

LINCOLN BEREAN CHURCH

# ADVENT REFLECTIONS

- 2017 -





*The Advent season is a season of  
waiting, but our whole life is  
an Advent season, that is, a season  
of waiting for the last Advent,  
for the time when there will be a new  
heaven and a new earth.*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer



## - *Introduction* -

The Advent season has been an important observance of the Christian church dating back at least to the 6th century A. D. The more liturgical Christian traditions (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglicanism) that follow a church calendar regularly observe Advent. In recent times, more Protestant churches—including evangelical churches—have found value in celebrating Advent. Observing Advent is not a Catholic practice, an Orthodox practice, a liturgical practice, but a Christian practice. We hope you will join us at Lincoln Berean Church and observe the Advent season.

Advent means “coming.” The Advent season serves as a time of preparation for Christmas—the celebration of the first coming of the Messiah. It is also a time to anticipate the Messiah’s second coming. Advent starts the fourth Sunday preceding Christmas and ends Christmas Eve. This year, Advent begins Sunday, December 3.

The purpose of this booklet is to assist you in your preparations for Christmas. Each day of Advent ,you will find brief Scripture readings, prayers, hymns, or other reflections that will help focus your attention on the meaning of the Messiah’s first coming and the anticipation of His second coming. There is no one way to use this booklet. You can set aside a time of quiet in the morning, during the lunch hour, at the dinner table, or at bed time. You can read it alone or as a family. You may wish to light an Advent candle (violet, pink, or white are the traditional colors) each day before reading to remind you of the Light that came (and will come again) into a dark world. You may also hang a special decoration on your Christmas tree after each day’s reading. Be creative and use this booklet in whatever ways will make the Advent season a time of anticipating the celebration of Jesus’ first coming in Bethlehem over two millennia ago and a time of longing for His second coming.

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*May your Advent season be filled  
with the wonder of the Messiah's first coming  
and the hope of his soon return!*

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## - December 3 -

### READ: Luke 2:8-14

The story of Advent is the story of a rescue mission. How would God rescue a fallen world from its bondage to sin, death, and evil? Humans, in their sinful condition, are incapable of redeeming themselves, let alone the fallen world. The world needs a rescuer; it needs a savior. The angelic announcement to the shepherds of the birth of the world's Savior, their Savior, fulfilled the hope of the ages. In the midst of our lost and perilous condition, God sent His Son to rescue us. Rejoice this Advent season because, not only have the lost been found, they have been rescued and brought into the security of the Savior's intimate presence. Advent reminds us, too, that our Savior will return again to complete the rescue mission He began that first Christmas. "For unto you is born this day...a Savior!"

### REFLECT:

*We all come with different personal feelings to the Christmas festival. One comes with pure joy as he looks forward to this day of rejoicing, of friendships renewed, and of love... Others look for a moment of peace under the Christmas tree, peace from the pressures of daily work... Others approach Christmas with great apprehension. It will be no festival of joy to them. Personal sorrow is painful especially on this day for those whose loneliness is deepened at Christmastime. Despite it all, Christmas comes. Whether we wish it or not, whether we are sure or not, we must hear the words once again: Christ the Savior is here! The world that Christ comes to save is our fallen and lost world. None other.*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

### PRAY:

*O God, who has shown forth your salvation to all the ends of the earth, grant, we pray, that we may look forward in joy to the glorious Nativity of Christ who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

## - December 4 -

### READ: Luke 2:22-35

Christmas is a time of lights. Lights illuminate our Christmas trees, adorn our bushes, and outline our houses. The soft glow of candles and the inviting light of a fireplace create fond Christmas memories. All the lights we enjoy during this season of Advent should turn our attention to the Light who came into our dark world. Amid the noise and distraction of a busy temple, Simeon saw God's light for all of us living in a dark world. In the frantic pace of this Christmas season, may we pause and ponder the Light who broke into the dark world of Simeon's day and will once again break into our dark world at His glorious return.

