



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✧ *Staff* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Children's Ministry Coordinator	Terry Anderson
Parish Administrator	Barb Bash
Sexton	John Bryant

✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Gospel and Prayers	led by Magdalena Phillips, with responses from Svend Phillips
Piano and Flute	Sonia and Deepa Patten

This service of worship can also be seen online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 13, 2020

"Word Out" audio transcript



Prelude

Excerpts from Pachelbel's Canon in D
Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706), arr. for flute and piano

Welcome

☐: Welcome, this Third Sunday of Advent to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist describes Jesus as "the light of the world." John is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light. While we are called, as Martin Luther declared, to be Christs to one another, we too must direct attention away from ourselves to Christ, emptying ourselves as he did, living for others according to his example.

Apostolic Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: And also with you.



Gathering Hymn

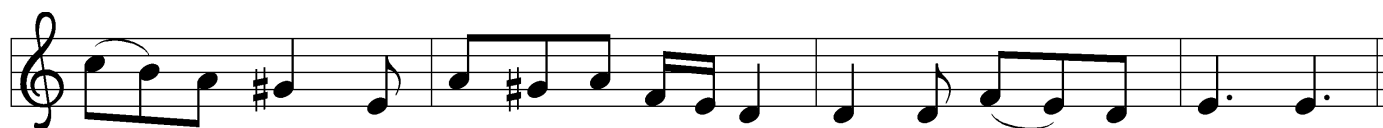
stanza 3

Light One Candle

ELW 240




3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.





Lift your heads and lift high the gate-way for the King of glo - ry.

Gospel Acclamation


Matthew 11:10


G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia


P: I am sending my messenger before you,
who will prepare your way before you.

G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

A: ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”
as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” ²⁶John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

The Gospel with an Eagle's Eye
Pastor Dan Peterson

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

In today's sermon I am going to solve, on one level, a discrepancy among the Gospels, that occurs on another. Doing so requires me to expose and acknowledge the discrepancies first. This may be difficult for a few of you to hear, so please bear with me.

By the end you'll see how I bring it, hopefully, together.

I have some startling news, but to share it I have to contradict what I said in my children's sermon last week about John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus according to all four Gospels.

Our reading last Sunday was Mark 1:1-8. There we heard that John dressed and lived in a way that was rather unusual. In addition to wearing clothes made of camel's hair, he ate bugs and wild honey for food. It's easy, I said, to get distracted by John's funny costume or diet, but during Advent our focus needs to be on the one whom John proclaimed, the one coming after him, namely Jesus.

In a moment I will share with you the surprising news I have since discovered about John, making him the focus of my message today in a way that runs totally contrary to what I said last week! But first I want to talk about another surprise I encountered recently, a surprise that – quite literally – takes us out of this world.

According to Marina Koren of *The Atlantic*, the claim that Voyagers 1 and 2, both launched by NASA in 1977, have left the solar system is wrong.

Now I know many of you feel as I do. This is shocking, a complete shift in perspective we haven't seen since Pluto had its status revoked as a planet back in 2006. Neither Voyager has crossed over into interstellar space or what Koren refers to as that "mysterious expanse between the stars." Because our sun's gravity still exercises some degree of influence, both ships technically remain within our solar system. Only when they pass through what scientists call the Oort cloud, a region that lies beyond the orbit of Pluto, will they be truly free of the sun's power, and that won't occur for tens of thousands of years.

Now you are probably wondering why I share this news. What on earth (or in heaven), you might be asking, does the the status of NASA space probes have to do with today's Gospel reading? The answer, I submit, appears when we turn our gaze from the destination of interstellar space to the moment when Voyager 1, some four billion miles from earth, turned its gaze for the last time toward us.

Sagan the Sage

Carl Sagan was one of the experts involved in the Voyager project. Years after the launch he persuaded its engineers to turn Voyager 1 around so it could take a final picture of the earth before ostensibly leaving our solar system on February 14, 1990. One click of its camera's shutter would provide a view of our planet unlike any we had ever seen. Indeed, the first scientist to observe the picture mistook it for a piece of dust until she recognized that what Sagan would subsequently call this "pale blue dot" was, in fact, our home.

"Look again at that dot," Sagan wrote shortly thereafter, overwhelmed perhaps by the same humility the prophets of Israel must have felt next to the overwhelming presence of the Lord their God. "That's here. That's home. That's us," he writes. All our worries, our troubles, our loves, our joys, our conflicts, our wars, "every corrupt politician, every 'superstar,' every 'supreme leader,' every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived [here on this pale blue dot] — "a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

It's this cosmic perspective, I believe, that distinguishes John's Gospel from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The distinction becomes clear in the opening lines of John's prologue and with it, this Gospel's unique depiction of the Baptist.

