

# THE SEEN YAHWEH

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL  
ON CHRIST IN THE  
OLD TESTAMENT



STEADFAST LUTHERANS

## “The Seen Yahweh”

An Advent Devotional on Christ in the Old Testament

Written by: Rev. Marcus Baikie, Rev. Travis Berg,  
Rev. Joshua Scheer

Editor: Rev. Joshua Scheer  
Cover Art: Rev. Roberto Rojas Jr.

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*To the glory of our Triune God  
and for the Evangelical Lutheran Church  
wherever she is found.*

*“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.” This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”” (John 18:4–9, ESV)*

The words of this familiar Good Friday passage recorded as “I am he” do not do justice to what Jesus said. We could just translate the Greek here as “I am”. He is not just acknowledging that He is Jesus of Nazareth (why would that cause the crowd of men there to capture Him to fall down?) here but saying something about Himself. He is “I am”. He is Yahweh. The ancient covenantal name for God from the Holy Scriptures, the name which Jews of His day feared to speak – that is Jesus.

This is not a new teaching that Jesus comes up with. The faithful of the Old Testament knew the mystery of the Holy Trinity. They knew the Son and expected Him to become man. They knew Him to be the revelation of the Father. They knew the tension of both “No man can see me and live” and also the many times when Yahweh appeared before His people, was seen by them, and spoke to them. They knew this because the Scriptures revealed this teaching. Through titles like “Angel of Yahweh” (Angel of the LORD), “Name of Yahweh” (Name of the LORD), “Word of Yahweh” (Word of the LORD), and “Glory of Yahweh” (Glory of the LORD), the faithful have been already taught about the Son of the Father. The Trinity is certainly clearly named and attested to in the New Testament, but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t taught and already revealed throughout the Old Testament.

We confess in the creeds that Jesus is eternal. He has always been God. Begotten of the Father from all eternity. This is sometimes a hard thing for us to grasp because we have a hard time understanding Jesus apart from His incarnation. This is not a bad thing, but simply the natural outgrowth of where we stand in salvation history. We stand after the incarnation, and so from that wondrous moment of history into eternity Jesus was and will ever be incarnate. So, managing to learn of Him prior to that seems odd, but hopefully this little devotion and series for Advent will help us see Him all over the Scriptures, even before the infant of Bethlehem and the man of Golgotha. Certainly once we get a sense of this we will easily see Him there in that Old Testament, for He is still the same, with the same regard and love for us, the same service toward us, the same deliverance of us – this is because Jesus is still the same revelation of the Father – whichever of the testaments we read about Him in. Jesus taught this to those who refused to believe in Him, but His Words teach us today:

*“You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,”*  
(John 5:33–39, ESV)

The Scriptures (especially noted here is that Jesus is referring to the Old Testament) bear witness of Christ. They reveal the Father who is heard and seen in the Son. By this Son, revealed in Scripture to be God of God, Light of Light, and very God of very God – by Him you have eternal life. May our God bless your observance of the season of Advent this year by granting you greater knowledge and trust in the Son.

Rev. Joshua Scheer

Senior Pastor - Our Savior Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming

President and Editor-in-Chief – Steadfast Lutherans

*A special note:*

*Much of the credit of the content of this devotion is due to another work – “The Holy Trinity” by Carl Beckwith as found in the Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics Series (© 2016 by The Luther Academy). This book has brought the Trinity back into the forefront of our theology. We often assume these most foundational things about theology, but history teaches that over time a return to these fundamental doctrines is always necessary. So many of the errors we find in today's world and even in churches is related to the dulling of our confession of the doctrine of the Trinity. We can rightly give thanks to God that He does raise up teachers who bring old truth into new times to help the rest of us along the way.*



# THE SEEN YAHWEH

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STEADFAST LUTHERANS | ADVENT 2023



## First Sunday in Advent Week One - “The Angel of Yahweh”

*Matthew 21:1-9*

“*Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’*” (Matthew 21:5, ESV)

The prophet Zechariah called God’s people to “Behold (that is, see), your King is coming!” But how could God’s people rejoice at the sight of their King? Israel’s King and God was none other than the Lord Yahweh, who had declared to His servant Moses, “Man shall not see me and live.” (Exodus 33:20) If the daughter of Zion was able to see the Lord her King coming at all, it would have meant death for her. Nevertheless every Word of God proves true. The daughter of Zion would indeed behold her King as He came to her on that first Palm Sunday long ago, and she would not die but rejoice greatly.

In fact, Palm Sunday was not the first time that God was seen by His own people. There were others throughout the Old Testament who had likewise seen the King, Yahweh of Hosts, with their own eyes and lived: Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Moses, and others. These men saw the visible Angel of Yahweh, distinct from the invisible Yahweh, yet at the same time Yahweh Himself. The mystery of the God who cannot be seen and yet has been seen is the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

But there was a crucial difference between the visible appearances of God in the Old Testament and the coming of the Lord Jesus as the King on Palm Sunday. When Jesus, the Son of God, was beheld by the daughter of Zion as He rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, He came as true Man, incarnate, having flesh and blood, like us in every way but without sin. Because the Word was made flesh and the Son of God became Man for us men and for our salvation, we have every reason to rejoice greatly and shout aloud. For in Christ alone we see God’s glory.

**Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, grant that the joy of Your coming in our flesh and blood be and remain ours throughout this season of Advent. Amen.**

## Monday of Advent 1

*Psalm 34*

*“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.” (Psalm 34:7, ESV)*

David was on the run. Having been warned by his faithful and beloved friend Jonathan that King Saul had determined to put him to death, David departed from the land of Israel into the land of the Philistines, to the city of Gath. It seems as though he had gone out of the frying pan and into the fire! For Gath was not only the city of the Philistine king, Achish (called Abimelech in Psalm 34), it was also the home of Goliath, the Philistine champion, whom David had slain in battle. And indeed, the king’s servants recognized David as the one who had struck down his ten thousands. Surely Achish would not welcome this man into his presence who had defeated the Philistines on more than one occasion. With no refuge in Israel or Philistia, where could David turn?

“Blessed is the man who takes refuge in [Yahweh],” writes David in Psalm 34. Since there was no earthly help available to David, he sought Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him and delivered him from all his fears. In his poverty David cried, and Yahweh heard him and saved him out of all his troubles—that is, the Angel of Yahweh, who encamped around him and delivered him. David feared the Lord Yahweh, and he delivered David out of all his afflictions. He delivered him from Achish by David feigning insanity in the king’s presence, He delivered him from Saul who sought his destruction, and He delivered him from all his sins and transgressions and ultimately from death itself by His holy, innocent, bitter sufferings, and death.

“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh,” writes David. Through his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we learn to fear, love, and trust in Him who was David’s Lord and would become his Son, born of the Virgin Mary. As it was then, so it remains true today: Yahweh redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

**O Lord, hear our cries for mercy, encamp around us, and deliver us from every evil. Amen.**



## Tuesday of Advent 1

*Exodus 3:1-15*

*“God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’ ”*” (Exodus 3:14, ESV)

As Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law he encountered a wondrous sight: a bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. Years later, when he wrote the account of this event by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he would confess that it was the Angel of Yahweh who appeared to him out of the midst of that flame. This was no created angel but God himself, the Creator of all the angels. For He calls Himself the God of Moses’s father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. The one and only God was speaking to Moses, and He would send Moses to deliver his people.

The name God reveals to Moses, “I Am Who I Am,” testifies to His oneness. There is no other God. At the same time, however, it is clear that the Angel of Yahweh, who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, is distinct from Yahweh. Here the doctrine of the Trinity is found in the Old Testament. Yahweh and the Angel of Yahweh are indeed one in substance or essence, yet distinct in person, for the Father and the Son, along with the Holy Spirit, are eternally one God in three persons.

In addition to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is clearly confessed here, our fathers in the faith also found in the burning bush a type or allegory of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. Even as the fire kindled the wood of the bush but did not consume it, so the divine nature dwells in Christ’s human nature without destroying it. The Word became flesh to deliver us from sin and death and bring us to the eternal promised land of heaven.

**Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for becoming Man for us men and for our salvation. Amen.**

## Wednesday of Advent 1

*Hebrews 1:1-14*

*“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” (Hebrews 1:1–4, ESV)*

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only-begotten Son of God, manifested himself to His people of old in many ways, including as the Angel of Yahweh. It is certainly appropriate that He should refer to Himself by this name in the Holy Scriptures, for the word “angel” in both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament means “messenger.” Truly God has spoken to His people throughout the ages by His Son. He is, after all, the Word of God made flesh.

The first chapter of Hebrews makes it clear that to refer to the Son of God before His incarnation as “the Angel of Yahweh” is by no means to say that He is an angel like Gabriel, a created being. For it was not to the angels but to His eternally begotten Son that God the Father said, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You,” and, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

Jesus—both before His incarnation and now being true Man—is not a created angel but the Lord and God of the angels, as much superior to them as the Name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For this reason we who are Christ’s brothers according to the flesh worship him with the angels and archangels, fellow servants together with all who keep the Word of God.

**Lord of the Angels, with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your holy name. Amen.**

## Thursday of Advent 1

*Genesis 16:1-16*

*“So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.””* (Genesis 16:13, ESV)

By a spring of water in the wilderness, the Angel of Yahweh appeared to Hagar after she had conceived a son for Abram and fled from Sarai. In this encounter we read once again how the Angel of Yahweh is at the same time distinct from Yahweh yet one with Yahweh. He declares that He will number her offspring, while at the same time declaring that Yahweh has listened to her affliction. After this encounter, she asks (in the Hebrew text), “Have I really seen him here who sees me?” and implies that she should have died when she saw him (see Exodus 33:20).

Truly Hagar was right to confess her unworthiness to see God. For she had sinned against her mistress Sarai. She had become rebellious, proud, and disobedient when she conceived, seeing that Sarai had not. Furthermore, she fled from Sarai’s discipline rather than accepting it with humility. For her transgressions, Hagar deserved to be forsaken by God and left to die alone in the wilderness.

But the Angel of Yahweh came and spoke to her words of promise, and in faithful response Hagar confessed about Him, “You are the God of seeing.” Though she was a poor sinner, God looked upon her in mercy and cared for her and strengthened her to return to Sarai in obedience.

