

COME, LORD JESUS.

ADVENT  
SERMON SERIES



AN ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERMON SERIES



Concordia  
Seminary  
ST. LOUIS

**SAMPLE**

# “COME, LORD JESUS”

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## Description to give the congregation

“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest . . .” so begins the common table prayer. In the spirit of Revelation 22:20, during Advent services we will apply this petition to Advent devotions. Through short and simple daily practices we will learn to pray, “Come Lord Jesus” in a way that gives daily strength and hope.

“Daily devotions.” That sounds like a huge challenge to many of us. Whether you are a household of one, two, three, or more, having daily devotions can be a struggle. Our Advent series will use God’s word to equip disciples for this struggle and provide simple and effective ways to help meet this challenge. With God’s help we can learn to daily pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” not only to daily bless our food but our lives, finding strength and hope in Jesus.

The hope and strength that Jesus gives comes in his victory over the “unholy trinity”: the devil, our sinful nature, and the sinful world. This includes the promise of fully flourishing in the life to come. In this series we will explore how God’s word teaches and guides us in following our victorious Lord as we look to him in daily devotion to his word.

“Advent” means “coming.” During this season of Advent our focus will be on Jesus’s “three comings” to save us—past, present, and future. Jesus has come and accomplished his saving work. He continues to come by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word and sacraments. He will come again on the last day for our final deliverance. This series will match Christ’s three “comings” with his “overcoming” of the “unholy trinity,” the enemies of his saving word.

## WEEK 1:

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Has Come to Defeat the Devil

## WEEK 2:

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Comes to Lead Us in Daily Life

## WEEK 3:

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Will Come Again to Bring Final Victory

## WEEK 4 | CHRISTMAS EVE:

Praying COME, LORD JESUS to Him Who Has Come to Create Faith

## CHRISTMAS:

Praying COME, LORD JESUS to Him Who Brings the Enlightening Word

### Abbreviated Notes for Preachers

Jesus has come, now comes, and will come again to defeat the unholy trinity. Jesus defeated the devil's accusations by the completed work of his first coming. He comes daily to lead us in word and sacrament to bring about repentance, faith and Christian living.

He will come again to overcome this rebellious world and bring final victory on the last day, to bring a new heavens and new earth.

Jesus taught in the parable of the Sower that his word is essential for his coming into our lives. The tradition of Advent devotions provides an excellent avenue into teaching the use of God's word and prayer as a daily practice. The challenges to planting the seed of God's word deeply into people's hearts as described in the parable, will form the outline of the first three weeks of sermons: Jesus is needed to defeat the devil who seeks to "snatch" the word away; His word must penetrate the "hard ground" of our hearts; and his promise to overcome the world is necessary to loosen the stranglehold of its false hopes and to give lasting peace. The fourth sermon, which may be used in some cases during the final week of Advent or in others for Christmas Eve, focuses on the fourth kind of soil where the word has taken root and flourishes by creating faith in people's hearts. The final sermon, suitable for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, has the enlightening Word Incarnate as its focus.

# FOR PASTORS

## Preaching in Advent?

How should we approach preaching in Advent? This is a season of the church year with deep roots, theologically rich themes, and cherished traditions. However, outside the church, there is little Advent engagement for our people.<sup>1</sup>

This series focuses on one Advent tradition that could still engage church members with Advent's rich biblical themes today. Even amidst the culture's secularized Christmas, it holds the promise of putting down deep spiritual roots in peoples' daily lives. The focus of this sermon series is the generous sowing of the seed of God's word on the hearts of people in the concrete practice of household devotions.

In a conversation with a fellow church member recently about daily devotions, she commented that her family always tried to have Advent devotions. Even if families do not spend time reading God's word daily the rest of the year, they may relate to sitting down to devotions with an Advent wreath and opening the boxes on an Advent calendar. The preaching in Advent for this series seeks to encourage that Advent tradition with the desire of extending the practice of daily devotions into a year-round habit of daily prayer and devotion on the word of God.

## An Advent Preaching Series on Daily Devotions – Why?

In answering the question of why use a preaching series to encourage daily devotions, several streams of thought come together.

As already mentioned, it fits among the traditions of Advent, it also reflects key themes of this penitential and preparatory season. Daily devotions, like Advent, should produce repentance, draw one's attention to the promise of the gospel, and enable vigilant expectation of the return of Christ.

