ’s return. Christ has prepared us by His word of forgiveness of sins to meet God face to face.

With the words of Stanza 4 of “Arise, O Christian People,” we pray that Christ would prepare us well for His final coming:

Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus; Turn not from me aside, and help me to receive You this blessed Adventide. Come now to dwell within me. Amen.

Jacob Bergstedt (CTSFW 2nd Year Seminarian)

Tuesday, December 17th, 2024

“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came” (LSB 356)

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born

In Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn,

And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:

“Most highly favored lady” (LSB 356.4).

One of my Catholic friends told me a few years ago, as we were preparing for the season of Advent, “Ah, Advent! The only season where your church is okay with having statues of Mary!” Lutherans today have a complicated relationship with Mary, prompted primarily by our pushing against misconceptions surrounding who she and what her role in the church is today. I have found that her most significant title, and the greatest lesson for the church today, lies in the Orthodox tradition of calling her the *Theotokos*: the God-bearer. Cyril of Alexandria reminds us that our Lord invited mockery by asking His own servant to become His mother.² In faith, she holds to the promises given by the angel Gabriel, and gives birth to a son: Emmanuel. Now, all generated regard her as favored – but is it because she’s perfect? No. Mary is favored because she was chosen – just as all Christians are through the waters of Baptism. By virtue of those waters, we all serve as the *Theotokos*, in some sense. We have the honor of *bearing God* to the adolescent and the aged, the broken and the burdened, the cantankerous and the contented. We are entrusted with this holy task not because of our merit or perfection but because God has chosen us, just as He chose Mary.

Stir up our hearts to action, O Lord. Help us bear Christ's love to all. Amen.

Rev. Travis Ferguson (CSL D. Min Student)

² Cyril of Alexandria, “The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius with the XII Anathematisms,” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry R. Percival, vol. 14, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 205.

Wednesday, December 18th, 2024

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357- st. 2-4)

“We preach Christ Crucified... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

We confess who God is when we see Jesus. In His coming into the world, the darkness of this present age is no longer confusing, but everything makes sense. We do not get bogged down in the mire of philosophical guessing about God. We simply confess to God what we come to know about Him by faith in the Gospel: Thou art Wisdom, the Lord of might, the Dayspring from on high. God has revealed Himself, that we might receive the great gift of salvation won in Jesus’ atoning death. Thus the whole universe has been ordered by the eternally self-giving, perfectly loving Word of God. In sin, the blind world can only see chaos in this universe, chasing vain ideas, aimlessly following deception after deception, lost in fear and confusion. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22). But we who have been born again by the Spirit may truly see it, confess it, and shout it into the darkness of this blind world: Christ has come! Sins to atone, vision to restore, wisdom to bestow. Gone are the days of endless searching, for Christ has now revealed the eternal Gospel, our true Wisdom.

Everlasting Father, who hast redeemed Thy creation through the precious blood of Thine only-begotten Son, show us always the Wisdom of Thy Grace that gives meaning to all life, so that we, with the Cross ever before our eyes, may daily walk in the peace that surpasseth all understanding; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Peter Williams (CTSFW 2nd Year Seminarian)

Thursday, December 19th, 2024

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357- st. 5-7)

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18).

“Veni, veni Emmanuel” is Latin for “O come, O Come, Emmanuel.” This hymn encompasses expressions of pleas, cries, shouts, desperation, zeal and signs of relief for the advent of our long-awaited Savior, Jesus Christ, who has come to rescue us from sin, death, and the devil.

The text of this hymn stems back to the 8th century and is taken from the O Antiphons, a series of seven antiphons that begin with the letter “O.” A different antiphon is sung each day during the seven days that lead up to Christmas Eve. The first letter of each verse of this hymn in Latin spells out the acronym “SARCORE.” When read backwards, it reads “Ero cras,” which means “I will be present tomorrow.” This can be seen as Christ’s response to our waiting of his first and now second coming, which will surely come.

