

Lord, Have Mercy – A Christmas Kyrie

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail th'incarnate diety! Pleased as man w/man to dwell, J our Immnl! (CW 350). My dear sis/bro in Xp, who on joyfl Xmas day sing glory to newborn Kng: **Texts.** Well, what u ask for this yr for Xmas? What put on list? Kids, ask for toys, trucks, dolls? If little older, like HS/Colg, myb askd: latest elctrnics, trendy clothes. If adlt, myb hoping: smthng w/sm hrspwr or carats. Or myb what really hoping for this Xmas: smthng can't order online: time w/fam, spcl moments w/spcl ppl at spcl place. No matter what you put on Xmas list this yr, I hope that all/us as Xians recognize diff btwn, on one hand, those cute/nice/fun little gifts we ask for, wrap up, & give to oa at Xmas, and on other hand, those truly imp requests that we ask of J, those matters of hrt that we bring before Lord in earnest prayer.

All ppl in these rdngs undrstd that diff. They: not celbrtng Xmas or opening gifts; had no Xmas wishlists; and certly were not asking J for thngs that Amzn can ship to door. Each: in very diffclt/dangrs sittn w/childrn or hlth. So turned to only one who cld possibly provd any help, and begged J for mercy. Mt 15 – Canaanite woman whose baby girl: suffrg trbly fr demon possn; she falls at J's ft, begs mercy. Mt 17 – sweet little boy also possd by demon, that actly seizes boy's bdy & thrws him into fire/wtr try kill; and this helpless dad can do nthng re it except fall on knees, beg J mercy. Lk 17 – 10 men w/leprsy, deadly/contg skin disease that eats away at flesh & rots away limbs; they plead w/J: have mercy! And Lk 18 – blind Bartimaeus, who spends days begging, until hears J is nearby & begs J mercy. These ppl weren't asking for Xmas gifts you can buy w/Kohl's Cash. They were in trouble & desperately needed help; so turned to J and said: **Mercy!**

Kyrie eleison – Lord, have mercy! “J, we're in trbl; we need you/your help! Help us, J! LHM/KE!” If those wrds sound funny in your ear, bec Grk wrds. NT wrttn in Grk; and for 1st 3 centrs of Xianity, lang of Med wrld: Grk. But for 2k yrs, Xian Ch has borrd these wrds fr these hurting ppl & cried out to J in prayer using wrds: KE.

And know what? You've prayed these wrds, too – I know u have, whthr knew/not. Let me explain; I'd like tch u smthng this morn. In tradtnl Luth litrgy, which is histrc Xian litrgy (order/srvc we genrly follow here at SJ), there are 5 songs (I'll call songs, even if smtms sing/speak) that are incldd in ev Com srvc. Called: 5 songs/ordinary. Wrđ ordnry here: techncl term; doesn't mean common/plain/simple/ordnry; no, wrđ ordnry here means that these 5 songs give order/strctr to srvc, make srvc ordrlly, well ordrd – what ordnry means. These 5 songs/ordnry: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo/Creed, Sanctus, & Agnus Dei*. Think of these 5 songs like pillars holding up bldng; you can put whtvr want inside bldng, but pillars don't move; 5 songs/ordnry don't chng. The parts/srvc that do chng (thngs put in bldng, incl in srvc): proper, which again, techncl term; dsn't mean forml/stuffy; means what is approprt/appointd for that srvc. So, when u come ch, not like hymns/rdngs/sermon are always same ev service; they change ev wk – proper. So, in summary, in historic Xian/Luth order/srvc, you have ordnry (parts that stay same, pillars, like 5 songs) & proper (parts that change ev service).

Now, you may say, “OK, PKL, I follow what saying. But today's Xmas. Why talking: liturgy, leprosy, and demon possn? Here's why: these 5 songs/ordnry are tied so strongly to Xmas, to birth/Xp, to God/Fr sending only bgtnn Son into wrld bec Sav. These 5 songs/ordnry, that sing so often in ch, tell us all re what this baby born/Bthlhm came do for us; & been sung litrly for hndrds yrs. Yet so often in our wrshp we don't stop think re what mean. So this Xmas: focus on Kyrie. And it's actly my intntn, begng today, base my next 5 Xmas sermons on these 5 songs/ordnry, bec these songs truly: Xmas songs.

So today let's unwrap KE. I think you're recgnz these diff melodies: old hymnal; new; hymn; old Matins. Kyrie means Lord; the LORD; God free/faithful grace; the I AM Lord who apprđ to Moses at burning bush; **“Lord, Lord, compssnt, gracious God, slow anger, abndng love/faithfls” (Ex 34:6)** – that Lord. The Xp child we worship today, wrapped in swdng cloths & lying in manger – he is Lord! Night/birth, angel: **“Today in town/Dvd, Sav been born to you; he: Mes/Lord” (Lk 2:11)** – the almgthy God, creator hvns/earth. And this L-J lookd down fr hvn, saw devsttn sin had wrght on his ppl, & made decsn clothe self in humnty, take on human flesh, & come into wrld as human, as one/us. But didn't come as warrior w/mighty army or king w/royal entourage. Came as baby! Lord came as helplss, nursing, diaper-wearing baby, born in most humble of places: makeshift lean-to for livestock. Joseph probly had kick away cow pies & find some unsoiled straw for Mary lie down on to give birth. That's how Lord: born! When we pray KE, we're crying out to Lord, God/hvn/earth, who once was baby sleeping in bckyrđ cattle shed! But make no mistake, this baby: same Lord who parted Red Sea; gave 10 Coms; filled temple w/prsnc; walked wtr, fed Ks; died on cross; rose fr dead; descended into hell to proclaim victory over Stn; declared us justfd in God's sight; and will come again judge livng/dead. That's J; that's Lord.

