

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Advent 2  
December 10, 2023  
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft  
***Prepare to meet the King***

<sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: For the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, as some consider slowness. Instead, he is patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up. <sup>11</sup>Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people ought you to be, living in holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>as you look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God? That day will cause the heavens to be set on fire and destroyed, and the elements to melt as they burn with great heat. <sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight.

—2 Peter 3:8-14

“Welcome to Swift City, AZ!” Did you know that Glendale, our neighbors to the north of Phoenix, ceremonially changed the name of its city on March 17 and 18? I know that some of our teens at Emmanuel are “Swifties,” so they know what I am referring to. Perhaps, many of you feel out of the loop on this one.

During this last spring and summer, Taylor Swift was on her “Eras Tour.” Her reception was unbelievable. People would dress up in Taylor Swift costumes. They would pack the stadiums and sing every song. Now, people are going to movie theaters to relive their experiences.

Many cities and people pulled out all their stops to welcome Taylor Swift to their town. They were told that they Need to Calm Down, but they couldn't. This is because seeing Taylor Swift would fulfill their Wildest Dreams. They had so much excitement that they couldn't just Shake It Off. Okay, I will stop it with the Swift song puns, I wouldn't want to harm my Reputation.

I know many of you may be thinking, “I have to hear about Taylor Swift when I watch football now, what's the point of this in church?” There is a point. This is that the knowledge of Taylor Swift's coming, made people do some extreme things to prepare. So much so that a city even changed its name.

People know to prepare for the coming of an important person. During this Advent, we are preparing for the coming of a person who is much more important than Taylor Swift. We are preparing for the coming of our King Jesus. In today's sermon text, we are encouraged to prepare for Jesus' second coming with repentance and holiness of living. Therefore, let us prepare to meet the King.

God calls his people to live lives of repentance. Yet, as people live in this world, they can begin to feel comfortable. Perhaps they even become lazy in their fight against sin. This is because it feels like the King is taking so long to come again. Peter mentions this and how in the last days, people will have this demeanor. They will feel like God is being slow. Maybe they will even feel like he must not be coming at all.

In the face of this doubt, Peter gives the assurance that God is not being slow. Jesus in fact will come again. Rather than being slow, God is patient. God is giving people time to “repent and believe the good news.” God desires that all people come to repentance.

Although God is being patient, the end will come. The earth and everything in it will be destroyed by fire. The last day will come. As we know on the last day, the King too shall come. Therefore, the encouragement here is to prepare to meet the King with repentance.

So, what is repentance? Repentance is a gift from God. Repentance consists of two parts. The first component of repentance is contrition or sorrow. God's law shows a person the error of his ways and that he has sinned against the God of the universe. The second component of repentance is faith. After being struck by God's law, the Holy Spirit then brings a person to see that Jesus is his Savior and has forgiven his sins. The tool that the Holy Spirit uses is the gospel. Therefore, repentance is turning from sin to Jesus in faith. Preparing to meet the King with repentance is about being in a right relationship with him.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord commands that we “produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Matthew 3:8) When you are baptized, you are brought into a life of repentance. In Luther's Catechism, he writes, “the old Adam in us should be

drowned by daily contrition and repentance.” A proper fruit of the repentance that the Holy Spirit gives is a cessation of the sins that plague us.

You are called to live a life of repentance. Do you confess your sins regularly? Do you strive to flee from them? A strong temptation for Christians in our circles is to use God’s grace as an excuse to continue in sin. People might take the mindset of “It is okay because I am forgiven.” Please heed the warning that this is not the case.

The college student who gets drunk every weekend thinks “I am forgiven by Jesus for my sin,” but then he continues to get drunk every weekend. The gossip-mongering high school girl thinks “I am forgiven by Jesus for my sin” but then she continues to spread nasty lies. The man caught up in a secret affair thinks “I am forgiven by Jesus for my sin” but then he continues to sleep with his co-worker.

Impenitence is unbelief. Continuing in sin is not fitting with a life of repentance. As Jesus said, repentance is necessary. “unless you repent, you will all perish too.” (Luke 13:4) So, heed John the Baptist’s warning “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!” (Matthew 3:2) Search your hearts. If you are holding onto a sin. Let it go. Flee from that sin.

Then, in faith, run to Christ. Your forgiveness comes from your King. As Pastor Pufahl noted last week, this King has come to save. He shed his blood for you on the cross. He washed you clean of all your sins. He has made you ready for his return. He washed you clean of your sins by shedding his blood on the cross. He clothed you with his righteousness. This is what your King did for you. Yes, with a repentant heart, look to your king who is your Savior.

Prepare to meet the King with repentance. Knowing what your King has done for you, prepare to see him in his second coming by fleeing from the sins of this world. Do not become complacent with your sins. No, run from them. Drown your Old Adam in daily contrition. In faith, run to the cross of forgiveness and life.

In the second part of today’s text, Peter uses the confidence of the King’s coming as a reason to live a holy life. Here, we are exhorted to prepare to meet the King with holy living.

Peter shares the certainty that this world will come to an end. The world will be destroyed by fire, this is true. Yet, the end of the world is good news to those who have a right relationship with God through Christ. These people have confidence of a new heavens and a new earth. This is eternity in paradise.

As believers know that their King is coming, they want to prepare to meet him with holy living. They will do this to say thank you for the wonderful gift that they have received from their King, the confidence of eternity in paradise.

With this basis, Peter encourages that they ought to be people living holy and godly lives. As they look forward to their King coming, they are to strive to be found in peace with others. They want to live lives that are spotless and blameless in his sight.

Kids are used to preparing for Christmas with holy living, right? Maybe, you know of someone who has an “Elf on the Shelf.” The premise of the “Elf on the Shelf” is essentially that they are Santa Claus’ spies sent to make sure that you are truly naughty or nice. Ultimately, this practice is a work-righteous motivation meant to encourage kids to act better based on the threat of losing Christmas presents.

During Advent, we are encouraged to prepare for Christmas with holy living in a different way. We do not do this to earn God’s favor or to escape hell. Santa may be all about that destructive work righteous theology, but God is not. We prepare to meet our King with holy living as a natural response of thanksgiving.

This pre-Christmas season is a time to consider charity and holy living. In this time, we see more people engaging in various volunteer projects. This can be a great thing. Consider what happened last weekend at our church. Through church decorating, present wrapping, caroling, and volunteering at Feed My Starving Children, we had over 100 people engage in volunteering. We also had over 120 Christmas gifts donated. We will continue to have opportunities to demonstrate thankfulness to our King.

This Christmas season though, let us not just focus on the outward acts of an apparent holy life. Often during Christmas time, people can engage in these charitable ventures, but they allow the unseen parts of their lives to be less than spotless.

Imagine the scenario, motivated by the nearness of Christmas, a man volunteers often at his church and in his community, but then he allows his godliness at home to disappear. Stressed out by his charitable ventures he becomes cold with his wife, angry at his kids, and lazy around the house. In such a scenario, this man is failing to make peace with others and be blameless in God’s sight all in the name of trying to do the things of a holy life.

People of Emmanuel, if you have allowed the charity of this season to lead you to live an unholy life in this way, you must repent. God calls us to live holy lives in preparation for the coming of our King. This means lives that are set apart from sin. This means lives that consist of more than large charitable actions. Instead, live a life that honors God in every aspect.

If we have failed to live spotless lives with the knowledge of our coming King, let us confess this to our God. Let us look to him with penitent hearts. Yes, turn from the volunteer work toward Jesus. Jesus lived a completely pure life for you. Jesus did not just do the outward visible acts of charity, but he maintained a completely pure life. This was Jesus living for you. Yes, he died for you too. Jesus, the King who is coming, has already come and given you peace before God. He has clothed you in his holy living.

Now, moved by the grace of our God, let us prepare to meet our King with holy living. You can continue to engage with the volunteer works of this season but also live a holy life at home. Moved by the first coming of our Lord and in view of his second coming strive to be at peace with your family members Reconcile over past hurts. Forgive and seek forgiveness. Do this as you are motivated to live a holy life before your God.

The King is coming. Prepare to meet him. Many screaming fans prepared for Taylor Swift to come visit their cities on tour. Even the cities themselves did their part. A much more important person is coming. He is Jesus Christ the King of Kings. He is coming on the last day. Let us prepare to meet him with repentance and holy living. Amen.