In the meantime, we go about our lives with joyful singing as baptized children of God, knowing that our salvation, resurrection, and life everlasting rests in Jesus. His presence with us in Word and Sacrament strengthens us to continue serving our neighbors and inviting them to wait in this hope with us.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your Son to make all things new. Give us peace and patience as we anticipate Christ’s return. Amen.

Pamela Vue (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Friday, December 20th, 2024

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357- st. 1)

“Then the Lord said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings.’” (Exodus 3:7).

As Advent draws to a close, our hearts turn to the Old Testament plea: “God with us.” Like Israel in captivity, we, too, know exile—not in a foreign land, but in a world marred by sin and suffering. We endure—grief over loss, loneliness, and the weight of guilt and shame from our own sins. In this world where God’s kingdom has not yet been fully realized, there is injustice, division, sickness, and suffering. Yet Emmanuel, “God with us,” comes to ransom us, to dwell with us, to break our chains. This prayer is not merely a call for God to remember us but a confident cry, rooted in His promises, that He will come and free us.

This is the God who saw His people’s suffering in Egypt, who heard their cries and came down to deliver them. Now, He hears our cries from the Egypt of this world, bound by sin, mourning in exile. And, in Christ, He descends again—not in fire and smoke, but in the quiet of Bethlehem, in flesh and blood, to ransom us.

So we rejoice. Emmanuel has come, is here, and will come again to bring us to Himself. Until then, we wait in faith, praying, “O come, Emmanuel,” assured that the Son of God will appear.

O Emmanuel, come into our exile, our sorrow, and ransom us from sin and death. As we await Your return, keep us in faith and hope through Your means of grace. Amen.

Solomona Rakotonirina (CTSFW 4th Year Seminarian)

Saturday, December 21st, 2024

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (LSB 358- st. 1-5)

*“’Tis Christ our God, who far on high
Hath heard your sad and bitter cry;
Himself will your salvation be;
Himself from sin will make you free” (LSB 358.3).*

When was the last time you cried? I don’t mean eyes welling up with pride or tears of joy. I’m talking about a real, ugly cry where your eyes get puffy, your face is red, and your nose runs. Now when was the last time you cried like that in front of someone else? Most of us, if we’re lucky, will only allow a *few* trusted loved ones see us in that state. It’s too vulnerable, too messy.

We might be tempted to think of God as far off, removed from our messiness, and unable to relate to our vulnerability; but Christ came exactly for that reason. We suffer in a world broken by sin. We need a Savior and God who, knowing our need, did not remain far off from us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to free us from sin and to redeem all things. Praise be to God who hears our sad and bitter cries and who knows our sorrows intimately. You can cry to Him with the confidence that He hears you, knows you, and is with you.

Dear Jesus, Just as you listened to Mary and Martha weep at the death of Lazarus and wept with them, so too you hear us when we cry. Bring us the peace and comfort that can only come from you and embolden us to live as Christians, confident in our Wonderful Counselor. We thank you and love you. Amen.

Lydia Grabau (CSL 2nd Year Deaconess Student)

Sunday, December 22nd, 2024

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (LSB 358- st. 6-10)

*“How glad we’ll be to find it so!
Then with the shepherds let us go,
To see what God for us has done,
In sending us His own dear Son” (LSB 358.6).*

Stanza 6 of Luther’s hymn shifts the focus from the angel’s message of salvation to the shepherd’s joyful response. It also invites us to share in this joyful response, as we also know who this Child is and why He has come. This most Noble Guest has come to bless the earth, despite its depravity. For through His suffering will come salvation, as our reconciliation with God could only be accomplished with this Child taking on our human nature (Hebrews 2:14).

This weak, poor, and small Child begins His earthly life in the lowliest state, yet Luther understands why He lies in this humble manger. Christ was obedient for His whole life, from His birth to His crucifixion, that He might be exalted (Philippians 2:7-9).