The prologue encompasses the first 18 verses of John's Gospel. Its cadence and poetic beauty has led some scholars to conclude it was a hymn before the author incorporated it in his account of Jesus. Preachers and theologians have been captivated ever since. Their "celestial flights," as Adele Reinhartz points out, have led to the use of the eagle to represent John's Gospel. Its "words were thought to have healing power, and for that reason were used [in] the Western church as a benediction over the sick and over newly baptized children and as amulets to protect against illness" (*Fortress New Testament Commentary*, p. 270). Even in translation, its affect can be mesmerizing: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God.” Like the Eagle who soars at great heights and according to legend can look directly into the sun without going blind, John’s Gospel perceives the “unapproachable light” in which Christ dwells with the Father (1 Timothy 6:16) and interprets the Jesus story from on high while the other Gospels speak of Jesus on the ground.

The challenge with such a view – whether in a spacecraft a several billion miles from Earth or an eagle a few miles above it – is the corresponding loss of detail. In seeing the forest one *necessarily* misses the trees, an observation which brings us to the startling news I discovered in preparing today’s message: *when it comes to John the Baptist, John’s Gospel not only deviates from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It flat-out contradicts them.*

John’s Version of John

Following the prologue, the Fourth Gospel says that the Jews sent their priests from Jerusalem to ascertain the Baptist’s identity. “Who are you?” they ask. “I am not the messiah,” he replies. Then they ask if he is Elijah. This is important. We know from the prophet Malachi the prophecy that God would send Elijah “before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes” (4:5). We know that according to Mark and Matthew, the Baptist’s appearance, including the leather belt he wore around his waist, resembled Elijah (see 2 Kings 1:8). We *also* know that Jesus specifically identified John as Elijah according to Matthew 11:14. Yet in today’s reading, John denies it. This would have made Jesus’ acceptance by the religious leaders of the day all the more difficult.

John contradicts Jesus again when he says to the priests that he is not a prophet (John 1:21). Speaking to the crowds according to Matthew 11, Jesus asks of those who went to see John, “What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet” (v. 9).

When John, several verses later in our Gospel reading, acknowledges Jesus’ superiority by referring to him as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin

of the world" (1:29), we might assume that the Eagle has landed, that this Gospel finally joins the others on the ground. Indeed, all four Gospels have John say here that he is not worthy to untie the thong of Jesus' sandal, a task in those days relegated to slaves. Today's reading departs once again from the other Gospels, however, when John says that after him comes a man who ranks ahead of him because he was before him, adding "I myself did not know him" (John 1:30-31a). But how could he not know Jesus? Luke's Gospel tells us they were cousins, that Mary and Elizabeth, the mothers of Jesus and John respectively, knew each other (1:36).

The Fourth Gospel deviates from Mark, Matthew, and Luke in other ways too. It tells us that two of John's followers, one of whom was Andrew, the other of whom remains unidentified, became Jesus' disciples when John identified him a second time as the Lamb of God (1:36). Andrew, in turn, found his brother Peter (Simon) who subsequently followed Jesus as well. Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, indicate that Jesus first met Andrew and Peter while they were fishing, whereupon he called them to follow him and become "fishers of men."

Yet perhaps most surprisingly it's what John's Gospel omits that appears most striking: it makes no reference to Jesus' baptism! Sure, John was baptizing other people (1:25), and sure, John says he saw the Spirit descend like a dove upon Jesus (1:32), but nowhere does the text say that John baptized Jesus. Perhaps the suggestion that Jesus would need to be baptized was too offensive to the early church, a problem with which Matthew's Gospel tangles as well (see 3:14).

Similarities between John and the other Gospels exist, to be sure. But when it comes to the Baptist it deviates from them in profoundly significant ways. It denies the equation of John with Elijah. It rejects Jesus' view that John was a prophet. It denies John's kinship with Jesus. It says he acquired his first followers differently than what Matthew and Mark tell us, and it skips over Jesus' baptism entirely.

This is startling news! But it's not bad news. It's good news.

The Merit of a Macroperspective

John may differ with regard to the details, but that's because this evangelist sees Jesus from an alternative view. Like Voyager 1, which gives us a perspective on the earth and our place in the cosmos we would never gain on the ground, John sees Jesus from a perspective not available to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Remember the opening line: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The beginning is not, as in Mark, the outset of Jesus' ministry, nor is the beginning, as in Matthew and Luke, his birth. For John it's the beginning of the world, the grand beginning, the cosmic beginning, the beginning of space and time. This is why the Baptist says only in John's Gospel that after him (in time) comes a man who ranks ahead of him because he was before him (in time). Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Word of God, was a perspective only available to a Gospel with the Eagle's eye.

It would be easy to dwell on the discrepancies between John and the other three Gospels. Once we recognize that John's view, like the Voyager, gives us a vantage point that obscures the details, but does so for the sake of offering a bigger, wider perspective, those discrepancies become immaterial. Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide the details of Jesus' social interactions, while John offers us the universal, Eagle's eye perspective, one that invests the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection with a truly cosmic meaning.

