

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
First Sunday in Advent  
November 30, 2025  
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
**Rejoice in the imminent arrival of your King!**

Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:4-7 EHV

Today marks the first Sunday in Advent. It's the beginning of a new church year. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus* which is about a coming or an arrival. It signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person. Some churches during the Sundays in Advent focus on the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. If you go into our Ministry and Education Center, you will see four banners with those words hanging on the east wall.

This year during the Sundays in Advent, we will focus on the imminent arrival of Jesus. We will focus on different aspects of who he is, what he has done, and the blessings he brings. We will look at the imminent arrival of Jesus as our King, as the Judge, as the Messiah, and as Emmanuel.

Today we **rejoice in the imminent arrival of our King**. Rejoice! That is perhaps the theme of the book of Philippians. Rejoice! Paul writes this letter to Christians in Philippi as he is chained in prison in Rome, and he encourages his readers to "Rejoice!"

But I think we need to pay careful attention to how we approach this word "Rejoice." Notice Paul doesn't say, "Rejoice always. I will say it again, Rejoice," because that could be kind of frustrating. There are many times in my life when I don't feel like rejoicing. When a person is laid up in bed for a few days, he doesn't feel like rejoicing.

But we lift our eyes from the situations of this world, and we find our reason to rejoice always. Paul writes, "**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again Rejoice.**" The Lord is the reason we always rejoice. And here's why. The Lord will never let you down. The Lord will always be there for you. The Lord will always make things right for you. As we look at various aspects of who the Lord is during this season of Advent, I think it's a great encouragement to start this new church year with the words, "**Rejoice in the Lord always**" because it is in the Lord alone that we can have true joy.

And that changes how we live. Paul says, "**Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.**" That word "gentleness" means the opposite of harsh judgment. It means taking other people's words and actions in the kindest possible way.

Oh, that is so important in our relationships with each other, isn't it? Instead of making harsh judgments about each other, which can happen, take each other's words and actions in the kindest possible way. Instead of letting bickering and fighting rule the day, let your gentleness be known to everyone. Instead of being gruff, be gentle. And here's why you can do that.

"**The Lord is near.**" What does that mean? I suppose it could mean one of three things. It could mean the Lord is with you, you know, like he is always with you and will never forsake you. "**The Lord is near.**" Or it could mean that the Lord is near in his Word and Sacraments. His voice is heard through the pages of his Word. His love is poured out through the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. "**The Lord is near.**" Those are possible meanings, but in the spirit of the Advent season, the third option is also one to consider. "**The Lord is near,**" like he is coming back soon; any day, any minute, any time. In other words, **rejoice in the imminent arrival of your King**.

And if that's true, then your relationships with each other give you a great opportunity to constantly encourage and remind each other of the **imminent arrival of your King**. Whether it's in your homes or in your church, you have someone by your side who is a constant support and encourager on your journey to the time when the Lord returns.

Knowing that the Lord is near helps you live each day. Not only with gentleness, but listen to this: "**Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.**" What marvelous advice! Do not worry about anything. But doesn't that seem hard? Never worry? Never have anxiety? With all the things going on in the world and things happening in your lives, is this just a pipe dream? Or can this encouragement really happen?

Well, again, understand something here. Paul is not just saying, “Stop worrying.” He’s giving you a reason and a way to replace that worry and anxiety. **“Don’t worry about anything, but instead do something different.” “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”**

The idea there is that you take whatever is bothering you, whatever is weighing you down, whatever is making you feel guilty and sad and scared, and you make it known to God and cry, “Lord, help me. Help me.” You drop off all your problems and pains at the foot of the throne of the King of the universe. “Lord, help me.”

And then as you do that, here is the promise, and it is a beautiful one. **“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** The peace of God is more than just some happiness inside. It’s more than just some warm fuzzies. First of all, it means that you are *at* peace with God. He doesn’t look at you like an enemy. He looks at you like a friend, his child. He made peace with you at the cross. He rode into Jerusalem on a humble donkey because he was going to war on your behalf, to bring you peace. He took all of your sin, all of your guilt, all of your anger, all of your worry, all of your despair, all of the times you looked to fill the gap of what you need somewhere other than him, and he died for it all on the cross. And he said, “Here’s my peace. We are one. You are forgiven. We are at peace.”

And then this peace that he gives you means that you don’t have to worry. It transcends all understanding. In other words, it’s not waiting to see whether you have everything right in life or not. It’s not coming to you only when you have no more problems or stress. This is a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a peace where God looked at you from eternity and said, “I want you in my family. I have a place in heaven for you. And I will do everything to make sure you get there. And if that means giving my Son to die on the cross so you will be forgiven, I will do it. And you will be at peace forever.”

That has some huge implications for you and me. When you are lying on your back in bed with a pain that just seems as though it won’t end, God has created this peace just for that moment. When you sit alone with your head in your hands and tears are streaming down your face because you’re struggling with your spouse again, God has created this peace just for that moment. When your heart is broken because your loved one is sick and death seems so imminent, God has created this peace just for that moment.

He will give you his peace that will put your hearts and minds to rest. Paul says it like this: **“[God’s peace] will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”** That word “guard” is a word used of a Roman guard, keeping something safe, locked up. The picture is that Jesus Christ himself guards your mind and your heart. Picture Jesus as the victorious King who stands guard over your heart and mind.

Jesus does that because despair and depression and self-loathing and anxiety and hatred all want to get in there and live. So, Jesus comes through his Word and say, “No! You’re not getting in there. That’s my child; my son, my daughter. I’m putting something in there instead. I’m putting in *joy and peace and love and hope*.” And that’s what our King does as he rules your heart and mind.

God has given you a tremendous invitation to come to him in prayer with anything in your life. Whenever we gather in this church and speak the words of the Lord’s Prayer, we end that prayer with a song of praise, or a doxology: **“For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.”** Doesn’t that doxology, that hymn of praise, encapsulate everything about our King?

His kingdom extends from one side of the universe to the other. He is King over all. Just as we heard in the Gospel for today, he’s the humble King who rode into Jerusalem to offer his life so that he could rescue you and me and make us a part of his kingdom. And he also rules personally in your life through his Word.

His power is beyond anything this world could possibly create, greater than any nuclear warhead or solar flare. He demonstrated his power as he offered his life and took the sins of the world upon himself to give us eternal life. He’s the King with all power.

And his glory? We enjoy the beautiful weather and sunny days. We marvel at the tiny wrinkles on the fingers of a newborn. We stand in awe at the gorgeous sunsets over the calm ocean shore. But none of that comes close to the glory of the Lord Jesus. The risen and living Lord Jesus, whose name the angels proclaim and glorify every day, who’s so glorious that the angels have to cover their faces in his presence.

So, my friends, rejoice in that. As our King, Jesus has the kingdom, the power, and the glory. And his arrival is closer today than yesterday. So, we shout, **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** Yes, rejoice in the imminent arrival of your King. Amen.