

December 21, 2025

St. Paul Lutheran LCMS
Julesburg, CO

970.474.2592
stpauljules@gmail.com

The Pathlight

*Your Word Is A Lamp To My Feet and a
Light To My Path.
Ps 119:105*

Zion Lutheran LCMS
Big Springs, NE

308.289.5148
Muleshoexv@gmail.com

GOD IS WITH US!

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). Matthew 1:22-23

Who wouldn't want a peace that lasts because God is with us? Well, many don't. Why? Because as the sinful, rebellious people we are by nature, we tend to settle for anything other than the real thing. (Oh, this will do. This will get me by. This is just as good and it's cheaper.) When offered the eternal peace that comes from sins forgiven, some are satisfied with peaceful circumstances or just a temporal peace of mind, right? I will settle for the peace of paid bills, peace amongst the family members, my health and body doing fine, a meaningful job (as long as I want to work). Instead of “God with us” no matter the circumstances, I will settle for circumstances of my liking.

This Christmas, spend some time reflecting on what it means to have faith in the Savior who is “God with us” no matter the circumstances. That's the circumstance that faced Joseph that first Christmas. He had so much on his plate. Mary, his fiancé, was pregnant, but the child wasn't his. What should he do? How would he face the whispers and sideways glances of his family and neighbors? He had some good intentions. He loved Mary and would attempt to protect her in his disappointment and divorcing her quietly seemed reasonable. (Matthew 1:19). But then things changed dramatically. Of all things, an angel appears, saying, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife” (Matthew 1:20). Why? Because God was at work in ways that Joseph's natural reasoning couldn't understand. Joseph could have run for the hills. Instead, Joseph put his faith in God's Word of promise. Joseph would take Mary as his wife, and Jesus as His Savior, no matter the personal cost at the moment.

Christmas and Easter deliver to us what we need in every circumstance every day. Christmas and Easter are the daily reality of sins forgiven and eternal life secured. It's the promise of peace that lasts, a peace that endures no matter the present circumstance. That's what Matthew 1:22, 23 points to. It tells us about the God who brings peace because He pays the price for our sins, and then He promises to be with us in all circumstances in this world and that we will live forever with Him in heaven. It's the peace that comes when you know that there is ONE who is able, ONE who is capable, ONE who is with you in all things. Faith in Him says, “There is nothing else, and nothing less.”

O come, O come, Emmanuel, into our daily lives. When God is “with us” and God is “for us” (Romans 8:31), we rest assured and secure in His hands. IN CHRIST we have way more than enough to live this life as “God with us”. A life here in His joy, peace, and an eternal life to come.....even when circumstances seem to the contrary.

A blessed Christmas to all of you!

Pastor and Joline

For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Cor. 13:12

Lutheran Service Book

Order of Worship

HYMN # 341 “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

LITURGY pg. 151 Divine Service (setting one) with Communion

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

INTROIT (insert)

KYRIE pg. 152

SALUTATION and COLLECT

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 7:10-17

EPISTLE: Romans 1:1-7

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

NICENE CREED pg.158

HYMN OF THE DAY #357 V. 1-5 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

OFFERING

OFFERTORY pg.159

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT pg.160

HYMN #617 “O Lord, We Praise Thee”

HYMN #900 “Jesus! Name of Wonderous Love”