### REFLECT:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.*

*Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,  
As the light of light descendeth from the realm of endless day,  
That the pow'rs of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.*

*At his feet the six-winged seraph; cherubim with sleepless eye,  
Veil their faces to the Presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry;  
"Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High."*

- Liturgy of St. James

### PRAY:

*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

- The Book of Common Prayer

- December 5 -

**READ:** Isaiah 8:19-9:7

Waiting is hard. Waiting is harder when we need help. The stranded mountain climber, the wounded soldier behind enemy lines, and the abducted child all long for rescue. The Jewish people knew this longing. Oppressed by foreign nations and the injustices of their own leaders, Abraham's children waited for God's Messiah to come and rescue them. Enslaved by their own sinfulness and the powers of darkness, God's chosen ones longed for freedom and light. We, too, long for Jesus to come once again and put our broken and sinful world right. This Advent, the waiting for Christmas reminds us of our hope of rescue by the King born in Bethlehem.

**REFLECT:**

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**PRAY:**

*Ever faithful God, your prophets foretold the coming of the light. In Your name, they promised that the eyes of the blind would be opened. We confidently await the coming of your Son and the day when He will gather all people to live in your light, forever and ever. Amen.*

*- The Glenstal Book of Prayer*

## - December 6 -

### READ: 1 Samuel 7:8-16; Isaiah 11:1-5

The Jewish people waited and longed for the promised descendent of David to come and sit on Israel's throne. God had formed a covenant with King David promising him an eternal dynasty. The Jews expected, and awaited, the coming of an anointed king from David's bloodline—the Messiah—who would defeat their enemies and rescue them from their bondage. With this Davidic king on the throne, the world would be a safe place filled with rejoicing in God's presence and goodness. Sin, death, evil, suffering, and fear would all be cast aside. The baby born in Bethlehem's manger was that Son of David, the long-awaited Messiah. As the Jewish people hoped and longed for that day, so we, too, hope and long for this Messiah's return; not as a baby, but a victorious king. On the day of His return, He will finish the mission He began at His first Advent. Sin, death, evil, suffering, and fear will be eliminated finally and fully. This Advent, waiting to celebrate His first coming should heighten our anticipation of His second coming when the forces of darkness shall be no more.

### REFLECT:

*Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.*

*- Charles Wesley*

### PRAY:

*Jesus; in the darkness of these Advent nights, let me be guided by the light of your word. Give me the humility to be led by you and the wisdom to learn from you.*

*I feel your light in my life and in the world. I am grateful for the Savior who awaits us, and eagerly await the time of rejoicing. Let me look forward in hope and turn to you in great trust, knowing you will guide my steps along the unknown path of this day.*

## - December 7 -

### READ: Isaiah 35

The anticipation of Messiah's coming created joy in the hearts of the Jewish people. On the day God's anointed arrives, the whole cosmos would erupt with singing and joy. Besides delivering them, he would heal them and purify them. Our anticipation of Messiah's second coming should be no less joyous as we contemplate our final rescue, healing, and purification. May the longing for and joy of our Christmas celebration flow into our longing for and joyous hope of Jesus' return.

### REFLECT:

*Watch and pray:*

*The Lord shall come.*

*Those who are longing*

*Await His appearing.*

*Those who listen*

*Await His cry.*

*Watch...Wait...Listen.*

*- Celtic Daily Prayer*

### PRAY:

*Father, all powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. When He humbled himself to come among us, He fulfilled the plan you formed long ago, and opened for us the way of salvation. Now we watch for the day, hoping that the salvation promised us will be ours when Christ will come again in His glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels in heaven, we proclaim your glory and join in their unending hymn of praise:*

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

## - December 8 -

### READ: Luke 1:26-38

Mary waited. An unwed, expectant mother carried the Messiah in her womb. The nine-month wait for a mother—especially a first-time mother—can be difficult. As an unwed mother in first-century Israel with scandal swirling about, the wait could be agony. Add to this Mary's knowledge of who she is carrying and her waiting becomes almost unimaginable. Still, she waited and accepted her divine calling to bear God's Son. As we wait for Christmas, our wait reminds us of the long expectation of God's people for their Messiah and Mary's wait for her divine child. Our waiting should further heighten our anticipation of Mary's Son's return.

