

The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

Advent Devotions

by Rev. Michael G. Lilienthal

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Introduction

The season of Advent is all about the coming of our Lord. With the first Sunday in Advent, the Gospel recounts the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem, the city where he would die to pay for our sins. Thus we remember at the beginning of the season the reason he came the first time: as a baby conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, born on Christmas in the stable in Bethlehem. We also remember the reason he will come again at the End of the World, to judge the living and the dead. And further, we remember the reason he continues to come to us in his Word, in the Sacrament of Baptism, and in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Supper of His Body and Blood. He came, comes, and will come, to save us from our sins, taking their punishment onto himself and giving us his righteousness.

This is called “The Great Exchange.” The unholiness, wickedness, and sinfulness that belong to us, with all their attendant guilt, blame, and punishment, are counted as Christ’s. Meanwhile, his righteousness and holiness, his life and privilege as Son and heir of God the Father, his mansion, are all counted as ours. This exact thing is what occurs in marriage. Everything that belongs to the husband – his money, his possessions, his inheritances--all become possessions of his wife. Meanwhile, everything that belongs to the wife--her debt, her burdens, her enemies--all become possessions of her husband.

In human marriages, of course, there’s a fair blend of good and bad baggage brought in by each party. But in the mystical marriage of Christ and his Church, we brought nothing good, and Christ brought nothing bad. We gave him our death. He gave us his life.

In Advent we await the consummation of our marriage to the Son of God. Advent is not, as the world sees it, “Christmas Lite.” We don’t actually look forward to the first coming of Christ anymore. That’s an historical reality, and we remember it fondly. But we remember it for its purpose: Jesus was born in order to live and to die for us. And therefore we remember his first coming and what it means for his second coming (in

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the Word and Sacraments) and for his third coming (at the Last Day). We are reminded through the preparations of Advent that our Lord, who once came humble and lowly, still comes in ways we aren't made to expect--a Word, some water, bits of bread and wine--and that he will come again in power and glory.

Christmas still maintains its importance. Because of the fact that the perfect Son of God became a human being and was born of a Virgin, that history urges us on in our faith and hope in his coming to us now. We *know* that Jesus is with us when we gather around his Word, as families do in their devotions, as classes do in their Bible Studies, and as congregations do in the Divine Service. We likewise *know* that Jesus will come to bring us home with him, to the heavenly mansions, to be with him forever. The Bridegroom will indeed soon call us, and our constant prayer is that we may be kept awake through his Word and Sacraments.

A Note on the Devotions:

Each devotion is structured similarly. Where the letter "H" is found, this is for the Head of the Household to read. Where the letter "F" is found, this is the response from the members of the Family. Most of these responses are familiar from the liturgy of the church, and children may easily be taught to remember them.

The devotion begins with the Invocation and the reading of the Bible Passage. Then the family is asked to sing a couple of stanzas from the hymn. Children and adults alike may be encouraged to memorize this hymn, which is made easier by its repetition throughout the week. Each family will need a copy of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* for this hymn-singing. Alternatively, the lyrics and tunes may be found on hymnary.org.

1. Invocation
2. Bible Passage
3. Hymn
4. Devotion & Questions
5. Prayer
6. Lord's Prayer
7. Hymn
8. Benediction

Following the hymn, the Head of the Household reads the devotion and asks a few questions during the reading. Children may be encouraged to answer these questions with guidance and help from their parents. In