Our merciful Lord Jesus is still “the God of seeing.” He saw us in our misery, and He had compassion on us. He took upon himself our sins, including those of rebellion and pride, and atoned for them with His most holy blood on the cross. He comes and speaks to us the promise of forgiveness for His sake. In faith, like Hagar, we can thus confess that the Lord has seen us, and for His sake we shall live eternally.

**Truly You are a God of seeing, O Lord, for You have looked upon us with mercy and forgiven all our sins. Amen.**

## Friday of Advent 1

*Judges 6:11-24*

*“Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.” But the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.”*” (Judges 6:22–23, ESV)

Once more we hear of the Angel of Yahweh appearing to his people, and once more the Scriptural texts makes it clear that the Angel of Yahweh is at the same time distinct from and yet one with Yahweh. Judges 6 says that it was the Angel of Yahweh who spoke to Gideon and said, “Yahweh is with you, O mighty man of valor.” But it also says that Yahweh turned to him and said to him, “But I will be with you.”

However, Gideon did not seem to realize at first with whom he was speaking, or at the very least he was uncertain. In order to be sure with whom exactly he was speaking, Gideon asked for a sign. He brought an offering before the Angel of Yahweh, who caused fire to spring up from the rock to consume the meat and unleavened cakes. It was in the act of worship that Gideon was able to perceive that the one with whom he spoke was truly the Angel of Yahweh, that is, the Lord Yahweh Himself.

Our Lord Jesus still makes Himself known to us in our worship today. When we gather in His holy house to hear his Word and receive his Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith in our hearts so that we may be sure, as Gideon was, that we are standing in the presence of the Almighty Lord and God. But when we hear His Word and receive His Supper in faith, we are likewise comforted with this promise: “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” For by the means of grace we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.

**Lord Jesus Christ, You are our life and our peace. Grant us faith to acknowledge Your presence with us in Your Word and Sacrament. Amen.**

## Saturday of Advent 1

*Judges 13:1-25*

*“And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?” And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground.” (Judges 13:17–20, ESV)*

Again the Angel of Yahweh manifests Himself to His people in the book of Judges, this time visiting Manoah and his wife, promising them the gift of a son who would save his people. When Manoah asked the Angel of Yahweh what His name was, He responded, “Why do you ask my Name, seeing that it is wonderful?”

It’s no coincidence that this is one of the names by which the Christ would be called upon His birth: “Wonderful Counselor.” For who can count all the wonders of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity? There is the wonderful union of His two natures, the wonderful conception and birth from the Virgin Mary, the wonderful redemption He won for us by His death on the cross, His wonderful reign over His church at the Father’s right hand, and much more.

That son born to Manoah, who would deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines, was named Samson, and we know from Scripture that he did not always walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which he had been called. But the Christ Child born to us, the Son given to us, was sinless and without blemish. He has been given the name Jesus, for He has saved us, His people, from our sins.

**Lord, You have wonderfully redeemed us by Your blood and made us Your people to live under You in Your kingdom forever. Help us to trust in this and never lose our wonder for You and Your mighty deeds. Amen.**

**Second Sunday in Advent  
Week Two - "The Name of Yahweh"**

*Luke 21:25-36*

*"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."  
(Luke 21:27, ESV)*

They will see. We will see. All will see God with their own eyes. At Mount Sinai, no one saw God. Moses says to the children of Israel: "You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice." (Deut. 4:12). This is why there are such strict laws against image making for the purpose of worship. How can you make an image of the formless God?

But they will see. We will see. All will see. We shall see God. The Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, is not merely a voice. He is flesh and blood. He was seen. Men beheld His glory. And they will see Him again when He returns to judge the world in righteousness.

Because we see God in the person of Jesus Christ, we can also picture Him in art. We do not picture Him so that we may worship the image. We make crucifixes and paintings because we are confessing that Jesus is a Man. The eternal, divine power, honor, and glory is communicated to Christ, as true Man, through the personal union. We use images to teach. We use images to confess that Jesus really is true God and true Man.

But Jesus is not the only person of the Trinity Who is pictured. We see, in Daniel 7, that God the Father, the Ancient of Days, is pictured as an old man. He also (without fear of idolatry) may be painted. But we must always remember that the Father is God only. He didn't take on human nature. Jesus did. We make pictures and images of Christ and His Father in order to confess that we shall see Him.

**Lord Jesus, You took on human flesh that we might behold Your glory. Bless our artists, so that they might teach You through their art. Stop all false teaching which would destroy images due to a misreading of Your Law, and preserve us until You come again. Amen.**

## Monday of Advent 2

*Psalm 113*

*“From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!” (Psalm 113:3, ESV)*

Wherever God’s name is, there God is. We see this reality in the patriarchs. In the days of Enos, “At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.” (Gen. 4:26). Abraham built altars and called upon the name of the Lord, as did Isaac (Gen. 13:4; 21:33; 26:25). To call upon the name of the Lord is to teach the gospel. They preached and taught and prefigured our Lord’s death with the sacrifices of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer. Solomon built a house for the name of the Lord, the temple. The Lord, the I AM, only wanted to receive sacrifices there. Indeed, the Lord wanted His people to even pray facing this house (1 Kings 8:44). This is how Daniel prayed in Babylon under the Persians (Daniel 6:10).