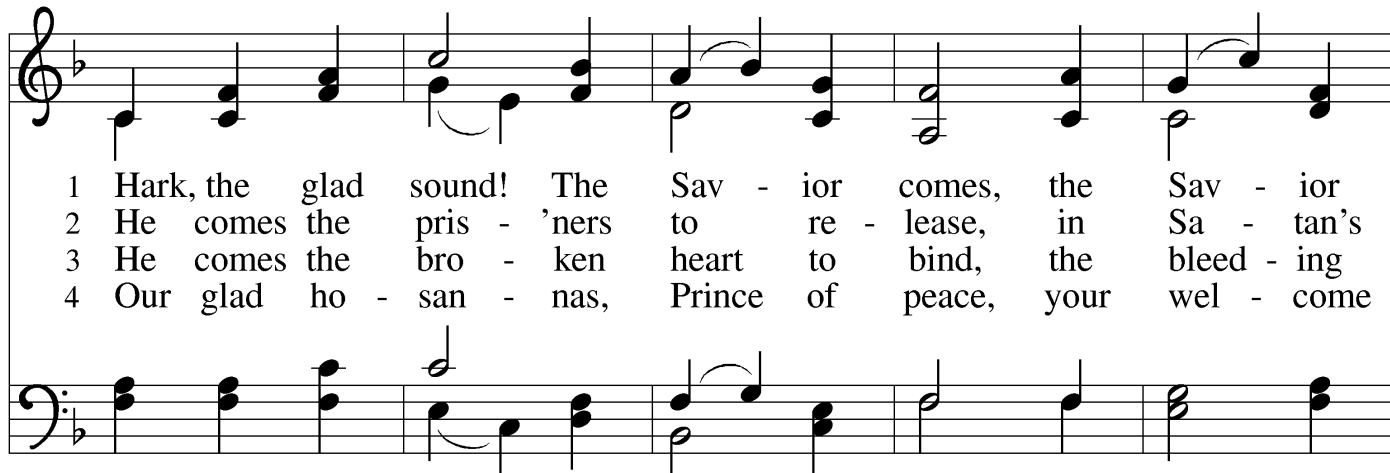
We can, in short, appreciate both, just as we appreciate living on this "pale blue dot" as well as the perspective we gain from seeing it four billion miles away.

Amen.

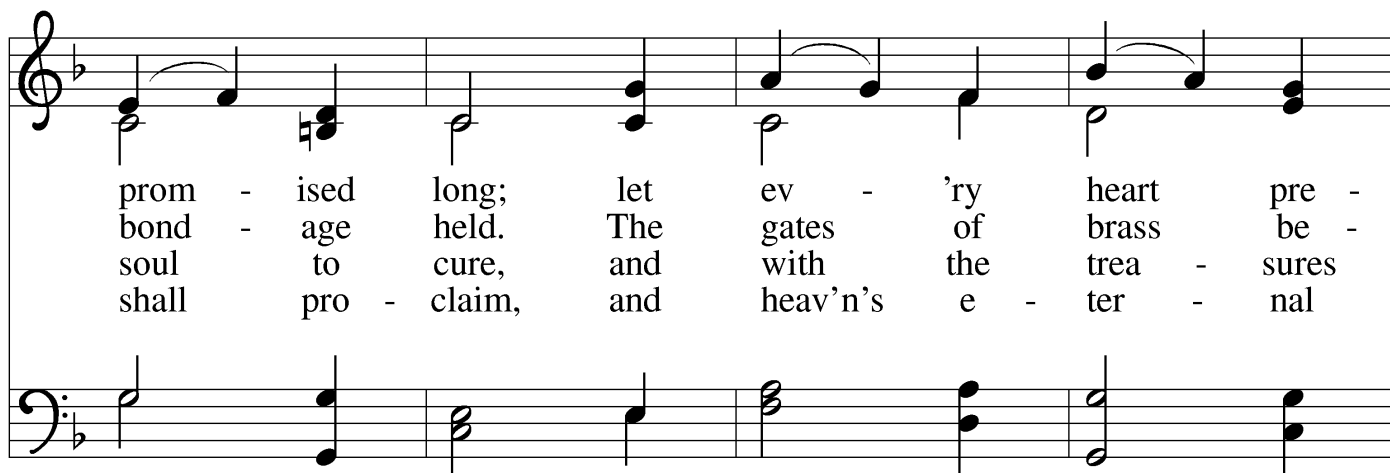
Hymn of the Day

Hark, the Glad Sound!


ELW 239



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Prayers of the Church

A: God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

A: God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of the powerful and the helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

A: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Prelude and Fugue in C major
Georg Böhm (1661–1733)

About today's music

Today we welcome Sonia and Deepa P. for a daughter-mother duet. Thank you for enriching our worship! Pachelbel's "Canon in D" is one of the most popular pieces of music from the Baroque era, lending itself well to this arrangement for flute and piano.

– Cantor Kyle Haugen