Although this Child appears weak and lowly in this state, we know that this humiliation will turn to exaltation, and that the Son of God will be raised for our justification. With the shepherds we shall go, as we await the fast-approaching birth of Christ. So let us rejoice with the shepherds, the angels, and all the saints, since God has had mercy on us, and has given His Son for this broken world.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the gift of Your only Son which we do not deserve. Stir up Your power, and forgive our sins for the sake of this Christ Child, who, though lowly now, is our Mighty Savior; in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Nathaniel Demlow (CTSFW 1st Year Seminarian)

Monday, December 23rd, 2024

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (LSB 358- st. 11-15)

*“Instead of soft and silken stuff
You have but hay and straw so rough
On which a King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state” (LSB 358.11).*

What a gracious love our great King has for us, that he not only condescends to take on our flesh, but that he does so in true humility. He forfeits his honor, wealth, and might and receives a bed of hay and a pillow of straw. Through this humble action He reveals to us the simple truth that these things matter not to Him: though we may seek status, money, power, and a host of other worldly things, they are all passing away (1 Jn 2:17). Rather, He would have us seek Him alone.

Through faith we receive the riches Christ gave up. We receive the salvation won for us that only He who was rich and became poor could win (2 Cor 8:9): We receive the honor to be called sons of God, the wealth of a great heavenly inheritance, and the might of saints who will judge the world. Through faith, the Holy Spirit creates in our hearts a place for Jesus to dwell (Eph 3:17), and by dwelling there He strengthens and comforts us with His love. Let us always remember the precious baby Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger, so that He may remind us of what is truly needful!

Lord Jesus Christ, as an infant enthroned on hay and straw you made yourself poor that we might become rich. Make Your dwelling place our hearts, that we may learn not to desire earthly goods that are weak and worthless in Your sight, but that we, having comprehended the depth of Your love, would seek first to love You and our neighbor; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Chris Atlee (CSL 1st Year Seminarian)

Tuesday, December 24th, 2024

“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” (LSB 359)

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1-3a).

Anticipation is a powerful emotion; eagerness for things to come coupled with angst over the unknown. So it is with childbearing: months of excitement and planning, discomfort and trepidation. When it is finally time for the child to be born the signs are obvious! The Floweret we sing of today is not just any child, but the long-promised blossom which bears fruit from the stump of Jesse.

Like a bud on a branch bulging under frost and dew, tender new growth is ready to spring forth from its protective cover; today we anticipate the birth of the Christ child. Today is not His nativity, but it is close. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and nurtured in the womb of His virgin mother, the eternal Word of God in human flesh waits to be revealed. And we have seen the glory of this Flower — the child who grew as a man in order to die on the cross.

Now it is our turn for anticipation! Anticipation of His second advent when the fruit of His sacrifice will be fully revealed — the redemption of our bodies and the glory of eternal life.

O Savior, child of Mary, Who felt our human woe; O Savior, King of glory, Who dost our weakness know: Bring us at length we pray To the bright courts of heaven, And to the endless day. Amen.

Nathan D. Raugutt (CTSFW 4th Year Seminarian)

Wednesday, December 25th, 2024

“All My Heart Again Rejoices” (LSB 360)

*“Should we fear our God’s displeasure,
Who, to save,
Freely gave
His most precious treasure?
To redeem us He has given
His own Son
From the throne
Of his might in heaven” (LSB 360.3).*

Can there be any doubt about the Father’s great love for His creation? His only Son came from might to humility that we humble sinners might be redeemed from sin, death and the devil. We who were not worthy of salvation have been redeemed by the greatest and most worthy treasure possible, Jesus Christ, God’s own Son. This gift, this sacrifice, shows that God truly loves His creation, and even you, dearly.

*O Lord, as I await your return may I rejoice in your abundant love for Your creation, even me.
In the name of Your most precious Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Grant Burnham (CSL 2nd Year Seminarian)

Thursday, December 26th, 2024

“Angels from the Realms of Glory” (LSB 367)

“So Elisha answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:16-17).

