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Midweek Advent I
30 November 2011
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Savior of the Nations, Come

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

This Advent season, as the world rushes all around us,
as Christmas lights go up,
Christmas songs start playing,
Christmas shopping hits full stride,
and Christmas parties already get underway,
we as a Church will slow down and wait and sing.

But our song will not yet be the carols of Christmas,
but the songs of waiting and anticipation of Advent.

This season the Church waits, it slows down, it repents, and it prays that God would come to us.
And in these midweek services, we will pray by the hymns of the Church.

Advent is one of those times the Church's life seems to stand out from the world most clearly—
rather than white and green and red, we see blue.
Rather than gifts under a Christmas tree, we have an Advent wreath,
lighting one candle at a time,
restraining ourselves from jumping straight to Christmas.
And rather than singing "*Rockin' around the Christmas Tree*,"
we sing "*Savior of the Nations, Come*," and "*Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*".

Each midweek service we'll focus on a different hymn,
letting that hymn guide our prayer and meditation on the coming Christ child.

This week we gather around the ancient hymn from the 4th century,
"*Savior of the Nations, Come*".

The hymn was written originally in Latin by St. Ambrose of Milan, *Veni Redemptor, gentium*,
but quickly became a favorite of Luther, who translated it into German for his
congregation.

The hymn was written originally as a confession, a proclamation of who this Jesus is.

It was written at a time when a great heresy was spreading quickly and powerfully throughout
the Church—
a teaching we call Arianism.

Now this Arianism has nothing to do with Hitler's promotion of the Aryan race.

It was the teaching that Jesus was not God like the Father is God.
The Arians would say that there was a time when Jesus was not—
that is, He's not eternal, He's not God the same way God is God!

And in the region of Milan (Northern Italy), it was forbidden to preach otherwise!

So, to care for his congregation,
 to care for the church,
 to lead them in the truth of who this Jesus is,

St. Ambrose wrote this hymn.

 The hymn was Ambrose's confession of Jesus.

 It sings the faith, it sings the confession of Jesus Christ as true God and true man.

Now let's get into the text itself—and for this I invite you to open your hymnal and follow along.

The first stanza opens the hymn with a prayer for the Lord to come—
 you can't get more *Advent* than that!

But this prayer isn't just for the Lord to come in general, but for Him to come as *savior*,
 as one who comes in mercy,
 and as one who comes with mercy and salvation to all—
 the whole world—the nations!

And this Savior is none other than the "*Virgin's Son*."

Here we sing of the humanity of Christ.

We sing of His real flesh and real blood, His real body born amongst us in real time.

And so we call heaven and earth, and with them we call ourselves,
 to "*marvel...that the Lord chose such a [humble] birth*."

But this Christ is also the Son of God!

 "*Not by human flesh and blood*,"

 that is, this Jesus wasn't conceived the normal way!

Blessed Mary wasn't unfaithful to Joseph—

 it was the Spirit that conceived this Christ in her.

As Martin Luther somewhat crassly has said,

 "*Mary conceived in the ear*." (LW 36:341-42)

And strange as that sounds, that's also the way each of us receive Christ too!

 Christ is conceived in us by *hearing* the Word of the Gospel—

 the way to the heart, and in Mary's case the womb also, is through the ear!

And because the Holy Spirit attaches Himself to the Word—

 Christ comes to us by way of the Holy Spirit with the Word.

So by this miraculous, Spirit-conception, the "*maid was found with child*," as stanza 3 says.

And with this pregnant Mary, all first-time mothers can relate!

 There was fear of the unknown pain,

 there was expectation of great joy,

and as she grew closer to month 9 she wondered when the child would ever come!
 The pregnant, waiting Mary wanted the *Advent* of Christ, too!
 She waited with the joy of a first-time mother.

“*Then,*” stanza four proclaims,
*“Then stepped forth the Lord of all,
 From His pure and kingly hall;
 God of God, yet fully man,
 His heroic course began.”*

That’s Christmas, that’s the birth of the Savior, that’s the incarnation of God in this world!

But stanza 5 shows the true purpose of His coming in the flesh—
 while He began His work by taking flesh of the Virgin,
 He still had His course to run!

From Heaven above He comes down to earth in order to suffer, die, be buried, and rise again!
 He doesn’t come for Himself, but for you.

He comes because there’s a frightful battle, a bloody war, a massacre of His people.
 Sin devours us with its lust and passions, it traps us and lays our guilt heavy upon us.

It’s for this reason He came, there was a Victory to be won!

A victory over sin, death, and the deception of the devil.
 Left to ourselves we’re broken, hurting, suffering, and dying.

But as we sing in stanza 6,
*“By Your mighty pow’r make whole,
 all our ills of flesh and soul!”*

And being made whole by the coming, dying, and rising of this Jesus,
 and receiving this Jesus by faith, by eating His body and blood for our forgiveness,
 we then, in stanza 7, can praise the light of life,
*“From the manger newborn light
 shines in glory through the night.
 Darkness there no more resides;
 In this light faith now abides.”*

But that light of life isn’t stuck back in Bethlehem,
 and it’s not trapped up in heaven either—
 the light of life comes to you!
 It pierces the darkness and the night of your heart—
 the newborn light that rest in the manger now rests in you as well!

Advent is the story of this Christ,
this God and Man together in Jesus coming, *advent-ing*, to you!

And He comes to you with healing and wholeness, with victory and power,
with the conquering of your sins on the cross—
He comes to you with forgiveness, as Savior.

And so we Christians praise God, the Triune God, the Holy Trinity, now and forever more,
*“Glory to the Father sing,
Glory to the Son, our king,
Glory to the Spirit be
Now and through eternity.”*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit