

ADVENT

Our Dear CHRIST Enters In

WEEK 1:

**Family
Tree**



WEEK 2:

**Home
Hurts**



WEEK 3:

**Baby
Names**



WEEK 4:

**Company
Comes**



- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Milwaukee 88 88 88 66, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits.
 The King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.
 He brings salvation down to earth. Greet him with shouts of holy mirth.
 Our highest praise we bring, our God, Creator, King!;

The righteous king is bringing grace; he comes the pris'ners to release.
 His royal crown, self-sacrifice, its jewel, mercy without price.
 He brings our sorrows to an end. Shout out your joy to God, our friend.
 Our highest praise we bring, our God, Redeemer, King.

O happy town, O blessed land that keeps our gracious King's command,
 And blest the heart when he comes in his holy reign there to begin.
 His entrance is the dawn of bliss; he fills our lives and makes them his.
 Our highest praise we bring, God, Comforter and King.

Unbar the gate, fling wide the door, your heart to God's design restore.
 Adorn its walls with all things right, with peace and love and joy and light.
 Your King will then be glad to come and live within you as his home.
 Our highest praise we bring, to God, our Lord and King.

Christ Jesus, Lord and Savior, come, I open wide my heart, your home.
 Oh, enter with your radiant grace, on my life's pattern shine your face,
 And let your Holy Spirit guide to gracious vistas rich and wide.
 Our God, we praise your name, forevermore the same.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

P Last week, we took a closer look in Matthew 1 at Jesus' family tree. There we learned that no person is ever too messed up, broken or lost to be connected to Jesus' family tree. Jesus came to make us at home in God's family forever.

This week we are looking at what I call "home hurts"—those things that cause us pain and suffering very close to home. There are many home hurts that happen by their *nature* (something that we *can't* control). Maybe a loved one has had a prolonged disease or illness, a parent or sibling is battling addiction, the former breadwinner of the family has lost a job or a wedded couple is dealing with infertility.

Other home hurts, however, happen by their *nurture* (something that *we* can control). Time spent inside the walls of many homes can reveal favoritism, neglect, forms of abuse, rivalry,

abandonment, absenteeism, unfair expectations, lack of support or loneliness. Hurt can come, too, when parents try to relive their sport careers and dreams through their children, causing their children to feel inadequate or under pressure.

There can also be a cyclical aspect to hurting homes. Unhealthy patterns, behaviors, choices, communication, words and attitudes are often passed down from one generation to the next. Phrases like “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” or “Like father, like son” have an uncomfortable level of truth about them. We’re never far from generational sin in the Scriptures either. For example, what is said of King Amos is said of many Old Testament kings: “And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. He walked in all the way in which his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them. He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD” (2 Kings 21:20-22).

In our Gospel reading today, we see another home that had its fair share of hurt, yet in and through the hurt, three Gospel truths serve to guide us when our own homes hurt. Luke writes in chapter one, “[Zechariah and Elizabeth] were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years” (Luke 1:6-7). **Gospel truth #1:** Zechariah and Elizabeth remind us that faithful believers live in brokenness too. Luke notes that both spouses were righteous. Both walked in God’s words and ways. But this godly couple also grieved a lifetime of infertility, and now...both were advanced in years beyond the age of childbearing. For Zechariah and Elizabeth, it seems that hope has all but gone out the window. And if infertility wasn’t painful enough on its own, the absence of children in Judaism often brought varying levels of reproach and shame, for a woman’s greatness was measured by the greatness of the child or children she bore.

Yet, here’s the power of faith: Even with their home hurts, Zechariah and Elizabeth still walk obediently with God. Even when their life is broken and their life does not seem fair, this husband and wife resolve not to be victims. Zechariah and Elizabeth do not wallow in self-pity, dwell on all the ways they have been wronged in life, blame each other, or angrily turn away from God. Rather, they continue to walk with their Lord by faith. Their steadfastness reminds us of Paul’s words in Romans 8:37, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” God’s children are not merely survivors in life’s school of hard knocks. In and through Christ, we triumph. No matter what our hurt is, we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

Our text continues in Luke 1:8-13: “Now while he [Zechariah] was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw

Tune.....Freu Dich Sehr 87 87 77 88

Piano score for the piece 'Freu Dich Sehr'. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The first system is marked with a '1' in both staves. The second system is marked with a '5' in both staves. The third system is marked with a '9' in both staves. The fourth system is marked with a '13' in both staves. The music features a variety of chords and melodic lines, with some measures containing rests.

- The **Hymn of Praise** is sung by the congregation to the tune Freu Dich Sehr 87 87 77 88, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

“Comfort, comfort ye my people, Speak of peace!” so says our God.
 “Comfort those who sit in darkness, groaning under sin’s dread rod.
 To my people I proclaim pardon now in Jesus’ name;
 Tell them that their sins I cover, that their warfare now is over!”

Yes, our sins the Lord will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed;
 All that well deserved his anger he will no more see nor heed.
 We who suffered many a day under guilt now washed away;
 We exchange our pining sadness for his comfort, peace and gladness.

Now, the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near,
 Calling us to true repentance, for the kingdom now is here!
 Oh, that warning cry obey, oh, prepare for God a way;
 Let the valleys rise to meet him, let the hills bow down to greet him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
 Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign;
 For the glory of the Lord now o’er earth is shed abroad,
 And all flesh shall see the token that his Word is never broken.