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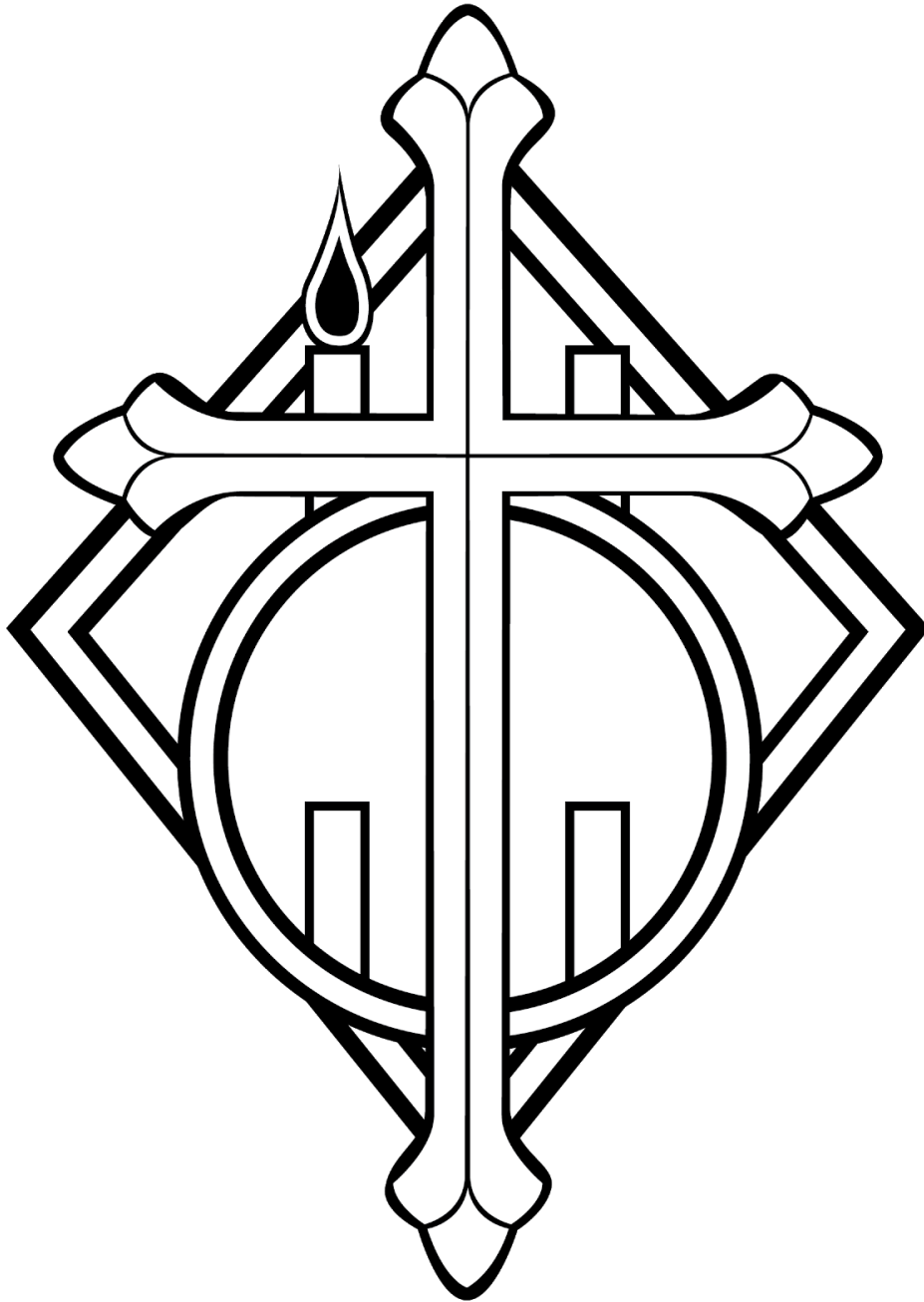
households where there are no children or very young children, an appropriate method would be for the husband to read the questions, and the wife to read the answers. In the home of a single man or woman, the questions and answers may be read continuously.

After the devotion is time for prayer. Options are given for including special petitions, and a specific prayer for each devotion is printed for the Head of the Household to read, with a lead-in for the whole family to recite together the Lord's Prayer. After the prayers another hymn is sung, and the devotion ends with the Benediction.

The devotion is structured in a way similar to the liturgy of the church's services. This is designed to emphasize not only that the church's pattern encompasses the whole lives of believers, but also that in the penitential season of Advent, our return to the Word of God comes with discipline and devotion in the true sense of the word. When the Bridegroom calls, we pray to be kept awake. This means our faith must be exercised. If worship on Sunday is the main event, then family devotion throughout the week is like a practice, a scrimmage, only it has the benefit of also communicating to us the life-giving Word of Christ.

May the Lord bless you through the Word with which he graciously feeds you day after day. To him alone be the glory. Amen.

