

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Rorate Coeli · Late Elementary · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

A collect is a short prayer the pastor prays for the whole church. Here is today's collect:

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Words to know. *Might:* great strength. *Weigh us down:* make us heavy, like a load too big to carry. *Grace:* God's love that we do not deserve. *Mercy:* God's kindness to people in trouble. *Old Adam* (in the catechism): the sinful self we were born with. *Contrition:* being sorry for sin. *Repentance:* turning from sin back to God.

1. We ask the Lord to stir up His power and _____ and help us.

Answer: Come.

2. Our sins _____ us down.

Answer: Weigh.

3. We ask that our sins be lifted by His grace and _____.

Answer: Mercy.

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

John 1:19-28

19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." **21** And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." **22** So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" **23** He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) **25** They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" **26** John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, **27** even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." **28** These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

1. What question did the priests and Levites ask John?

Answer: "Who are you?" (verse 19).

2. John said he was not three people. Who were they?

Answer: The Christ, Elijah, and the Prophet (verses 20-21).

3. Who did John say he was?

Answer: "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness" (verse 23).

4. What was John not worthy to do?

Answer: Untie the strap of the sandal of the One coming after him (verse 27).

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

Say to your child: Our prayer asks Jesus to come and lift the heavy load of our sins. In the Gospel, John tells people that Jesus is coming. Let's find our prayer in the story.

1. The collect asks Jesus to *come*. Find the words in verse 27 about someone coming.

Answer: *"He who comes after me."*

2. The collect asks for our sins to be *lifted*. What was John doing with water to get people ready for Jesus?

Answer: *Baptizing (verses 25-26, 28). People came to be baptized, confessing their sins and turning back to God.*

3. John said he was not worthy even to untie Jesus' sandal. In the collect, how are our sins lifted: by our work, or by something else?

Answer: *By Jesus' grace and mercy, not by our work.*

Parent note. The very next day John pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). That is how our heavy sins are lifted: Jesus carries them to the cross. He gives us that forgiveness in Baptism and in the Absolution we hear each Sunday.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

Baptism, Fourth Part. What does such baptizing with water indicate? It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. **Where is this written?** St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)

1. John baptized with water. What does Luther say baptizing with water shows?

Answer: *That the Old Adam in us should be drowned and die, and a new person should rise to live before God.*

2. How often does Luther say this happens?

Answer: *Daily. Every day we are sorry for our sins, and every day God forgives us and makes us new.*

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

Pray today's collect together one more time. Then ask:

1. What does Jesus do with your sins?

Answer: *He takes them away. He carried them to the cross as the Lamb of God, He washed me in my Baptism, and He forgives me every day.*