Another answer to the "Why?" of a series with this overall function is that it promotes the practice of daily devotions that supports Christian discipleship. This is a recognition, especially in today's culture, that Christians need daily formation to counter the "secular liturgies"<sup>2</sup> drawing them away from God's word. That need is clearly on display in secular celebrations of Christmas that shoulder out the biblical themes of Advent. In view of this need, the 2019 LCMS Convention resolved to provide more resources for daily discipleship.<sup>3</sup> A preaching series is one such resource. This particular series draws on the Lutheran

<sup>1</sup> See Phillip Brandt's intriguing article, "Can We Talk about Advent," *Concordia Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 39–54. Acknowledging the secular Christmas takeover of the time of Advent, he proposes moving it to after Christmas, where he posits its themes better fit the culture.

<sup>2</sup> See James K. A. Smith's description of cultural liturgies in *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 73–88.

<sup>3</sup> To Encourage Lifelong Catechesis in the Home and Church, Resolution 12-03A, *Today's Business*, 2nd Edition.

catechetical tradition for supporting discipleship.<sup>4</sup> A specific form for the practice of household devotions suggested by this series will be a simple order based on the section for Daily Prayers in the Small Catechism.

Why “preaching” to teach this practice? Much encouragement is needed for the faithful practice of daily devotions. Preaching is a powerful way to encourage Christians in faith and Christian living. One struggle voiced by parishioners and pastors alike is the challenge to practice daily devotions.<sup>5</sup> This is a spiritual battle that requires the full attention of the church. Advent is a great time to offer this encouragement, to build on the Advent devotional tradition and to seek to regularize it in the lives of Christian disciples. Preaching is an effective way to support this.

### An Advent Preaching Series on Daily Devotions – How?

There are a number of ways preaching could function to encourage daily devotions.<sup>5</sup> The parable of the Sower guides this particular preaching series. Its focus on planting God’s word in the hearts of people and highlights the obstacles that are faced in doing so. Jesus tells this parable to help his disciples recognize why his message is so often resisted. Those spiritual forces are still very active today. We sometimes call them “the unholy trinity”: the devil, the sinful nature, and the fallen world. Overcoming these is necessary for the practice of daily devotions. The challenges to planting the seed of God’s word deeply into people’s hearts as described in the parable, will form the outline of the first three weeks of sermons: Jesus is needed to defeat the devil who seeks to “snatch” the word away; his word must penetrate the “hard ground” of our hearts; and his promise to overcome the world is necessary to loosen the stranglehold of its false hopes and to give lasting peace. The fourth sermon, which may be used in some cases during the final week of Advent or in others for Christmas Eve, focuses on the fourth kind of soil where the word has taken root and flourishes by creating faith in people’s hearts. The final sermon, suitable for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, has the enlightening Word Incarnate as its focus.

These sermons draw on the meaning of Advent, the coming of Christ, for its gospel emphasis. It will feature the coming of Christ in the past, the present, and the future to overcome the forces of evil which seek to uproot the word of God in our lives. To that end, additional biblical texts will be proclaimed. St. Paul’s message in Ephesians 6 on spiritual warfare indicates that since the completed work of Christ in his first coming has already defeated Satan, we can find spiritual protection and weaponry for this battle in “the armor of God” and “the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.” Jesus’s counsel to Martha in Luke 10 points to “the one thing needed” being the word of God where Jesus comes to calm anxieties and worries characteristic of our sinful nature. The second Advent of Christ, the future coming of our Lord Jesus, is the basis of our ultimate hope in overcoming the sinful world. In various places in Scripture, including Revelation, the message is clear that our Lord

<sup>4</sup> See John T. Pless, *Luther’s Small Catechism: A Manual for Discipleship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> In 2019, Dr. Ken Schurb did a survey at a Central Illinois District Pastor’s Conference on the subject of addressing cultural idolatries in ministry. A top result was the failure to set aside time for daily devotion to the word of God. The survey also asked pastors what kind of resources could help in this work. The top answer was resources for preaching to address this need.

will return to bring to an end the old, fallen world and to replace it with “a new heaven and new earth,” the future “home of righteousness.”

Teaching the practice of daily devotions through preaching is well served by a simple format and basic instructions. As noted, a simple order for daily devotions based on the Daily Prayers section of the Small Catechism will be offered. It is stressed that if one already has a regular practice of daily devotions that is serving well, maintaining the “holy habit” is wise. Even so, it is helpful to consider some of the reasons why the approach to daily Lutheran discipleship using the catechism has been successful for many.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for this success may be described by five words: Simple, Short, Shaping, Structured, and Synchronized.