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*The First Week of Advent
Longing for the Bridegroom*

Wake to Watchfulness
Advent 1 - Sunday

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: Matthew 25:1-13 -

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - “The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us”](#)

H: The season of Advent reminds us that our Lord, our King, our Bridegroom is coming. We, because of this fact, are to keep alert and

aware, watching and waiting for him to come. Like the five wise virgins, our prayer is that we will be found with oil to spare when our Lord comes.

H: What does the oil symbolize in Jesus' parable?

F: Answer: The oil symbolizes faith. The wise virgins take care to keep their store of faith full, and the foolish virgins neglect their faith. This is why the foolish are not allowed into the banquet hall, but the wise are.

H: Because of our sinfulness, we can't keep ourselves awake. Like the disciples while Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, even when the most important thing in the world is close at hand, our flesh is weak. Sin traps us. The Devil prowls around and snatches us. The world pulls us away from our Bridegroom.

H: Who fell asleep in Jesus' parable?

F: Answer: Both the foolish virgins and the wise virgins fell asleep. All people are corrupted with the sinful flesh, and we are all guilty of not staying awake as we should.

H: Jesus has taken the guilt of our sins onto himself. Even our sins of sleepfulness are forgiven for his sake. Because of his sacrifice on the cross, the punishment for our sin is paid. Therefore we look forward to the Bridegroom's coming with joy! We will not be cast out into outer darkness, but welcomed by our loving Lord into the feast of salvation. Our faith is continually nourished, so that even when we are weak, the strength of our Lord, given to us in the means of grace - the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper - maintains us. As the apostle says, "The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; *if we are faithless, he remains faithful* - for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13, ESV).

H: Why can we be certain of our eternal life?

F: Answer: God promised it, and he keeps his promises. We have been promised everything by our Lord, our Bridegroom. In Baptism, we die and rise with him. Through the nourishing strength of the Word and the Supper, we are made to endure so that when our marriage is consummated we will reign with him. He keeps his promises through the means of grace. Therefore he will keep his promise to bring us to eternal life. That is his marriage vow to us, and God will not deny himself.

H: Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we give you thanks for the gift of faith that you have given to us. Grant by your Holy Spirit that we do not squander this gift, or neglect it, but treasure it and nourish it through the means you have provided. Strengthen us through your Word, through the reminders of our Baptism, and through the feast of your Son's body and blood in the Holy Communion.

As you feed us in this way, be with us in every occasion of life that seeks to cause us to fall asleep to you. In times of difficulty, turn us to you to see your grace, and provide us your strength, according to your will. *[Especially now we ask you to be with _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by your Word and Holy Spirit.]* All this we bring before you in Jesus' name, who also taught us to pray:

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

**The Church Begs that Her Bridegroom Come Soon
Advent 1 - Monday**

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: Revelation 22:17 -

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us"](#)

H: The dearest wish of Christians in this life is for Jesus to return. Frequently our lives are filled with difficulty, and we can grow frustrated and worn out by the way the world rejects the truth. Perhaps we are even persecuted ourselves for our beliefs. We want this to come to an end.

H: Why do we think things will be better when Jesus returns?

F: We know, in fact, that things will be better, because Jesus has promised, when he returns, to take us to his home with him (John 14). This world will end, and the new creation will begin, in which we will have new, glorified, resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15), and we will be with our Lord forever.

H: The book of Revelation describes many calamities and dangers that come upon the Church in the End Times. We are right now living in those End Times. There are indeed devils filling the world, all eager to devour us, and the world itself would love to stamp out our faith and destroy us. Even our own sinful flesh would prefer to flee the true God, and to go and

do our own thing, to prefer our own pleasures (even if those pleasures aren't bad in themselves). But the End also means that Jesus is returning with his glory in order to bring us to glory, to make us holy, to cleanse us, and to give us pure joy. Jesus is coming to rescue us, to bring us home.

H: What is Jesus doing right now, when we can't see him?

F: **He has ascended into heaven in order to prepare a place for us. He sits at the right hand of the Father, which means that he has all the power and authority of God. Since he has taken the punishment for our sins and promised us eternal life, he uses that power for our benefit. He also promised to be with us to the end of the age. Although we don't see him, we know he is still with us where his Word is preached and his Sacraments are administered. Especially in the Lord's Supper, Jesus' true body and blood are with us, to continue to give us the forgiveness of sins.**

H: Let us pray:

Dear Lord, you are with us in your Word to give us the forgiveness of sins. You are with us in our baptized lives, for we are clothed in your name thereby. You are with us with your true body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Lead us to continually see the need for these things, and the great blessings you provide in them.