May God open our eyes like the servant of Elisha. With eyes of faith, we see the angel armies that encamp around us to protect us. We see the flaming chariots that, in the name of Christ, drive out the devil and his demons every time they attack us in body and soul. These same angel hosts cried out an awful battle cry when the Son of God was born a man: “Glory be to God on high, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.” This song meant that their great Lord and general Jesus Christ had come to duel with Satan and defeat him, whereby Christ becomes peace for men, embodies the good will of God toward men, and delivers us from the powers of hell.

These angel hosts have not stopped singing. In our hymn, “Angels from the Realms of Glory,” their constant refrain is “come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the new-born King.” The gathered faithful answer that angelic call by joining them in song: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” We do not worship the angels, but we worship with them by praising Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Christ was praised in song when He took on flesh for our salvation, let us also praise Him with angelic song when His flesh and blood is given us for our salvation every Lord’s Day.

Lord, give us eyes of faith to see Christ and triumphantly worship Him with the angels. Amen.

Peter Pohlod (CTSFW 2nd Year Seminarian)

Friday, December 27th, 2024

“Once in Royal David’s City” (LSB 376)

*“He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Savior holy.*

*For He is our childhood’s pattern,
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feels for all our sadness,
And He shares in all our gladness” (LSB 376.2-3).*

We cannot separate the manger from the cross. Even now during this season of Advent, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the coming of our Lord, we are reminded of the lowly, humiliating, and unexpected nature of God’s work for salvation. In the first of these two stanzas, we are reminded of the humble lowly nature of the incarnation of our Lord. Here was God, pure and holy, humbling himself, taking on human flesh. But why is Christ born, in a stable, taking on human flesh? So that he might later die on the cross.

And this brings us to the second of our stanzas. Yes, as a child, Jesus may have experienced the weakness of a child. But it is on the cross that this fully comes to fruition. It was on the cross that he was weak for our sake. It was on the cross that he became helpless for our sake. It was on the cross that he felt our sadness, our suffering, our sins.

And so we pray:

Christ Jesus, as we remember your incarnation and birth in Bethlehem, we thank you also for your saving work on the Cross. Fill our hearts with the gladness that this season brings as it turns our eyes and focus on you even as you continually reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Eric Bear (CSL Student Association President, 4th Year Seminarian)

Saturday, December 28th, 2024

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” (LSB 379)

“When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’” (Luke 2:15).

Luke is teaching us deep truths about Christ in an ironic and subtle way. Consider: the Bread of Life was born in Bethlehem (the House of Bread). The Good Shepherd’s birth was announced to shepherds. The King of Angels was made a little lower than the angels (cf. Hebrews 2:9). All of this is to say that Jesus isn’t just being talked about here— even the background details are about Him! It’s not surprising: the point of Scripture is Jesus Christ, the God-Man come to die and rise for us. What else could the shepherds do but run to worship Him, to gather where He is? The Living Bread is in the House of Bread! What else can we do? Dear Christians, come and adore Him— your King, the Bread of Life, given to you as a gift on the Altar! He Whom the shepherds saw, we receive, mystically singing His praises with them and the angels and all the heavenly host. O come, let us adore Him— Christ the Lord, now in Flesh appearing! Amen.

Lord Jesus, as we remember Your first coming and await Your second coming, sustain us with Your true Body and Blood. Amen.

Philip Norton (CTSFW 1st Year Seminarian)

Sunday, December 29th, 2024

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten” (LSB 384)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten” is one of the oldest hymns in the LSB. Written by a Roman Christian poet towards the end of his life in the fifth century, this hymn carries us along God’s story of redemption- from the very beginning, through the prophets and bowing kings, to the ringing voices of the resurrected throne as they sing in concert around the throne of the Alpha and Omega.

