



# Christmas

## TREES

A MIDWEEK ADVENT SERIES

Wednesday December 3, 2025

Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church

Maineville, Ohio

*Please stand*

**OPENING PRAYER**

We rejoice, heavenly Father, that you have stirred up your might and have come to save us.

**The eyes of our hearts turn toward Bethlehem, the birthplace of your Son, as the prophet Micah foretold.**

As John the Baptist, still unborn, leapt with joy in the presence of your Son before his birth, help us also to recognize and rejoice in him as your Son and our promised Savior.

**We joyfully receive the fulfillment of your prophecy.**

In a most marvelous manner, you prepared a sacrifice for our sins in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

**Send us your Holy Spirit that we may joyfully believe and receive this miracle of your love.**

As we anticipate with joy the celebration of his birth,

**Grant us your grace that we may see in him the greatness of your love for us. Amen.**

## **CONFESSION OF SINS**

We confess, almighty God, that we have wandered and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.  
**We have followed our own ways and the desires of our hearts instead of your will and your way.**

We have broken your commandments and neglected your righteous decrees.  
**We have offended you, our mighty and eternal God.**

There is no health or righteousness in us.  
**O Lord, have mercy on us.**

For the sake of your great mercy, O Lord, forgive us. Spare us the just punishment our sins deserve according to your promises declared to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.  
**And grant that for his sake, we may live sober, upright and godly lives to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God, our heavenly Father, has taken away your guilt and punishment. Because of the innocent life and guiltless death of God's appointed Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, he has forgiven you and restored you to the blessed status of his child. May God grant you peace and joy as you await his return from heaven to gather his people home.  
**Amen.**

## **SEASONAL RESPONSE**

The Lord will come again in glory. The Spirit and the Church cry out,  
**"Come, Lord Jesus. Come!"** Please be Seated

*Please be seated*

## READING

## GALATIANS 3:7–13 7

Understand, then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham. 8 Foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, Scripture proclaimed the gospel in advance to Abraham, saying, “In you, all nations will be blessed.” 9 So then, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 In fact, those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law.” 11 Clearly no one is declared righteous before God by the law, because “The righteous will live by faith.” 12 The law does not say “by faith.” Instead it says, “The one who does these things will live by them.”

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. As it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM RESPONSES

## Psalm 1

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked  
**or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,**

but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
**and who meditates on his law day and night.**

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season  
**and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.**

Not so the wicked!  
**They are like chaff that the wind blows away.**

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
**nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**

For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
**but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.**  
**Blessed are they, blessed are they who hope in the LORD.**

## READING

## MATTHEW 3:4–10

4John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## THE SECOND ARTICLE (REDEMPTION)

**I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won 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. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.**

## SERMON

## GENESIS 3:1–15

1Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

2The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”

4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

*Please stand*

## **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Lord God, we come before you in humility and honesty, standing once again at the tree of our rebellion. In Adam and Eve we see our own sin, our own weakness, our own wandering hearts.

**Lord, have mercy on us.**

When the serpent whispers and temptation presses close, we confess that we too have listened to lies, doubted your goodness, and chosen our way over yours.

**Forgive us, O Lord.**

When guilt rises and shame follows, we often hide—behind excuses, behind busyness, behind our pride.

**Seek us, O Lord, and draw us out of hiding.**

You came to Adam not in anger but with a searching question: “Where are you?” Continue to seek us, Lord. Call us back when we wander. Confront us when we stray.

**Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.**

Before we could offer a word of repentance, you spoke a word of grace. In Eden you promised the Seed of the woman, the One who would crush the serpent’s head.

**We praise you for your mercy that began in the garden.**

We thank you for sending your Son, born of a woman, born under the law, born to redeem us. The promise spoken at the tree of rebellion was fulfilled in the manger of Bethlehem and completed at the cross of Calvary.

**Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us and save us.**

Lord, as we walk through this Advent season, shine your light into our darkness. Remind us that no sin is too deep, no shame too heavy, no past too broken for your grace.

**Heal our hearts and restore our hope.**

Guide us by your Word. Strengthen us by your Spirit. Keep us faithful in the battle against temptation, until the day we stand before the tree of life in your eternal kingdom.

**To you be glory, honor, and thanks forever.**

Hear us, gracious Savior, and grant us your peace.

**Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## **SONG OF SIMEON**

Guide us waking, O Lord,  
**and guard us sleeping**

that awake we may watch with Christ  
**and asleep we may rest in peace.**

In peace, Lord, you let your servants now depart according to your Word.  
**For our eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for every people,**

A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.  
**Amen.**

Let us praise the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*Please be seated*

<b>HYMN: CREATOR OF THE STARS OF NIGHT</b>
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## **BLESSING**

The almighty and merciful Lord—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—bless us and keep us.  
**Amen.**