Lead us also to continue to pray that you would come quickly, Lord. *[Especially now we ask you to come and be with _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by your Word and Holy Spirit.]* Come soon, for we need your deliverance; in Jesus' name, who also taught us to pray:

F: **Our Father, who art in heaven....**

[The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"](#)

The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

Seek the Bridegroom When He Seems Absent
Advent 1 - Tuesday

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: John 20:11-18 -

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" – and that he had said these things to her.

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us"](#)

H: Her Lord was gone. All she wanted was to honor his body for burial, because she had seen him so poorly treated. Mary Magdalene had been told by Jesus that her sins were forgiven, and she only wished to respond

to his love by giving him her love. But the tomb was empty, his body was gone. It seemed to her that she would never see her Lord again.

H: While the absence of Jesus' body was a distressing thing to Mary, how was it proven to be a blessing?

F: **Jesus' body wasn't there because he had risen from the dead! Mary couldn't see Jesus, but that was because he was alive in glory, with the promise that she, too, would have glorious new life because of him.**

H: Why may we be comforted, even though we don't see Jesus?

F: **He is still alive, our glorified brother. He intercedes for us so that our prayers are always heard by the Father, and even though we don't see him, he is with us in his Word and Sacraments.**

H: Mary begged the angels to know where Jesus was hidden. When she saw the man she thought was the gardener, she begged him to know where Jesus was hidden. In the Song of Songs, the bride similarly seeks her groom desperately:

"On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?' Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go." (Song of Songs 3:1-4b)

It is with the same love and desperate need that Mary sought Jesus. It is with the same love and desperate need that we seek Jesus in our distress. When we feel alone, when the world seems dark and vast and empty, when it appears there can be no comfort, we look for our Savior. And he is to be found exactly where he promises to be. He had promised Mary and

the disciples that he would rise from the dead on the third day, and he was indeed found alive on the third day outside the tomb, as he had promised.

H: Where does Jesus promise us he is to be found?

F: **Wherever Jesus' Word is preached, as in the Divine Service, Bible Study, or in family devotions, Jesus is there with us.**

Wherever his Baptism is administered, and where we remember our baptisms, he is with us. Where the Lord's Supper is distributed and eaten, Jesus is there with us with his true body and blood. By faith, nourished by the Word and Sacraments, our Bridegroom Jesus is with us.

H: Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, you have promised that where two or three are gathered in your name, there you are among us. We are gathered here around your Word; therefore, as you have promised, be among us to give us the forgiveness of sins, salvation, comfort, and life. Dry the tears we shed when you seem absent from us, and remind us of your promise never to leave or forsake us.

Be present to comfort all of those who are in special need of your presence. [*Especially now we ask you to be with _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by your Word and Holy Spirit.*] And lead us all to cling ever more strongly to you in faith; in your name we pray, as you also taught us to pray:

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

Seek the Bridegroom in Suffering
Advent 1 - Wednesday

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: Exodus 2:23-25 -

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew.

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us"

H: Israel had never been in such dire straits. God had promised their forefather Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2), and that had come to pass. The sons of Jacob had all moved to Egypt where, after centuries of living, they had grown into a large nation. But they were not in control of their own fate. Instead, the whole nation of Israel became slaves to the Egyptians.

But God had foretold even this as well, as he told Abraham: "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Gen. 15:13-14).

God promised that even when it seemed darkest, he would not forget his people.

H: Why was Israel's cry for help exactly the right thing for them to do in their distress?

F: **In the Psalms, God encourages us: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Ps. 50:15). God indeed hears us in our suffering, as he has promised, and he will answer us and deliver us.**

H: In the culture and time of the Bible, if a couple was betrothed, they were essentially married. They were *promised* to one another, and they *promised* to care for one another for their entire lives, including the promise to marry one another. God had made a promise to the nation of Israel to join them to himself and to give them the great blessings that being his people would imply. As far as God was concerned, he was already the husband of the nation of Israel, and therefore it was his duty to care for them.

