

Stand

- L** O Lord, open my lips,
C and my mouth will declare Your praise.
L Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
C make haste to help me, O Lord.
C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
 as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
 Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Psalmody

Psalm

Psalm 89:1–5

- L** ¹I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.
C ²For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.”
L ³You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant:
C ⁴“I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.””
L ⁵Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

Sit

809 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

- 1 Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee.
 Thou changest not: Thy compassions, they fail not;
 As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be. Refrain
 ref Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!
 2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
 Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
 Join with all nature in manifold witness
 To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. Refrain
 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
 Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
 Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! Refrain

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866–1960

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Readings

Reading

Galatians 3:10–14

- L** A reading from Galatians, chapter 3.
¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴so that

in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

L O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Reading

2 Corinthians 1:8–11

L A reading from 2 Corinthians, chapter 1.

⁸For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

L O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Responsory (Advent)

LSB 230

L Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

L In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

L Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

Sermon

In Jesus's Name. Amen.

I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. (Ps 89:1)

What is reliable in your life? What or who do you rely on? Think about what you've seen in movies. What do the heroes of a Western rely on? They relied on themselves and their gun skills. Arguably, that's what made them heroes. We are taught to rely on ourselves, to "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps", to be self-reliant. We rely on ourselves, our ingenuity, our possessions. We rely on each other, our spouse or family or church family, God's blessings in and for our lives. Ultimately, we are to rely on God.

King David relied on God. David had a whole heart for God. Yet, David sinned. David's count of fighting men brought three days of plague upon the land (2 Sam 24:11-25). David's affair with Bathsheba brought the sword and division upon the house of David. (2 Sam 12:10-12).

David's offspring failed. Solomon lapsed into idolatry and oppressed God's people with hard labor. After Solomon's death, the kingdom divided, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. In time, both Israel and Judah were brought to ruin and exile in a foreign land, forced to worship the gods of their oppressors. Israel and Judah wondered, "Why all this suffering? What went wrong? We had the kingdom and a strong economy. Most of all, we had God who delivered us from Egypt and established Himself in the temple. God dwelt among us." How could everything go so terribly wrong?

God promised David a throne forever. In 2 Samuel 7:16, God said to David, "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." But the kingdoms had failed. Idolatry crept in. The Jews, both Israel and Judah, forgot the covenant of Yahweh their God. The Jews relied on themselves instead of the promises of God.

The problem is not with the promises of God. The problem is, was, and will be the hearts of people. When God gives wealth, we crave more, and some will do anything to get more. When God gives authority or power, we lord it over others. When given a kingdom and a temple, and every good thing we need for this body and life, we want more. Our sin, our greed, our pride, and our lust destroy us.

This was the story of Israel and its kings—even David, the king with a heart for God. They became enamored with themselves. Forget the politics, intrigue, taxes and forced labor. Forget the battles they fought and the terrible choices they made. The biggest problem in the kingdom was not labor or tax policy. The biggest problem was that they had forgotten God. That fundamental covenant with Yahweh, “I will be your God and you will be my people,” was lost in the dust.

I’ve been lost in the dust before, and so have you. We’ve been beaten, bruised, and battered by the world. We’ve been held up for scrutiny and ridicule, not just by others making fun of us during those awkward teenage years but also by every last sin that Satan can dig out of us and hold up for all the world to see. You remember the day you lost your temper, the hour you lost your purity, the times and again you’ve lost the battle against your addiction, and it grinds us to dust.

We’ve lost sight of God and His covenant. And when we lose sight of God, when we sin, we suffer. God remains God but we break our relationship with Him. We’ve wandered away. We rely on ourselves and try to do things on our own, without God, and then things fall apart and we’re left in the dust and ashes. Sometimes we wonder what happened. At the end of the day, when God seems far away, who moved?

When we are left in the dust of life trying to make sense of the world, we need someone on whom we can rely.

Welcome, then, to the words of Psalm 89, today’s Resounding Psalm for Advent. When we are lost and stuck and think there’s no way out, thank God we’re wrong. When you think that there’s nothing on which you can rely, thank God you’re wrong.