Simple to use - It is familiar to many Lutherans, accessible, and portable. The three basic parts of the catechetical core of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, can be learned by heart simply through regular use. Thus they provide a prayer “ordinary” that one knows by heart, a daily prayer structure to follow in the home in a manner similar to following a regular order of service at church.

Short but expandable - These three simple parts (Commandments, Creed, Lord’s Prayer) require only a matter of minutes to recite each day. Even with the addition of a Scripture reading, devotion, song, and personalized prayers, the entire prayer time can be done in about fifteen minutes. It is also expandable if one chooses to add more. For practical purposes, and in keeping with Luther’s design, making this a short, daily practice is desirable.

Shaping the Christian life - The ordering of the simple parts serves the life of discipleship lived out in repentance (Ten Commandments), faith (Apostles’ Creed), and Christian living (Lord’s Prayer). This approach makes devotions formative in light of the overall witness of God’s word. The repetitious character of the Catechism’s approach to discipleship through daily prayer should not be downplayed. Rather it helps relate the church’s message (liturgy) in a way that counters the “secular liturgies” which seek to “catechize” in their repetitious drumming of their own marketing slogans and cultural rituals. This format also makes room for Bible readings and devotional reflections that change from day to day. These also form disciples by applying relevant, age appropriate, and timely scripture lessons to those gathering for daily devotions.

Structured for daily prayer in the home - Before each part it says, “As the Head of the Family Should Teach Them in a Simple Way to His Household.” As Luther attests, this is more than just initial catechetical instruction. Envisioned here is lifelong discipleship

<sup>6</sup> I readily admit this is a subjective claim. This is based on over 30 years of using this simple order in daily prayer in my own home. I would also add, that Martin Luther himself credits his daily praying of the catechism as a practice that sustained him in the faith (See Large Catechism Preface 7-8).

using a catechism that is designed in a way that can be prayed. Luther's own personal testimony demonstrates this.

Synchronized with congregational ministry - The catechetical core that guides such a practice of daily prayer is in sync with the church's liturgy of holy baptism, with the practice of confirmation, and is suitable for use in worship (See the use by "The Service of Prayer and Preaching" of the Small Catechism in Lutheran Service Book.)

The sermons in this series proclaim topical themes by utilizing an approach known as "the four pages of the sermon. This is a sermon structure championed by Paul Scott Wilson which addresses: (1) Trouble in the World, (2) Trouble in the Text, (3) Grace in the Text, (4) Grace in the World.<sup>7</sup>

Preachers may modify the sermons to fit their ministry context. The use of a thematic text (parable of the Sower) that binds together the entire series adds length to the sermons (especially at the beginning of the series). One may use creative methods to incorporate this thematic element outside of the sermon. For example, a pastor may provide introductions to worship that describe the overall theme and the connection between the services. This could allow for shortening sermons and focusing on the text specific to that part of the series.

### **An Advent Preaching Series of Daily Devotions - Why Not?**

Having the opportunity to preach in Advent, realizing the need for support in daily discipleship and the challenges of practicing daily devotions, why not try a sermon series to encourage this? As the parable of the Sower indicates, when the seed of God's word is planted in one's heart and grows, it produces a great harvest in the life of the disciple.

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<sup>7</sup> See the description of this structure by Dr. David Schmitt at [concordiatheology.org](https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/dynamic/lawgospel-structure/): <https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/dynamic/lawgospel-structure/>

# WEEKLY WORSHIP RESOURCES

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Sermons are the primary contribution to worship resources in the 2019 Advent Series. These have been supplied along with a daily devotional “ordinary” and suggested devotional resources. Below are hymns that may be chosen to accompany the sermons and Scripture Readings in this series. Ministers and worship planners are invited to use any of these resources in a manner that serves their ministry context.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS AND HYMNS FOR ADVENT 2019

### Series Hymn Suggestions:

*“Once He Came in Blessing” LSB 333*

*“Almighty God, Your Word is Cast” LSB 577*

## ADVENT WEEK 1

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Has Come to Defeat the Devil

### Readings

Revelation 22:20; Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23; Ephesians 6:10–20

### Hymns

*“Hark, the Glad Sound” LSB 349*

*“Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord” LSB 352*

*“Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising” LSB 375*

## ADVENT WEEK 2

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Comes to Lead Us in Daily Life