In the same way, although Jesus is not visibly present with us, he has betrothed himself to us as our Bridegroom. We can count on his promise to come and unite himself with us in eternal life.

H: If we don't know how to ask God for what we need, should that stop us from calling to him in trouble?

F: **Not at all. God will hear our groans in trouble, even if we don't use words. But he responds to us in the comfort of his Word and promise, and we can always trust that he will deliver us, especially at the Last Day when we will be raised from the dead and granted eternal life.**

H: Let us pray:

Lord, you have promised to be near us when we are in distress. Keep your promise and come near to us through your Word and Sacraments, and come to us soon to fulfill your promise to bring us to the home you have built for us.

The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

Be near us also, when we are near death, so that your Son's cross may be set before our eyes and we may be comforted by the fact that our life is assured. Be near us in any and every difficulty and suffering. [*Especially now we ask you to be with _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by your Word and Holy Spirit.*] Comfort us constantly by your promises; in Jesus' name, who also taught us to pray:

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

**Where Is the Bridegroom Found?
Advent 1 - Thursday**

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: John 4:7-15 -

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us"](#)

H: It seems the woman in this text had no idea of the need she had for the Savior, the Bridegroom of the Church. Merely going about her daily

task of drawing water from the well to bring back home, the arrival of the Savior near her was a surprise. And the very fact that he, a Jew, spoke with her, a Samaritan, was shocking to her, because the Jews and Samaritans, although sharing the common ancestors of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were enemies of one another.

H: Why did Jesus, a Jew, speak with this woman, a Samaritan?

F: His purpose in coming was to give salvation, and this Samaritan woman likewise had need of salvation. He came to offer her what she didn't even know she needed.

H: If we read beyond this text, we see where Jesus challenges the woman to call her husband to also receive the water of life, but she responds, "I have no husband." Jesus then pricks her conscience: "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband" (John 4:17-18). God's design for marriage is explicit: the unbreakable union of one man and one woman for life, having made a permanent commitment to one another before God. But this woman, after five husbands (and who knows whether they had died or been divorced) now lived with a man who was not her husband. This is contrary to God's will.

But Jesus is himself the true Bridegroom. At his challenge to this woman, she had confessed her sins. Prior to meeting Jesus, she was focused only on matters of this life, the chores that fulfilled bodily thirst, even hoping that Jesus' water could keep her from having to keep coming to draw water. How often don't we hope for something to make our lives on earth easier, focusing on those things, rather than on God's will? Even if our solutions (like living together before marriage) are even only a little against God's will, are we more likely to take those easy routes?

But this woman confessed, and her Bridegroom loved her and offered her the forgiveness of her sins. The water he offers is greater than water that runs dry. The love he offers is greater than the love of the man this woman lived with.

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H: Where do we find the water Jesus offers?

F: We can think of Baptism, the water that perfectly washes us of all our sins so that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. We can think of the Lord's Supper, in which we eat and drink eternally nourishing food. We can think of the Word, which fills our hearts more than any well-water.

H: Let us pray:

O Lord, you offer us the forgiveness of sins, even when we don't realize we need it. Cause us to confess our sins to you, to come to you in repentance, seeking the eternal blessings you offer.

Nourish us with the everlasting water of life through your Word and Sacraments, and cause us to value your blessings and your will over our own selfish desires. Quench our desires by your Holy Spirit, and strengthen us by the same. [*Especially now we ask you to strengthen the faith of _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by your Word and Holy Spirit.*] In Jesus' name, who also taught us to pray:

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

[*The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"*](#)

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

**How Do We Properly Seek the Bridegroom?
Advent 1 - Friday**

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: John 4:7-15 -

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us"](#)

H: The world is full of people who need to see Jesus. In fact, we need to see Jesus, too. There is nothing more important, because there is no other way to be saved than in Jesus.

But finding Jesus is also very dangerous, and should not be taken lightly. The Shulamite, the bride of Solomon, in the Song of Songs, warns: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,...that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases" (Song 3:5). Basically, she is commanding that men and women wait until marriage before awakening the powerful passion of sexual union.

This is related also to the cost of discipleship as Jesus describes it. Here, when he hears that the Greeks are looking for him, hoping to follow him, he says, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also," and he had just said where he would be: he would die. Therefore those who follow him must also die. At another time he said, "And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

H: Why do Jesus' followers suffer?