So, K/L, E/HM. Mercy: such imp wrđ in Bible; similar to wrđ grace. Grace: the love God shows to ppl who don't deserve it. Mercy: love God shows to ppl who not only don't deserve it but actly do deserve God's wrath & punshmnt. Could say it this way: grace is God giving us good things we don't deserve (salvtn, hvn); mercy is God withholding fr us bad things we do deserve (punshmnt, retrbntn). The words: similar; our God: both gracious/merciful. But when we cry out, KE/LHM,

we are admitting: we are sinners who rightly deserve nothing but punishment; we are begging God show us kindness we know we don't deserve. Just like: Mt 15 – Canaanite woman falls at J's feet; please help daughter! Mt 17 – helpless dad kneels before J; Lord, I'm begging you help son! Lk 17 – ten lepers; Lk 18 – blind Bart. They didn't deserve a thing; neither do we. But when you recognize you're in desperate situation because of sin/effects, and understand you have nothing to offer God, then all you can do: fall on knees (spiritually/literally) and beg J for mercy. When you come to grips with reality that the sickness, suffering, pain, & death you experience in this life comes as result of own sin, and that you cannot fix own problems, all you can do is cry out: LHM/KE!

And at Xmas, God powerfully/demonstrably shows us depths/mercy, in most merciful way: birth/baby, birth/Son. God: I know exactly what you deserve, but I'm not giving you that; I don't want to give you that. I want to give you my Son/self/heart; I want you to know how much I love you! Baby J in manger is the mercy/God! He: cancelled/punishment we deserve; and overflow of God's love that we do not deserve. (Like Ps 23, my cup runneth over – mercy.) Baby J in manger: means God cares enough for us to become one/us; is the God-man who obeys God's law perfectly & credits perfection to us; is our Redeemer, who transfers collective sinfulness of mankind onto self & pays penalty for that sin in agony on cross; is our Savior who rises from the dead & promises to raise us from the dead; and is very Son/God who's prepared home for his people in heaven. Baby J is mercy/God! If you ever doubt God's love for you, if ever wonder why life is so hard and why you suffer so much, if ever begin to think God's forgotten you or doesn't care for you – just look again into the manger at mercy/God! J: God's mercy for you! When we cry out KE/LHM, God gives us J!

And, **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things” (Rom 8:32)**. All things! So what are you going to put on that Xmas list – list you give to Lord in prayer? God wants us to cry out KE/LHM, because he wants to show us mercy! Bk/Heb: **“Let us then approach God's throne/grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy & find grace to help us in our time/need” (4:16)**. Prints of demon-possessed kids, 10 lepers, blind Bart – they all turned to J in their time/need, and all received mercy! And God wants us to do the same. So we turn to J & pray: KE/LHM. LJ, I need your help. My prints, spouse, kids, friends, church, synod, Presbytery, kids' teachers, community, state government, federal government, my fellow humans across the globe – need your help! So, LHM/KE!

That: our prayer; prayer/people in these Gospel passages; and Church's prayer every week in worship. When you come church throughout 2025, I hope you pay attention to, and now have greater appreciation for, the KE that we normally speak/sing toward beg/service. Let's not speed through it mindlessly. It's one of 5 songs/ordinances, one of pillars/service, for a reason. We're calling on almighty L/K – now seated/throne, but once asleep/manger – to HM/E, to give us what we know we don't deserve, and withhold from us what we know we do deserve. And when you hold baby J in arms by faith, you can know with certainty: Lord is merciful!

So, let this be our Xmas Kyrie, the wishlist we give to God – not stuff ordered on Amazon & tossed under the tree, but a heartfelt cry for mercy that we bring before Lord in prayer. Let's close with a Xmas Kyrie of our own. Let me speak petitions/prayer, and I invite you to respond (not in Greek but English) with: LHM.

In peace, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. For a truly faith-strengthening Xmas, for us & all Christians across the world, that we may grasp/depths your love for us in sending Christ be our Savior, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. For penitent hearts, that we may repent/sins of greed, selfishness, distraction, & vanity in our preparation & celebration of J's birth, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. For the powerful spread of the Xmas Gospel to all corners/earth, that many more people would find in the manger the light/world & their Savior, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. For joy in our sadness, strength/weakness, and confidence/doubts, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. And for the comfort that comes through faith/Christ, who entered human life with us, to bring us to eternal life with him, let us pray/Lord: **LHM**. KE. Amen.

Matthew 15:21-22 ²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

Matthew 17:14-15 ¹⁴When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly.”

Luke 17:12-13 ¹²As [Jesus] was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

Luke 18:35, 38 ³⁵As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁸He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Sermon Series:

2024: Lord, Have Mercy – A Christmas *Kyrie*

2025: Glory to God in the Highest – A Christmas *Gloria*

2026: Lord, I Believe – A Christmas *Credo*

2027: Holy Lord – A Christmas *Sanctus*

2028: Lamb of God – A Christmas *Agnus Dei*