But we see glimmers of the New Testament age in the Old Testament. We see it especially in Psalm 113:3. God’s name will be praised everywhere. The Lord will be praised, not only by the Israelites, but also by every nation. From Easter Island to the Californian coast, the name of the Lord is praised.

This name, of course, is Jesus. As Peter says, “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). No one is bound to worship at Jerusalem. No one is bound to worship at Mount Gerizim. The Lord Jesus and His Father are worshipped in spirit and truth. To worship in spirit and truth is to hear the Holy Scriptures, which are spirit, life, and truth. Every time we hear the Scriptures sound, the name of the Lord is praised. This is true in the church building, in the home, at the hearth, or even on the barren wastes of the Scottish moors. Thanks be to God, that His name is praised from sunrise to sunset!

**Lord Jesus, Your name saves us. Let Your Word sound from coast to coast and from sunrise to sundown, so that we might ever praise You and Your great salvation. Amen.**

*“The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.” (Exodus 34:5, ESV)*

The golden calf was a spiritual fiasco. The tablets of God’s law were smashed. Now, this stiff-necked people were commanded to leave Sinai, the place where God had spoken to them. The past was full of sin and evil; the future was terrifying. Moses needs assurance. He needs an unshakeable conviction that God is still with them; that He is still for them.

And God makes Moses a beautiful promise. Even though Moses shall not see God’s face, he shall see all of God’s glory. And that’s exactly what happens in Exodus 34: “The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”

God revealed God. The eternal Son of God descended in a cloud and revealed His Father’s heart: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.”

The distinction is there. The Lord reveals the name of the Lord. But there is also identity. The Father’s attributes are the Son’s. Christ too is merciful and gracious to us miserable sinners. He too is slow to anger. He too is faithful; yes, He is faithful unto death. The Father has given all judgment into the hands of the Son, Who shall by no means clear the unrepentant guilty.

No one has seen God the Father at any time. He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. But we have seen the Son, Who descended not in a cloud but into the Virgin’s womb. We know God’s will because of Jesus’ preaching. We know Who God the Father is by Jesus’ teaching. He reveals the Lord and His kingdom. Thanks be to God’s Son, Who reveals His Father!

**Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to proclaim Your Name. Continue to teach us that You are gracious and merciful because You have sent Your Son into the flesh to be our Savior. Amen.**



## Wednesday of Advent 2

*Philippians 2:5-11*

*“so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,”* (Philippians 2:10, ESV)

Paul admonishes us: have this mind among yourselves. What does the Christian mind look like? The Christian’s thoughts shape his actions and his entire life. Here, we are told what mind to have among ourselves. We are to be like Christ.

How was Christ? Paul tells us that He was in the form of God. Only one that has the nature of God will also have the divine form. Jesus is, in His essence, God. He possessed every attribute of God and showed that He possessed them. He had divine glory and majesty. He was almighty, omniscient and omnipresent. He possessed all of these characteristics by nature. He not only stood at the same level as God, but He was also identical with God.

Even though all of these things were His by right, Christ took a different route. For the sake of sinners, He emptied Himself. He did not use His divine power to make bread into stones or to command twelve legions of angels to save Him. He, the Lord of the world, had no place to lay His head. He, God Almighty, suffered poverty, hunger, and fatigue. He, the King of all, came to serve. He was made a slave. He did not use His power or knowledge for Himself; He used it to save us. Not only was Christ a slave, but He died a slave’s death. He died upon the cross. He was cursed by God. He died a death no honorable Roman would ever countenance.

The Father exalted Christ according to His human nature. Adam sought equality with God by eating the forbidden fruit. Christ, true God, submitted to His Father’s will and saved us. Now, His name is exalted over all. His name saves. Here, we have a promise. Christ humbled Himself and was exalted. If we Christians are in Him and we humble ourselves, we too may be exalted.

**Lord Jesus, teach us humility and help us to bear our crosses so that we too might be exalted with You. Amen.**

## Thursday of Advent 2

*Exodus 23:20-33*

*“Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.” (Exodus 23:21, ESV)*

Exodus 23 deals with many different types of laws. There are moral laws, like loving your neighbor and worshipping the true God. There are other ceremonial commands, like not oppressing a sojourner, Sabbath years, and proper ways to cook a young goat.

But at the end of these laws, God makes a great promise. He shall send an Angel with the Israelite armies. This Angel is able to do divine actions. He blesses bread and water. This Angel forgives and does not forgive. Not only does this Angel do divine actions, but His voice is also to be unconditionally obeyed. Obedience brings great gifts and blessings; disobedience brings eternal destruction. This Angel blesses. This Angel’s words are to be infallibly obeyed. Why?

This Angel does divine things and says divine things because He Himself is Divine. We hear that God’s “Name is in Him.” The Angel is distinct but also inseparable from God. The Angel’s voice is God’s voice because the Angel Himself is God.

This Angel is the preincarnate Christ. He defends His people. He preaches to His people. He reveals the Father to these people. He pardons the sinners who listen and repent. But the King of all created angels is no push-over. He also does not pardon unrepentant transgression, as He did when He said to the Pharisees, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.” (Matt. 21:31).