F: **The devil, the world, and sinful flesh hates Jesus and everything he stands for. If a human being is united to Jesus in faith, then the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh will hate that person as well. We are united to Jesus, and that means united to his suffering and death, but also to his resurrection and life.**

H: The promise of eternal life is indeed present here: "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." You will find that the Christian Church is hated in the world, that the message of Christians is rejected and silenced, that churches are emptying at astonishing rates.

H: How should we react when we and other Christians suffer in these and other ways?

F: **We should take our suffering to God. He knows all our needs, and urges us to call on him. He indeed has suffered in greater ways than we have, and so he sympathizes with all that we go through, and offers comfort in his Word.**

H: Following Christ is not an easy thing. But it is the way we are saved. And ultimately, it is the most comforting thing, because in our suffering, we can remember the sufferings of Jesus for us, and we can know that he smiles upon us and carries us along with him to eternal life and honor.

The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

H: Let us pray:

Dear Lord, Your Son bore the cross of hell and sin for our sakes. Help us to bear our crosses as reflections of his cross, so that we and others may see the Jesus we need to see.

When we bear our crosses, comfort us in the knowledge that Jesus himself bears *us*, and that we will be brought to eternal life with him in the resurrection. [*Especially now we ask you to bear _____ as he/she bears the cross of (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.).*] In Jesus' name, who also taught us to pray:

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

[*The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"*](#)

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

**Feasting Now - Waiting to Feast in the Kingdom
Advent 1 - Saturday**

H: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

F: Amen.

H: Matthew 26:29 -

“I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

H: This is the Word of the Lord.

F: Thanks be to God.

[The Hymn: #100:1, 2 - “The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us”](#)

H: Jesus makes a promise. As our Bridegroom, he is betrothed to us, and that is the guarantee that he will come to join us to himself in eternal life. He has not left us without a sign of his promise. Like an engagement ring, Jesus has left things for us to see and hold dear so that we may remember his promise and rely on it.

When he instituted the Lord’s Supper, he left his engagement ring with the disciples. “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

H: Are the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper merely signs or symbols of the body and blood of Jesus?

F: No. Jesus says that they are his true body and blood, and at the same time are bread and wine. We are actually united to Jesus in the Sacrament, and that is a foretaste of when we will be eternally united with him in the resurrection.

H: Heaven is frequently described as a wedding banquet. Like an engagement ring is joined by a wedding band at the ceremony, we are

looking forward to the time when this meal will give way to the fulfillment that it points to.

In many churches, the communion rail is a half-circle, and if one could look beyond the wall behind the altar, one would see the church cemetery where the other half of the circle would be. This is a comfort that those who have departed in the faith are still united to us in communion around the feast of salvation; we and they together are the bride of Christ, and he gives us all the benefits of his life, death, and resurrection. Because his body died and his blood was shed, when we eat his body and drink his blood, we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

H: What should we do, since the Sacrament of the Altar brings us such great blessings?

F: **We should thank God for this precious meal and promise, and we should eat and drink it often, because he wishes to give us his body and blood often.**

H: Let us pray:

“Most gracious Lord, You bid me to approach Your altar in confidence and hope. ‘Come, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.’ O sweet and friendly word in a sinner’s ear, that You, Lord God, invite the needy and the poor to the communion of Your Body and Blood! You, the Lord of the Universe, have willed to come to me, a poor and lowly sinner, to live in me. Of Your infinite grace You have made me Your own dwelling place, for Your glory and my eternal salvation! Grant me grace at all times and in all places to give You hearty thanks for this marvelous gift. O Christ, Lamb of God, grant me Your eternal peace!”
 (“Before Holy Communion,” *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 40).

[Especially we ask you to grant peace to _____ as he/she faces (sickness, surgery, travel, etc.), and to comfort him/her by the Sacrament of your precious body and blood, and by the Word of forgiveness.] In Jesus’ name, who also taught us to pray:

The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

F: Our Father, who art in heaven....

The Hymn: #94:1-3 - "O How Shall I Receive Thee"

H: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.

F: Amen.

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Get the devotions for week 2 at church on Sunday!

