

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Rorate Coeli · Middle School · 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

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

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.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which part is missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O Lord." Petition: "Stir up Your power... and come and help us by Your might." Purpose: "that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy." Ending: "for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit." The reason is missing.*

2. This collect begins with the same words as the Advent 1 collect. Compare what each one asks to be done about our sins.

***Answer:** Advent 1 asks to be "rescued from the threatening perils of our sins," which pictures sin as danger. Advent 4 asks that "the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted," which pictures sin as a burden. Both ask the Son Himself to come and deal with our sins. Three of the four Advent collects begin "Stir up."*

3. By what means does the collect ask for our sins to be lifted? Why "quickly"?

***Answer:** "By Your grace and mercy." We ask for it quickly because we cannot carry the weight ourselves and need help now.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

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. Why did the leaders ask whether John was Elijah or "the Prophet"?

***Answer:** God had promised to send Elijah before the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5) and a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). They wanted to know whether those promised figures had arrived.*

2. John keeps saying "I am not." Why does he call himself only a "voice"?

Answer: His whole task is to point away from himself to Christ. A voice carries a message that is not its own.

3. In verse 26 John says, "Among you stands one you do not know." What were the leaders missing?

Answer: The Christ was already standing among them. They were so busy questioning John that they did not recognize Jesus.

4. Untying sandals was a slave's job. What does John's comment in verse 27 show about Jesus?

Answer: John counts himself lower than a slave next to Jesus. The One coming after him is not just a greater prophet. He is the Lord Himself.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Come" matches "he who comes after me" (v. 27). "The sins which weigh us down... lifted" matches John's baptism of repentance, which prepared people for Christ (vv. 25-26). "By Your grace and mercy" matches John's own unworthiness (v. 27): lifting sin is Christ's work, not ours. Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. Read John 1:29, the verse right after today's reading. How does it answer the collect?

Answer: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The Lamb carries the weight of our sins to the cross. That is how the sins that weigh us down are lifted.

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)

Cross-reference. "For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." (Psalm 38:4)

1. John baptized with water to prepare people for Christ. What does Luther say baptizing with water indicates?

Answer: That the Old Adam in us should be drowned and die each day through contrition and repentance, and that a new man should daily rise to live before God in righteousness and purity.

2. We are baptized only once. Why does Luther say "daily"?

Answer: Baptism happens once, but its gift lasts a lifetime. The sinful nature still clings to us, so each day we return to Baptism's promise by repenting and receiving forgiveness.

3. Psalm 38 calls sin a burden "too heavy for me." How does the Fourth Part of Baptism say the burden is removed?

Answer: Not by our carrying it off, but by being drowned and raised with Christ. Romans 6:4 says we were buried with Him and raised to a new life.

Parent note: the question they may ask. "What is the Old Adam?" It is the sinful nature we inherited from Adam, which still clings to us after Baptism. It is not a separate person but our own sinful desires. Each day, sorrow over sin and turning to Christ for forgiveness drown it, and the new man, who we are in Christ, rises. This is not a new baptism. It is living in the one we already have.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short Advent collect of your own. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world. Lift from us the sins that weigh us down, that we may live each day as Your baptized children; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. 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.*