As our Christmas journey continues, we can sing or meditate on this ancient hymn, reminding us of God’s unending love for us- love that comes fully in the sending of His Son to us. In the first lines, we hear that Christ was “ere before the worlds began to be”- a profound affirmation of His divinity. From before time, Jesus is begotten of the Father, not created. In Him, “all things were made” (John 1:3). This mystery of the eternal Son’s incarnation, the Word made flesh, draws us into the heart of our proclamation. God Himself came to dwell among us. He came to dwell, He came to die, so that we might live with Him, “evermore and evermore.”

Fill our hearts, Heavenly Father, with awe and gratitude for the gift of Your Son. In this season of Advent, help us to reflect on His eternal love and prepare us for His coming. May we, like the saints who have gone before us, find our rest and hope in Him alone. Amen.

Joseph Eggerman (CSL 4th Year Seminarian)

Monday, December 30th, 2024

“Now Sing We, Now Rejoice” (LSB 386)

*“Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heavenly ground?
Where the angels singing with all His saints unite
Sweetest praises bringing in heavenly joy and light
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!” (LSB 386.4).*

What a blessed incarnation we are celebrating! Christ the God-Man, true God and true Man. He is God through the eternal generation from the Father and Man through the assumption of flesh from the Virgin Mary. Why assume a true and whole human nature that He will never set aside?

It was to redeem us from sin, death, and the devil so that we would be most dearly loved, adopted children. All this not so that we could float around bodiless in heaven like ghosts riding on the wind but so that we would find joy “on heavenly ground.” The heavenly ground of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is a place where our feet will walk and our souls will rejoice. There will not be heard in this city the voice of mourning or the voice of crying, no more sounds of sirens, no more the sound of pain, no more death, only the glorious praises of Jesus’ saving fame. The Eternal Son has assumed our human nature to put our feet on heavenly ground, “where the angels singing, with all His saints unite, sweetest praises bringing in heavenly joy and light.”

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us, as those dearly loved and adopted by you, the sure hope that we will indeed walk on heavenly ground. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Rowan Turner (CTSFW 2nd Year Seminarian)

Tuesday, December 31st, 2024

“God Loves Me Dearly” (LSB 392)

“Therefore, I’ll say again, God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, yes, even me.”

My two toddler children were small enough to be in car seats, yet big enough to reach across to hold each other’s little hands together. It’s a sweet memory, but the memory includes a frenzied sound. While driving during a snowy December day, my son was singing loudly, and his sister joined in, doubling the joy: JINGLE BELLS JINGLE BELLS JINGLE ALL THE WAY!! The all-caps might help capture the volume but possibly not encapsulate the shrill pitch and the intensity of their singing. They were singing the chorus, but every time they got to “jingle all the way- HEY!” this chorus would repeat. On and on, the song went with no end in sight.

Our hymn’s chorus invites a similar repetition, reminding us that we need to hear this message over and over: “Therefore, I’ll say again, God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, yes, even me.”

Yes, even me. Me, a sinner. I am captured in Sin, Death, and Darkness. I need a Savior. Romans 5:8 reminds us that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This was an act of love from God. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved.” Grace is this favor shown on us, that we are looked upon with loving kindness by a God who sees us and brings us into light. This is comforting, good news! Jesus was born so that we could be saved. God loves us. It is a sweet and soothing message that announces our loving God has taken flesh to dwell with us and to die in our place so that we might be free- all because of his great love for us. Let’s say it again!

We have been saved by our Savior, and he continues to sustain us. This song that never ends is not just a human practice. We see in Scripture again and again and again God demonstrating his compassionate love for us. He loves us time and time again in his never-ending rhythm of grace.

Let us sing out for all to hear, “God loves me dearly, yes, even me!”

Dear Heavenly Father, Your steadfast love never ceases. Thank you for loving even me. Help me remember your love for me. Help me share your love with my neighbors. Let them hear me say again and again, “God loves me dearly.” Amen.

Sarah Crowder (CSL 3rd Year PhD Student)