### Readings

Matthew 13:5–6, 20–21; Luke 10:38–42

### Hymns

*“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” LSB 338*

*“One Thing’s Needful” LSB 536*

*“Oh, Blest the House” LSB 862*

# WEEK 1

Praying, COME, LORD JESUS, to Him Who Has Come to Defeat the Devil

Texts: Revelation 22:20; Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23; Ephesians 6:10–20

## COME, LORD JESUS

“Come, Lord Jesus be our guest and let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.” So goes the common table prayer sometimes referred to as “The Come Lord Jesus” prayer. Perhaps you have been in a group at church getting ready to eat and someone says, “Ok, let’s pray ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’”

The intent is for Jesus to come and bless our food. But this Advent we will pray “Come, Lord Jesus” in another way. Advent literally means “coming,” and, of course, refers to the Lord Jesus. It is important that we focus on these words because “Come, Lord Jesus” is the final message of Scripture. This revelation reminds us that the Advent prayer for Jesus’s coming should always be on our lips. Revelation 22:20 records Jesus’s parting words in Scripture, “Yes, I am coming soon!” and then John provides our response, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Over the next few weeks, we will pray “Come, Lord Jesus” in relation to the 3 different “comings” of Jesus—his past, present, and future comings. Today, we will focus on what Jesus accomplished in his first coming to save us. Next week, our attention will be aimed at his present coming in his word and sacrament. After that, we will look toward his future coming when he returns on the final day.

## COME, LORD JESUS IN ADVENT DEVOTIONS

Prayer for Jesus’s presence is not only for church services but is something needed every day, not only as a brief meal prayer but as a time of daily devotion.

Advent devotions are quite popular. You can find them in many places. There are Advent devotion booklets. You can even set up your email to receive an Advent devotion every day. “Come, Lord Jesus” on the internet! This is such an important practice. Especially in today’s world where we and members of our families are bombarded by so many non-Christian messages, hearing God’s word every day is critical. Therefore, in each of our Advent sermons I will be encouraging daily devotions. People who do them tell me what a blessing they are!

Consider this scenario: Members of a family, be it a household of one, two, three or more sit down every day to hear a devotion on the word of God and to enter into a time of prayer. The word they read helps shape their lives in the strength and hope of the Lord! This also leads to engaging God in personal conversation, thanking him for blessings and seeking his help and guidance for the day’s work. It is only for a brief time of perhaps no more than 15 minutes, but it is a daily practice. They don’t want to live without it!

## DIFFICULTY IN DEVOTION

“Ok, pastor, I hear you. But have you tried to do daily devotions?” someone might say. Some people have this down pat. But for a lot of folks, this is a real struggle. Let’s be honest. It is not as easy as it sounds to dedicate time to daily devotions, even if it’s only during Advent. Logically, you might think, “It sounds like no problem. There are 1,440 minutes in a day. I don’t see anything hard about taking 15 of those minutes, about 1 percent of my day, to do a reading and say a prayer.” But more than logical calculations are required. This is a spiritual activity. When we have devotions we are praying, “Come, Lord Jesus” into our day. There are spiritual forces that do not want Jesus to come to us.

That spiritual opposition is why daily devotions, and even weekly church attendance, can be difficult. Worshipping one or two hours a week, taking 15 minutes daily for a devotion would not be so hard if not for the spiritual battle. What is sometimes called the “unholy trinity” is working against us. The devil, our sinful flesh, and the world are all bitterly opposed to our receiving the word of God and praying, “Come, Lord Jesus” into our daily lives.

Consider these comments:

“Hey, it’s time for devotions.”

“Oh, I can’t today. I have some homework to finish before school.”

Or, “I’m so tired. I just can’t pay attention for a devotion. Let’s not do that today.”

Comments like these sound innocent, but they fulfill the devil’s schemes and reveal our natural resistance to the word of God.

If we do manage to sit down and have a devotion, the evil one will scheme some more to prevent planting the word in our hearts.

“Hey honey, I’ve got a big project due at work and need to get going. Can we skip the Bible reading and just say a really short prayer?”

Or, after reading your devotion you realize, “Wow, I have no idea what I just read! My mind was elsewhere.”

Or, consider this family devotional distraction, “Can you kids please sit still while we read the Bible story!” So says the exasperated parent as a toddler runs to grab a toy.

## TROUBLE IN THE TEXT

A place in Scripture where opposition to God’s word by evil forces is revealed is in the parable of the Sower. As Matthew records this, Jesus has been experiencing growing opposition to his own preaching and teaching. The religious sect of the Pharisees were actively resisting Jesus’s words and the crowds were showing they didn’t comprehend. Jesus uses the parable of the Sower to explain the opposition.

In it, he describes the unholy trinity as being the sources of resistance to God's word. He says that a farmer went out to sow seeds for his crops. Some fell along the path and birds ate them. Other seed fell on rocky ground but the plants had no roots and withered in the hot sun. Other seed fell amidst thorns that grew up and choked the young plants.

Jesus explains that the seed represents his message. The images of birds, rocky ground, and choking thorns represent the devil, our sinful hearts, and the fallen world. These evil forces are opposed to God's word.

In explaining the parable of the Sower, Jesus said that the birds who ate up the seed represent the evil one who desires to snatch the word of God away from us. The devil knows that the truth of God's word is his undoing. The last thing that the "father of lies," as Jesus calls him elsewhere, wants us to know is the truth that God has saved us and defeated him. So he will use every scheme possible to prevent our hearing of God's word. Let me say that again. He will use every scheme possible to prevent us from hearing God's word! That is why having daily devotions can be such a struggle; indeed, a spiritual battle. It is nothing less than spiritual warfare for us to daily pray "Come, Lord Jesus" in regular devotion.

## GRACE IN GOD'S WORD

It was in order to defeat the evil one that Jesus first came. Our focus today is: "COME, LORD JESUS," who has overcome our arch enemy—Satan. We say this confidently because our Lord has already come and defeated him through his completed work of redemption. That was his first coming.

It was quite a battle! From the moment of Jesus's birth, the devil was on the attack. As the so-called god of this world he was inspiring Herod to kill baby Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry he met Jesus directly in the wilderness to tempt him away from his mission. But our Lord defeated him with the word of God. During his ministry, Jesus would silence and cast out evil spirits who knew who he was. When the devil tempted his disciples, especially Peter and Judas, Jesus overcame the power of the evil one. While Jesus himself was attacked and tempted by the devil in every way, he did not sin. He did not sin and thus removed God's judgment on our sins by dying on the cross for us and the whole world. In dying for our sins, Jesus defeated the devil. Satan, the old accuser, could no longer make a claim on us. So after he died, before rising from the dead, Jesus "descended into hell," as we say in the Apostles' Creed, and announced victory over the forces of the evil one.

Therefore, we can confidently pray: "COME, LORD JESUS" who has come and defeated the devil.

## GRACE IN THE WORLD

Our Lord unmasks and exposes the devil with this parable. He defeated him with his death and resurrection. And, he has defeated him for us!

That is why we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” and desire to do so daily. In a great passage about Jesus protecting us from evil forces, St. Paul says that Christians are to put on the “armor of God.” In Ephesians, he writes that we don’t wrestle with mere flesh and blood but against “the spiritual forces of evil.” Then he says to “take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the evil day.” This divine protection is described as a gift of Jesus’s righteousness that protects our hearts. It is our shield of faith, trusting in his blood-bought forgiveness, that extinguishes Satan’s flaming arrows of accusation. It is Jesus’s resurrection that gives us hope instead of despair as we wear a helmet of salvation. These gifts are promised by God’s word and declared to us personally in our baptisms in the name of the Triune God. Yes, because Jesus has defeated the devil, we daily desire to pray, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

Along with all of the spiritual armor of Jesus that we wear, St. Paul also describes a specific weapon that is used against the spiritual forces of evil. It is, and I quote, “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Jesus used it to defeat the devil in his wilderness temptations. We too are invited to use his word to defeat the devil in our lives, as well.

## THE URGENCY OF DAILY DEVOTIONS TO DEFEAT THE DEVIL

This is why we encourage one another to practice daily devotions. As I said before, this is not easy because it is a spiritual battle. So we need to encourage one another!

Some of us may already be doing devotions. Others of us may have never done them. Still others, have tried but have not continued. We fell out of the habit, we gave up in frustration, or we simply felt too busy to take the time.

I’m simply asking you to consider doing a very SHORT daily devotion. We have provided some resources you might choose to use. But many others are available. One thought is simply to start reading the Bible and having a prayer. In the future we can discuss more about what you can choose to do.

But for now let’s focus on praying to Jesus to come and help us in this task. None of us can defeat the devil, he already has. So with his help, this Advent season, we join in praying “Come, Lord Jesus,” not just to bless our food but all of life each day.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**