Angel means messenger. That’s what Jesus is. He is the premier and ultimate Messenger of God the Father: “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus reveals the Father to us because He and the Father are One. Though distinct, they are inseparable.

**Lord Jesus, You are the uncreated Divine Angel Who led the Israelites. You are superior to the created angels, since You have a more excellent name than theirs: the Name of the LORD. Lead us and pardon our transgressions, so that the Triune God may be an enemy to our enemies. Amen.**

## Friday of Advent 2

*Hosea 1:1-11*

*“But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.”*  
(Hosea 1:7, ESV)

Hosea is a peculiar book. In it, the prophet’s preaching takes on a decidedly carnal aspect. Hosea must marry an idolatrous and adulterous wife. God commands it. The names of his children are also terrible sermons. The firstborn is Jezreel, which signals Israel’s defeat in the valley of Jezreel. A daughter is named Lo-ruhama, No mercy. Another son’s name is Lo-ammi, Not my people. A terrible sermon, written on parchments of flesh and inked with tears.

But in this fierce preaching of the Law, there is the bright light of the gospel. The Lord says that He will have mercy upon Judah. He will not save them by the bow of Jonathon, nor by the sword of Saul. God will not save them by a rider upon a bright red horse, who steals peace from the earth and makes men slay one another. What of horses and riders: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!” (Isaiah 31:1)

If God will not use any of these things to save us, then how shall He? “I will save them by the Lord their God.” God will save us by God. His name is Jesus, not Jezreel. Jezreel was a punishment for the blood shed by wicked kings. Jesus is the King Who sheds His blood to avert our punishment. Jesus has mercy upon the daughters of Israel by experiencing no mercy. Jesus came to His own and they did not know Him, so that they might crucify the King of Glory and make us His people.

**Lord Jesus, through You God saved us. Cause us to repent of our sins by fierce Law, so that You might have mercy on us and that we might be Your people. Amen.**

## Saturday of Advent 2

*Revelation 19:11-21*

*“His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.” (Revelation 19:12, ESV)*

Here, we see the Victor through John’s vision. He rides a white horse. He, Who was once a little and helpless Babe in a manger, has defeated all of His foes, both earthly and heavenly. He has conquered and all things are now under His feet. This Victor bears many diadems, many royal crowns. All other antichristian empires, especially the Antichrist, who have claimed such crowns have been destroyed and subdued.

This One “has a name written that no one knows but Himself.” This Victor conquers, is named Faithful and True and the Word of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, because He is true God. A name tells us what something is. A name reveals the essence of a thing. To know the name of something is to control it, understand it, have mastery over it.

But no one has mastery over our Master, Jesus Christ. His name is not known by anyone, save Himself. God only knows God’s being, God’s essence. There are many names we have been given to understand our Lord’s natures and His will. But He is still God. We will never plumb the depths of the infinite and eternal Godhead. It is as Paul says: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33)

But this God Man, Whom we will never fully comprehend or understand, is for us. That’s the point. He defends us. He saves us. He redeems us. He destroys all of the enemies of God’s church and makes a great supper for the birds of the air. He destroys those who would deceive and mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.

The One, Whose name no one else knows but Himself, is the One Who was named Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin. Thanks be to God!

**Dear Jesus, You are the Victor Who defends His church. Defend us during this time and defeat all of Your enemies. Amen.**

### Third Sunday in Advent Week Three – “The Word of Yahweh”

*Matthew 11:2-10*

*“And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you bear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”*” (Matthew 11:4–6, ESV)

Isaiah 8 is related to what Jesus quotes here to John’s disciples as the message to give to John in prison. In it, the Yahweh(LORD) of Hosts is the one appoint by Yahweh to be a sanctuary to some while a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to others (Isaiah 8:14). The prophet Zechariah identifies the Yahweh of Hosts as the same as the Word of Yahweh (see Zechariah chapters 7-9 especially). In all of these, this seen Yahweh of Host or Word of Yahweh is distinct from Yahweh but still regarded as Yahweh. Jesus is true God, He and the Father are one, and yet they are distinct persons, even in the Old Testament, prior to the incarnation.

Jesus has not changed. He is still as He was. He spoke to Isaiah and Zechariah of His help and judgment. He spoke both Law and Gospel, threat and promise to His people of old. He did the same in His ministry. He does the same in His ministry through the Church today.

A sanctuary is a beautiful thing. Yes, it may be physically a delight to the senses, but more beautiful is what it is based upon what God does there. It is a refuge from the fallen world. In it, those who suffer the ravages of the fallen world are bound up, healed, forgiven, and restored. That was what God said He would do. That is what Jesus did. He still does it today.

And offense drives us back into the mess of the world. May we never be offended by the Word of Yahweh, by Jesus. May He always be a sanctuary for us, a refuge where we are restored by His grace.

**Lord God, heavenly Father, who suffered Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to become man, and to come into the world, that He might destroy the works of the devil, deliver us poor offenders from sin and death, and give us everlasting life: We beg You so to rule and govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that we may seek no other refuge than His word, and thus avoid all offense to which, by nature, we are inclined, in order that we may always be found among the faithful followers of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him obtain eternal salvation, through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, world without end. Amen.**

## Monday of Advent 3

Psalm 33

*“For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.”* (Psalm 33:4–6, ESV)

Jesus created everything. John 1 brings this into full view, but the Christian hearing Psalm 33 can know that fact as well. Yet, creation alone is not the only work of the Second person of the Triune God. Psalm 33 lays this out as well.

