

Sermon for Advent Midweek #2

Date: December 8 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

First Reading: Exodus 40:17–21, 34–38

Second Reading: Isaiah 40:9–12

Gospel Reading: John 1:14–18

Sermon Text: Exodus 40:17–21, 34–38

Sermon Title: The Lord Sets Up His Tent among Us

Psalm: Psalm 86

Hymns:

O Great I Am, Almighty Word (*Tune: 344*)

LSB 810 – O God of God, O Light of Light

LSB 346 – When All the World Was Cursed

LSB 772 – In Holy Conversation (*Tune 644*)

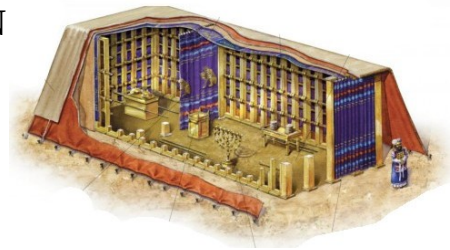
LSB 350 – Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 348 – The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

Liturgy:

Special



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Text: Exodus 40:17–21, 34–38

In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses. . . .

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

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Peace to you from the Prince of peace. Amen.

During the season of Advent we sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” Come God-with-us and be with us. That is what we want: for God to be with us, for God to come and dwell with us in the person. We want that because we are cut off from Him by sin and sin’s affect. We are in exile in this world, we are away from our true home. We need a Deliverer to deliver us from the isolation and the emptiness of life. Our entire goal, our hope is to be restored to that perfect communion with God.

Advent reminds us our God is One who does come to be with us. Christmas however is not the first time Christ appeared with us. So many see the Old Testament as “the Father’s time” thinking the Son of God wasn’t doing much before Bethlehem. Thinking He didn’t really come on the scene until the New Testament. The whole idea of Jesus in the Old Testament can seem a bit foreign.

In fact, the Son of God has been intimately involved with us from “let there be light.”¹ The Scriptures say all things were created through the One who is the Word.² Jesus, God the Son, appeared to His chosen people at many times, in the Old Testament, before He “was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary.”³ The Son of God descended to this earth at various times to be with His people Israel, to speak His Word, to guide them and to deliver them from their enemies. All of this was a foreshadowing of the time when He would descend to this earth in the ultimate way, taking on our very body and becoming the eternal Savior of us all.

Last week, we heard of how Jesus came down to earth and appeared to Moses in the burning bush, to announce the release of the Israelites from their slavery to in Egypt. In today’s Old Testament reading we encounter the Israelites after they were freed, as they traveled in the wilderness. We learn how God was present with His people in the form of a cloud that filled and covered the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was a mobile Temple, a large tent for the worship of the Lord, designed and described by God Himself. Within it was the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant was located. The Ark contained the two stone tablets of the testimony, which God had written with His Own hands, and given to Moses. On the top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat, where the Lord was present to meet with His people through the blood of the sacrifices.

1 Genesis 1:3

2 John 1:3

3 The Apostles’ Creed

Just as God was present in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, so also He was present among His people as a cloud in this Tabernacle. When the cloud rose above the Tabernacle the Israelites would pack up camp and follow. When it remained on the Tabernacle they would set up camp and stay where they were.

This presence of the Lord in the wilderness was none other than the Jesus, the Son of God, Christ the Savior. We heard in the reading from John's Gospel teaching no one has ever seen God. It is Christ, the only begotten Son of God Who has revealed Him to us. This cloud was the revelation of God in His Son. It was the real presence of God, the Creator entering into creation for the sake of His people to lead them to the riches of the Promised Land. It was a living prophecy of how the heavenly and the earthly would come together in a permanent and enduring way in the conception of Jesus, and in His birth at Bethlehem.

John the disciple teaches us in those very important words "The Word [that is Jesus, the Son of God] became flesh and dwelt among us."⁴ That word, "dwelt" is actually the word for "tabernacle" or "tent." It is to say He "tabernacled" among us. Jesus "set up His tent" with us, as the true Emanuel – God with us.

The same Lord who dwelt in a temporary tent has taken on our human nature, our flesh and blood, to set up His permanent tent with us. The glory of the Lord dwells as true man born of the virgin Mary, the person Jesus. The Tabernacle, Jesus descended to fill, was a body. He did this not just temporarily, for a little while, but for all eternity. In the wilderness the cloud would sometimes rise out of the Tabernacle, it would leave. In Christ, the Divine and human natures are eternally joined, so God the Son is, and always will be, true man our Brother.

The human tabernacle, which He now inhabits, is His dwelling place forever. This helps to explain why Jesus said, "Destroy this temple (meaning His body), and in three days I will raise it up."⁵ God and man come together forever in Christ, so all humanity might stand in the glory of God. Jesus is the glory of God, full of grace and truth⁶ for us.

That is why Christmas is such a time of joy! It celebrates this very reality. Though we had separated ourselves from God and cut ourselves off from Him through our sin, in Jesus Emmanuel, He crossed that great divide we had created. He bridged the gap between heaven and earth and brought us back to God. Through the human nature of Christ, we have been reconciled to our heavenly

4 John 1:14

5 John 2:19

6 John 1:14

Father.⁷ God and man have literally been reunited in Jesus, and now we have access to the very presence of God. Through faith in Him, we have been made one with God. That is the wonder of Christmas. We see this fellowship, this relationship, foreshadowed in the cloud that descended on the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

Clouds are often connected with Christ in the New Testament as well. For example, when Jesus revealed His glory to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, a cloud came and enveloped them.⁸ When Jesus ascended into heaven, it was a cloud that hid Him from the disciples' sight.⁹

What are clouds made of but water? It is through water that Jesus is present for us in Holy Baptism to make our bodies His temple, the tabernacle of His Holy Spirit.¹⁰ It is also written that Jesus will come in clouds with great power and glory¹¹ to bring the salvation of His people to its fulfillment.

Revelation 21 describes the fulfillment of our Advent hope-to-come on the Last Day:

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.¹²

No more isolation, no more exile. We will experience the fulfillment of the Lord's name, Emmanuel – God with us.

As we prepare, in this Advent season, both for Christmas and for the second coming of Jesus, let us be like the children of Israel traveling with the cloud of the tabernacle. Let us faithfully and patiently follow our Lord Jesus, in repentance and hope, across the wilderness of this fallen world. Let us feed on the true bread from heaven,¹³ and finally receive the resurrection and the Promised Land of the world to come.

Amen.

7 2 Corinthians 5:18

8 Matthew 17:5

9 Acts 1:9

10 1 Corinthians 6:19

11 Mark 13:26

12 Revelation 21:3-4

13 John 6:51

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