LORD’S PRAYER pg.162

NUMC DIMITTIS pg. 165

COLLECT

BENEDCTION

HYMN #338 “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

SILENT PRAYER

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**Servants for Today**

**St. Paul**

Greeters and Ushers – Les Ebke/Dwight Ebke

Organist –Jeanie Boehm

**Zion**

Usher/Greeter-Randy Schlake, Altar Guild-Jodi/Shelle, Organist-Jeanie



**St. Paul**

**Dec. 22-9:00AM-Bible Study**

**Dec. 24-5:00PM- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service-at St. Paul**

**Servants for Worship Service- Brian Lanckriet/Jay Lindsay/Gail Nicolaus/Jeanie Boehm**

**Dec. 25-9:00AM-Christmas Day Service-at Zion**

**Servants for Worship-Craig Nicolaus/Gail Nicolaus**

**Dec. 28-8:00AM-Bible Study**

**9:00AM-Worship Service**

**Servants for Worship Service-Brian Boehm/Chuck Juhl/Jeanie Boehm**

**Zion**

**Dec. 24-5:00PM- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service-at St. Paul**

**Dec. 25-9:00AM-Christmas Day Service-at Zion**

**Servants for Worship-Craig Nicolaus/Gail Nicolaus**

**Dec.28-10:00AM-Sunday School**

**11:00AM-Worship Service**

**Servants for Worship Service- Randy Schlake/Shelle & Jodi/Jeanie Boehm**



**12/11-Marvin and Wanda Trennephol**

**12/28-Rex and Louann Nicolaus**



**12/23- Curtis Hensley**

**12/25- Eric Alcala**

**12/27- Jules Hoschouer**



# Riddles

1. Riddle: I arrive without footsteps, yet prophets hear me coming. I am promised, anointed, and born where bread is named. **Who am I?**
2. Riddle: My greeting startles but does not condemn. I stand by an altar, speak of favor, and foretell two impossible births. **Who am I?**
3. Riddle: I sing of reversals—proud scattered, humble lifted. My song is a cradle for mercy. **Who am I?**
4. Riddle: I leap before I speak. My cry straightens roads, and my joy fills a mother's house. **Who am I?**
5. Riddle: I do not break the bruised reed. I reign without throne rooms and wear a crown of thorns. **Who am I?**
6. Riddle: I am a key that opens a locked dynasty, a root that blossoms in winter, a lamp at dawn. **Name me in one ancient "O."**
7. Riddle: I hold a promise like a carpenter holds a beam—quiet, steady, righteous. Dreams guide me; shame does not. **Who am I?**
8. Riddle: We travel by night, reading light. Our gifts speak three languages: kingship, divinity, and sorrow. **Who are we?**
9. Riddle: I am a city small as a seed yet royal as a scepter. Shepherds know my hills; a prophet names my streets. **Where am I?**
10. Riddle: I am not a candle, yet I flame with Love. I complete the waiting, and my glow means "God with us." **Which Advent moment am I?**

## Answer key

1. Answer: The Messiah (Christ)
2. Answer: Gabriel
3. Answer: Mary (the Magnificat)
4. Answer: John the Baptist
5. Answer: Jesus

6. Answer: An "O Antiphon" title (e.g., Clavis David, Radix Jesse, Oriens)

7. Answer: Joseph

8. Answer: The Magi (Wise Men)

9. Answer: Bethlehem

10. Answer: Lighting the Love candle (Fourth Sunday of Advent) and the nearness of Emmanuel



## Fourth Sunday of Advent Devotion

### **The Candle of Love: Emmanuel, God with Us**

Years ago, a man named Daniel lived in a small farming community. He was known for being quiet, hardworking, and not particularly expressive. One winter, just before Christmas, a fire broke out in the barn of his neighbor—a widow raising three children alone. The flames threatened to destroy her only source of income: the animals she depended on for milk and eggs.

Without hesitation, Daniel ran into the smoke-filled barn. He freed the animals, carried out feed sacks, and even risked his life to save the family's old workhorse. By the time the fire was contained, Daniel was covered in soot, coughing, and exhausted. The widow stood in tears, realizing that without his courage, her family would have faced ruin.

Later that evening, Daniel quietly repaired the broken fence around her yard. When she tried to thank him, he simply said, "Love doesn't wait for thanks. It just shows up."

That moment became a turning point for the widow's children. They grew up remembering not just the fire, but the way one man's love—expressed in sacrifice—had revealed God's presence in their darkest hour.

## Reflection

The Fourth Sunday of Advent calls us to light the Candle of Love. Love is not abstract; it is embodied in action. Just as Daniel risked himself to save what mattered most, so too does Christ enter our world—not from a distance, but by stepping into the smoke and chaos of human life.

Mary’s “yes” to God, Joseph’s obedience, Elizabeth’s blessing, and the shepherds’ faith all echo this truth: love is costly, but it is also transformative. It is Emmanuel—God with us—breaking into our ordinary lives with extraordinary grace.

For adults, this devotion reminds us that love is not measured by words alone but by presence, sacrifice, and courage. It is choosing to show up when others are in need, even when it costs us comfort, time, or pride.

**“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”  
— John 15:13**

**“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” — John 1:14**

Think of the “fires” around you—neighbors struggling with illness, coworkers weighed down by stress, families fractured by conflict. Advent love calls us to step into those places, not with easy words, but with presence and action.

When we light the fourth candle, we declare that love is not passive. It is Emmanuel, God with us, showing up in barns, living rooms, hospitals, and workplaces. It is the kind of love that risks itself so others may live.

## Closing Prayer

Lord of Love, as we light the fourth candle of Advent, remind us that Your love is not distant but incarnate. Give us courage to step into the fires of others’ lives with compassion and sacrifice. May our actions bear witness to Emmanuel, God with us, and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ, Love made flesh. Amen.







St. Paul Lutheran Church  
7<sup>th</sup> & Maple  
PO Box 72  
Julesburg, CO 80737