First of all, the Word of Yahweh (LORD) is Jesus prior to His incarnation. Just as you have learned that titles like Angel of Yahweh (week 1), the Name of Yahweh (week 2), Yahweh of Hosts (yesterday), and even later the Glory of Yahweh (Christmas Eve and Day) are all mentions of a person rather than a concept, equal to and yet distinct from Yahweh – so we learn about Jesus as the Word of Yahweh this week.

The Word of Yahweh in the Psalm is confessed as being upright, faithful, loving righteousness and justice, having the same steadfast love of Yahweh. John’s gospel lays it out that Jesus is perfect revelation of the Father, and to know the Son is to know the Father. So also in this Psalm we see that relationship.

Jesus, the Word of Yahweh is righteous and loves righteousness. That is why He provides it to His people. St. Paul calls him the one who is both just and the justifier of the ungodly. Here the atonement of Christ comes into full view, fulfilling all that was spoken of Him, even in Psalm 33. The sending of Christ to save the world is also the clearest revelation of the steadfast love of Yahweh that we have, and the Scriptures lay that before our very eyes by way of our ears.

The Psalm confesses the Word of Yahweh as being faithful. All of His work is done in faithfulness. Jesus has been and is faithful. This is why we can trust His Word and promises to us. Baptism. Confession. The preached Word. The Supper. Jesus, our God is faithful to us. Always. It is just who He is.

**O Lord, help us to rely upon Your faithfulness to us. Remind us always of Your steadfast love in providing for our righteousness in Your righteous life, and by Your atoning work to providing justice for our many sins. Amen.**

## Tuesday of Advent 3

*Jeremiah 1:4-19*

*“Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.’ Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.’ But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.’” (Jeremiah 1:4–7, ESV)*

The Word of Yahweh comes to Jeremiah. Then Yahweh speaks. There is a clear distinction and yet relation between the Word of Yahweh and also Yahweh. Many of the prophets are encountered by the person of the Word of Yahweh coming to them. This leads them in their calling and preaching. They are ordained by the Word of Yahweh for the task.

At the close of Matthew’s Gospel we are told that Jesus commands the ministers of the Church to teach all things that He has commanded to the baptized that they would be disciples. This is much the same as the commission of Jeremiah at the beginning of his prophetic ministry. And the ministry of the Word of Yahweh is the same now as it was for the Apostles and also for the prophets.

St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 and 15 that He is just handing over what was given to Him. Jeremiah could say the same. The foundation of the prophetic and apostolic ministry is to take what God has said and bring it to others. We have this surely in the words of sacred scripture, relayed to us through men by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is also connected to the Son handing over what the Father had given to Him, and then the Spirit handing over what the Son had done to the Apostles (see John 14-16 for this more fully). As we receive the ministry of the Word of God by His ordained preachers, we can trace this ministry all the way back into the Triune God, just as Jeremiah could do by the Word of Yahweh and Yahweh. This is also what we should expect from our ordained men of God – that they would deliver to us what they have received from God by His Word.

There is comfort in that. Earthly situations may vary, but the ordaining of men to bring God’s Word by God Himself is a comfort for us. Jeremiah thought his youthfulness would be a hindrance, but it wasn’t. God had ordained him for the task. He has done the same for your pastor(s). Receive the faithful word as from God above, for by it He cares for you.

**Lord, thank you for ordaining prophets and apostles in former days. Thank you for sending pastors now. Keep them faithful to Your Word and help all to receive their ministry as from You. Amen.**

### Wednesday of Advent 3

*Revelation 19:6-16*

*“He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”* (Revelation 19:13–16, ESV)

Jesus is the Word of Yahweh. We have seen the confession of His Work of Creation and of the Atonement (Psalm 33). We have also heard of how He works through ministers (Jeremiah 1). Here we see the Word of Yahweh involved in judgment. He comes to judge the nations. Kings and rulers and all who presume to govern will be held accountable to Him.

Are the weapons of this King like those of earthly kingdoms? No. His weapon is remarked here by the Apostle John as being a sharp sword from his mouth. His Word. Jesus had warned His disciples to not fear those who can only kill the body, but to fear the One who can destroy both body and soul. Earthly rulers in rebellion have and will continue to destroy body and goods. They do not have the power however to do more. Jesus by just speaking has more power than all the nuclear arsenals in the world and all the tools of warfare combined. No one can stand against Him. He is the Word of Yahweh. His word has the power of Yahweh. This is a threat and warning to all who presume to rule godlessly or even conduct their lives as if God didn't exist or matter. Yahweh will repay.

There is more in this lesson, however. Look again at the first half. There is for the Church, that is the Bride of Christ, the language of a marriage feast. There is the confession of Jesus' glory and majesty, his power and might, but here He is also pictured as the Lamb of God, the One Who took away the sins of the world. For those who believe, Jesus' return in judgment brings a joyous day full of feasting and celebration. This is you dear Christian. This is those who put their trust not in the ways of the world, in the powers of this earthly life, but who trust in Christ while even suffering what the world throws at them. Christ, the Lamb, the Bridegroom, the Word of Yahweh comes. He brings joy to the faithful and terror to the faithless.

**Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that You would come. Come in joy and celebration as the Lamb of God who has taken away our sins. Come as our Bridegroom for the marriage feast in Your Kingdom which has no end. To fulfill Your Word, come and show Yourself as the Victor over all things, the true King of kings and Lord of lords, repaying those who rejected You and sought harm to Your people. Amen.**



## Thursday of Advent 3

Genesis 15:1-21

*“And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:4–6, ESV)*

Here in this passage, we find the Word of Yahweh coming to Abraham, and it being credited to Yahweh (the LORD) Himself. He promises Abraham many things, blessings for this earthly life and for eternal life. Here we find the righteousness of faith in Yahweh, that pattern sustained and repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. Through the Word of Yahweh, there is faith in Yahweh and righteousness from Yahweh.

Throughout this whole passage note how the Word of Yahweh and Yahweh (LORD) are interchangeable. They are distinct and yet they are not. Here you may think of how we often will address Jesus in many ways, and sometimes using words like Lord or God, which can also apply to the Father or the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Holy Trinity, especially that of the Father and the Son are involved here. Note how this revelation comes at a key moment of the promises to God to Abraham, promises of the people of God in Egypt and the Exodus, promises that will ultimately be fulfilled by Christ Jesus our Lord, the Word of Yahweh.

St. Paul teaches us that in Christ *“all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory.”* Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of all that God has promised and said to us. The glory of Yahweh (which we will hear about at the Nativity of our Lord) is tied to Christ Jesus, the second person of the Triune God, our Lord and Savior, the revelation of the Father’s love for us.

**Lord Jesus Christ, You brought promises to Abraham and by Your Word caused Abraham to believe Your Word and such faith was accounted to Him as righteousness. Help us to share in the same faith as Abraham, and thus be accounted righteous by what You have fulfilled for us and for our salvation. Amen.**

## Friday of Advent 3

1 Samuel 3:1-21

*“And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.”* (1 Samuel 3:19–21, ESV)

This whole chapter once again shows the interplay between Yahweh (LORD) and the Word of Yahweh. These final verses summarize what starts at the beginning of the chapter. The time was changing, as God was once again visiting His people, this time through the prophet Samuel.

Samuel had to be taught by Eli. Catechesis is a lifelong requirement for every Christian. Samuel had to have courage to speak a seemingly “negative” word from God to Eli about his family and lineage. Eli taught him to even do that. Eli also taught Samuel how one faithfully receives the Word of God, regardless of whether it seems good or bad to us. This is important as God’s Law reveals “negative” things to us. To what God says and does, whether good or bad to our estimation, we receive it with an Amen and accept the will of God as both good and gracious for us, regardless of what we think. This is the faithful way to receive God’s Word and the various situations He brings us through.

Yahweh (the LORD) revealed Himself to Samuel by the Word of Yahweh (the LORD). This is as we hear so often in the Gospel of John. To know the Father, we look to the Son. If you know the Son you know the Father. In fact, this knowing the Son allows us to trust the Father, no matter the circumstances we find around us. It would be easy to despair and look at our world today or experiences and think ill of God. Natural revelation is not sufficient to teach us of the love or grace of God. Jesus does that. Jesus reveals the Father, and in particular the love of the Father for us. When we ponder and consider God the Father and what He has happening around us in light of the perfect revelation of the Son, no matter what, we know the love of God, we know the grace and mercy of God – for in the Son, the second person, we have such a revelation of God’s love, grace, and mercy for us all.

**Almighty Lord and God, help us to always know you by way of Jesus. Help us to look upon the world around us with fervent trust in what You have done for us in Christ. Help us when our lives have hardship and difficulty to see Your lovingkindness in Jesus. Amen.**

### Saturday of Advent 3

*Zechariah 7:1-14 (8:1-23)*

*“And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”” (Zechariah 7:8–10, ESV)*

The wider lesson from these two chapters of Zechariah really fits what we are going through in the next couple days. First, today is one of the last days of the season of Advent, and so the warning and call to repentance and right living in chapter 7 is very fitting. And again, it comes by the Word of Yahweh. Guard yourselves when you hear God’s Law convict you of sin – lest you do not become like those in chapter 7 who become as hard as diamonds against God. Instead repentance is the order of the day for the Christian. This involves both sorrow for sins and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Chapter 7 is a call to repentance. What follows it in chapter 8 is the proclamation of peace that God does for His own people. Chapter 8 will fit in better with the joyous proclamation of the Gospel as we enter into the season of Christmas. There we find the peace and joy of God coming to His people and then His people gathering together to receive from the Lord all that He blesses them with.

The commands and promises found here are from the Word of Yahweh for us as well. Our conduct toward others is very important. God still commands righteous actions. We have the blessing of being children of God, and from being born from above (baptized) we can now bear the fruit of being saved – rendering true judgments, showing kindness and mercy, assisting those who are most in need around us, and pondering how best we can help others.

