



BLESSED SACRAMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

“Generally speaking, there are two parts to Scripture: Law and Gospel. The Law displays sin, the Gospel grace. The shows the disease, the Gospel the cure.” — Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* 1521

Dear Saints,

12 Dec 2021

The theme of the Third Sunday of Advent is love. Gifts and love go together hand-in-hand and present us with insights about the giving nature of God. Gift giving is self-giving. A “Theology of Gift,” then, helps to tell the story of the Son and Spirit as the Father’s gifts to the world.

The Giver. The Gift. The Given. the Perfect Giver (God the Father) gave the perfect gift (God the Son), through the perfect means (conceived of the God the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary). The perfect One comes as perfection through perfection.

The Giver is God the Father. But what motivated the Father to give his only begotten Son. St. John’s Gospel tells us: Love.

The word love is used 53 times in St. John’s first epistle. In fact, it is used more by John than any other writer in the Bible. Brian Thomas notes, the word here is not *eros*, but *agape*. So when we read of God’s love or the command to love one another, the reference is not to sentimental, sensual, or a social love. These forms of love have their place, but that’s not the focus here. Instead, *agape* is held up as a supreme divine attribute. Love turns out to be not simply a thing or action, but a characteristic of God himself. “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God *is* love” (v.8). Basic to a knowledge of God is that he gives out of fatherly love.

But that leads us to ask, What exactly did he give? Is his great gift revealed to us in the Bible salvation? Is it eternal life? Is it peace? The answer to this question is the driving point of the entire Bible. Following the high treason of Genesis 3, the story surprisingly continues and it continues because the Father, out of his great love, originally intended to give something to the apex of his creation — human beings. And this loving Father would not be denied in his desire to give a supreme gift to the supreme act of his creation. And so the story continues out of necessity because the Father will prevail in his love expressed through his great gift-giving.

It is here that a theology of gift enters. The Father is the Giver. What he gives is nothing other than himself. The Bible’s theology of gift-giving is about giving from yourself, actually giving *yourself* through your gift; where the gift is an extension of yourself and the embodiment of yourself. It says, “I give this to you. Receive this gift from me as if I were giving me to you in and through this gift.” The gift that one gives is a placeholder for the giver. A shortcut for our understanding of the theology of gift might be this: “Receive me in this: This gift is me.”

How do we know that He loves *us*? Because He gave us the Son.



Dec. 12	Third S. in Advent	Zeph. 3:14–20	Psalm 85	Phil. 4:4–7	Luke 7:18–28 (29–35)
Dec. 19	Fourth S. in Advent	Micah 5:2–5a	Psalm 80:1–7	Heb. 10:5–10	Luke 1:39–45 (46–56)

Third Sunday 12 Dec. Color: **BLUE/ROSE**. Divine Service 1. Hymn of Invocation 352. Psalm 85 chanted responsively; Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath; Hymn of the Day 374; Eucharistic Hymn, 362; Recessional 371. Sermon: Philippians 4.4-7, “The Lord Close By.”

- * Third Midweek Mass: Evening Prayer & DS IV. Office Hymn: LSB 357. Isaiah 64.1-8 “A Tale of Three.”
- * Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 8: “Progression of the Stories.”

Fourth Sunday 19 Dec. Color: **BLUE**. Divine Service 1. Hymn of Invocation 348. Psalm 80 chanted responsively; Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath; Hymn of the Day 359; Eucharistic Hymn, 358; Recessional 791. Sermon: St. Luke 1:39-56 “The Magnificat.”

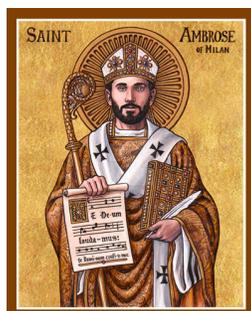
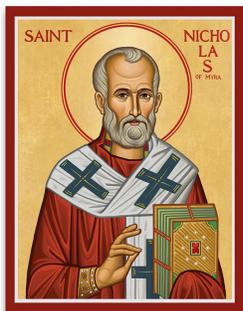
- * Fourth Midweek Mass: Evening Prayer & DS IV. Office Hymn: LSB 356. I John 4, “Christmas’ Theology of Gift.”
- * Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 9: “Thematic Similarities to OT Stories.”
- * Confirmation Catechesis, Lesson 3: Thursday 3:25pm at Classical Christian Academy
- * **Christmas Party @ the Bombaro home, 5pm Saturday 18 Dec. Please bring an appetizer and White Elephant Gift (kids version & adult) for each person in your party who would like to play. Gifts \$10 and under. Carol singing. Ugly sweater contest. Bring friends. No humbugs.**
- * Order of Saint Vincent training & ICE SKATING event: 21 Dec. Time TBD.
- * **Christmas Eve Mass, 5pm.**
- * Please keep Mike Williams in prayer for a speedy recovery and Drake’s baby due 20 Dec.
- * Welcome home Sophia!

Family remembrances:

Dec 6 St. Nicolas of Myra, Bishop

Dec 7 St. Ambrose of Milan, Bishop, Hymnwriter, and Doctor of the Church

Dec 13 St. Lucia, Virgin and Martyr





5 Dec 2021, Second Sunday of Advent, First Holy Communion for Luther Sousa, Teddy Ashley, Samantha McCabe, Ivan McCabe, Aviel McCabe, & Declan McCabe.

Photo: Dennis Sinning