“I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever,” says the psalmist (v 1). I will sing of the *chesed* (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh. *Chesed* is so much more than just the emotion or feeling of love. It implies action. I will sing of the steadfast love, the covenant faithfulness, the abiding loyalty of the Lord. I will sing of God who loves me so much that He will do whatever it takes to maintain the covenant relationship with me. Yahweh our God will do what it takes to have for you for His own.

There is a word, there is a promise, from God himself on which Israel can rely. Even in loss, even in exile, you can rely on the promise, the word, the covenant faithfulness of God. Listen again to verses 3–4: “You have said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: “I will establish your offspring forever and build your throne for all generations.”” Yahweh’s word is reliable. Listen to the words of promise and reliability in just those two verses: “Made a covenant.” “My chosen one.” “I have sworn to David.” “Establish your offspring forever.” “Build your throne for all generations.”

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one,” God says. Advent is all about this chosen one of God, that beautiful Word and promise of God who became flesh and walked among us. John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Beloved in Christ, this baby, this child born in Bethlehem, is the reliable Word of God for you. From his birth to his suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, his unbreakable promise to his people is reliable.

Remember, then, these glorious truths of Jesus:

- “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mt 24:35).
- “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30).
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25).

- “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Cor 1:20 NIV).
- “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8).
- “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Rev 1:17–18).
- God’s steadfast love is forever, and you can rely on Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Tonight and always, we rely on the one of whom our psalm resounds, the trustworthy Word whose birth we long for with Advent hope: “I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations” (v 4). There is mystery and wonder in the manger. There is all the surpassing greatness of the incarnation of God for us to ponder this Advent. His love is for you. He, the root and offspring of Jesse, is for you. And On This Jesus Christ, the Word, You Can Rely. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Canticle

Stand

- L** Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
C and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

933 My Soul Rejoices

- 1 My soul rejoices,
 My spirit voices—
 Sing the greatness of the Lord!
 For God my Savior
 Has shown me favor—
 Sing the greatness of the Lord!
 With praise and blessing,
 Join in confessing
 God, who is solely
 Mighty and holy—
 O sing the greatness of God the Lord!
 His mercy surely
 Shall rest securely
 On all who fear Him,
 Love and revere Him—
 O sing the greatness of God the Lord!
- 2 His arm now baring,
 His strength declaring—
 Sing the greatness of the Lord!
 The proud He scatters,
 Their rule He shatters—
 Sing the greatness of the Lord!
 Oppression halted;
 The meek exalted.
 Full are the hungry;
 Empty, the wealthy—
 O sing the greatness of God the Lord!
 Here is the token
 All that was spoken
 To Abr’ham’s offspring
 God is fulfilling—
 O sing the greatness of God the Lord!

Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955

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Prayer

Kyrie

LSB 233

- C** Lord, have mercy;
- Christ, have mercy;
- Lord, have mercy.

Lord's Prayer

- C** Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Collects

- L** O Lord, hear my prayer.
- C** And let my cry come to You.

Collects of the Day

- L** Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- L** O Lord, keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Peace

- L** O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Stand

Benedicamus

LSB 234

- L** Let us bless the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Benediction

LSB 234

- P** The grace of our Lord ✠ Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- C** Amen.

722 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me

- 1 Lord, take my hand and lead me
 Upon life's way;
 Direct, protect, and feed me
 From day to day.
 Without Your grace and favor
 I go astray;
 So take my hand, O Savior,
 And lead the way.
- 2 Lord, when the tempest rages,
 I need not fear,
 For You, the Rock of Ages,
 Are always near.
 Close by Your side abiding,
 I fear no foe,
 For when Your hand is guiding,
 In peace I go.
- 3 Lord, when the shadows lengthen
 And night has come,
 I know that You will strengthen
 My steps toward home.
 Then nothing can impede me,
 O blessèd Friend;
 So take my hand and lead me
 Unto the end.

Text: Julie von Hausmann, 1825–1901; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, alt.

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Vespers from Lutheran Service Book

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