The message of Jesus does not change. He is truly the same yesterday, today, and forever. From His Words prior to His incarnation to these things to the Words of His preaching and teaching during His ministry, to the Words He gave the Spirit to say through the writers of the rest of the New Testament, these things of judgment, kindness, mercy, and love for others are commanded. Not just some “to do list” for us, our Lord has made sure to do them Himself for our righteousness’ sake. These are the very things that Jesus Himself has done for us and for our salvation.

**Lord Jesus Christ, by Your active obedience and fulfilling of Your Law we are righteous before You. Now, trusting in You for righteousness, without the concern for having to earn Your favor and blessing, help us to love all those You put around us in right judgment, kindness, mercy, and charity. Amen.**

## Nativity of our Lord – Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1-20

*“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’”* (Luke 2:8–14, ESV)

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up Mount Sinai, where the Glory of Yahweh dwelt, and there they beheld the God of Israel. As Moses describes it, God had feet under which was a pavement of sapphire stone like very heaven for clearness (Exodus 24:9-10). Years later the prophet Ezekiel would have a vision of the Glory of Yahweh seated on God’s throne, and he would see that the Glory had the appearance of a Man (Ezekiel 1:26). And again, Ezekiel would again have a vision of this One having the form of a man, describing his appearance as “brightness, like gleaming metal.” (Ezekiel 8:2)

These men of old, and others, likewise, saw the Glory of Yahweh, who revealed Himself to them in the appearance of a Man. But in the fullness of time, shepherds would stand in the presence of God and see Him, not merely in the appearance of a Man but actually *incarnate* as true Man. For us men and for our salvation the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. Therefore, with John we rejoice, saying, “We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

**We praise You, Jesus, at Your birth, for You have become Man and revealed to us Your glory. Help us to cherish this great mystery and confess it before the world. Amen.**

## Nativity of our Lord – Christmas Day

John 1:1-14

*“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:9–14*

The Word was God. He created everything that is made. Yet, today we celebrate an additional mystery beyond that of the Holy Trinity and how the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, of how there are three persons and yet still only one God. Today we celebrate that the Angel of Yahweh, the Name of Yahweh, the Word of Yahweh, the Glory of Yahweh became flesh and dwelt among us. The mystery of the incarnation is put before our eyes by hearing the Words of Scripture today, and if you attend Divine Service that mystery is given to you to eat and drink as well.

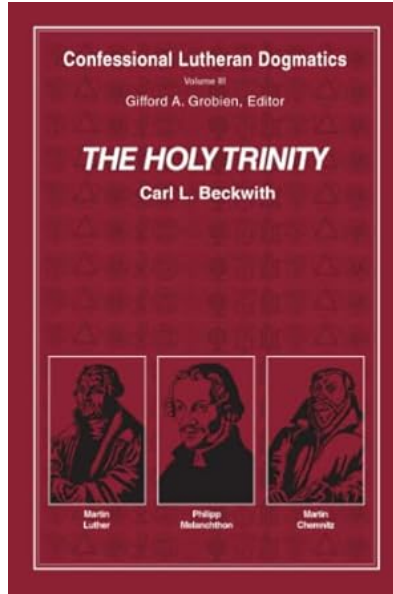
Today is a feast day, a wonderful day. Today we are reminded of the revelation of the Word made flesh, the Word who is Glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. And of course John doesn't just stop with that mystery, but explains how for us poor sinners this is an eternal blessing that can make each day ring with the joys of Christmas – this Son from the Father is full of grace and truth.

The Glory of Yahweh is revealed in Jesus. In the Old Testament such glory is regarded as a devouring fire (Exodus 24:17). Moses entered the Glory of Yahweh and was in the presence of Yahweh. In the New Testament, with the incarnation, God comes to us in the person of His Son, full of grace and truth. Certainly, judgment as we have heard, but for us who are born of God, He is the full revelation of the Father, full of grace and truth, not a devouring fire, but a loving Savior revealing a loving Father and bestowing upon us the Spirit who makes holy. We have spent Advent pondering a great mystery of the Old Testament. Today, give thanks that God has revealed Himself to us by His Son, in the flesh, our brother and our Savior.

**Father, with all boldness and confidence we give You thanks for the gift of Your only-begotten Son, who took on flesh that we would be saved from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Help us to cherish You, the only True God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with each and every day our lives. Amen.**

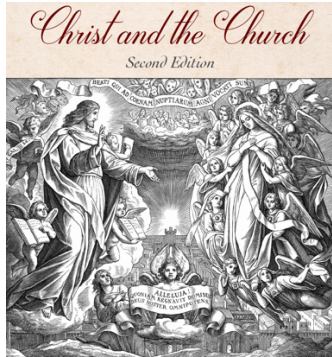
## Appendix

If you have found the theology of the Trinity found throughout this devotion helpful, you may want to consider this in-depth, comprehensive volume on the Holy Trinity:



Other volumes published by Steadfast Press (available on Amazon.com):

- Previous Advent Devotionals
- Previous Lent Devotionals
- “Christ and the Church” – a 30 day devotion on marriage to help Christians



- “Be At Leisure” – a small book on a Lutheran approach to evangelism
- “A Year of Law and Gospel Preaching” – a book of the sermons of Rev. Rolf Preus that follow the one year lectionary

Other books are being worked on and will be released when they are ready.