### REFLECT:

*Celebrating Advent means being able to wait. Waiting is an art that our impatient age has forgotten. It wants to break open the ripe fruit when it has hardly finished planting the shoot. All too often; the greedy eyes are only deceived; the fruit that seemed so precious is still green on the inside, and disrespectful hands ungratefully toss aside what has so disappointed them. Whoever does not know the austere blessedness of waiting—that is, of hopefully doing without—will never experience the full blessing of fulfillment.*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### PRAY:

*Almighty God, we ask you, grant unto your people grace that they may wait with vigilance for the advent of your Son our Lord, that when He rises from your right hand to visit the earth in righteousness and your people with salvation, He may not find us sleeping in sin, but diligent in your service and rejoicing in your praises, so that we may enter in with Him unto the marriage of the Lamb; through His merits, who lives and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

- A Book of Common Order

## - December 9 -

### READ: Matthew 1:18-25

Faithfulness can be difficult when circumstances turn our world upside down. The lives of Mary and Joseph were thrown into chaos with the event of Mary's pregnancy. Despite their circumstances, Joseph and Mary proved faithful in their obedience to God's plan for using them to bring the Messiah into the world. In our tumultuous world and in life's confusing circumstances, will the coming Messiah find us faithful? This Advent season, let us remember that a baby came long ago not to be an adored infant, but a king to whom we give loyal obedience.

### REFLECT:

*Just when Joseph was despairing over what he thought was Mary's unfaithfulness, he had an angelic visitation of his own. And this intrusive angel did a wonderful thing: he included Joseph in the great plan of God. God has a way of taking even critical bystanders and including them in His universal plan... Joseph married Mary by divine command, and he named Jesus by divine command. When God orders our participation in anything—whether it be something as grand as the Incarnation or as simple as serving in the church—we are made valuable both in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world.*

- Calvin Miller

### PRAY:

*This Advent, we remember Mary and Joseph, giving thanks for their faithfulness, courage and obedience, stepping out into the unknown in the strength of your Spirit, playing their part in the fulfillment of your plan to bring your prodigal people home again. We pray that their example might be the pattern of our lives, that when your gentle whisper breaks through the clamour of this world and into our small corner, we might be ready to listen, and having listened, to act.*

- [www.faithandworship.com/prayers](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers)

- December 10 -

**READ:** John 2:13-22; Matthew 1:23

Ancient Near Eastern people built temples for their gods as places where the presence of their deities would dwell. Israel was no different. She built a temple for the one, true God, Yahweh. This temple was the place of Yahweh's presence. The Jews came to the temple to encounter Yahweh, worship him, and have their sins atoned. An amazing thing happened in Israel's history. A Jewish baby born in Bethlehem grew up and claimed to replace the temple in Jerusalem. In John's gospel, Jesus challenges the corrupt temple system and then claims to be Yahweh's temple, the place of Yahweh's presence. Jesus, not the temple, was where one could now encounter God (John 14:5-14). Through Jesus, not the temple, sins could be forgiven (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus, not the temple, was the center of worship (John 20:26-28). In short, Jesus was where the presence of God resided. How fitting is it that Jesus is identified with the name "Immanuel"—"God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

**REFLECT:**

*Advent season is a time to remember that God showed up among us in the person of Jesus. God is not some distant being whom we have to strive to get close with. God is a personal being who has stooped down to reach out to us. He has made his residence among us. On that first, glorious Christmas, a Temple was born in Bethlehem's manger!*

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the incarnate Deity.  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.*

*- Charles Wesley*

**PRAY:**

*Oh Immanuel, God with us, truly in this Advent season we celebrate that you are not hidden in some faraway cloud, but you chose to be with us in the blur and mystery of our lives. In the midst of lists and rush, you are with us. We turn to you this season and pray that you would birth joy and healing, blessing and hope in us. Let something wonderful begin in us — something surprising and holy. May your hand be upon us. Let your love fill us. Let your joy overwhelm us. Let our longing for you be met on a coming holy night. Immanuel with us once again. Amen.*

*- Jerry Chism*

- *December 11* -

**READ:** Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6

God delights to take the small, the insignificant, and the weak to transform the world. He launched his greatest act of redemption by using a helpless baby (rather than a powerful warrior), born to an inconspicuous couple (rather than to celebrities or the politically powerful), born in an unimportant little town (rather than a major city), and born in a room reserved for the household animals (rather than in a palace nursery). Advent reminds us that God does not require the wealthy, powerful, and popular to achieve his purposes. Advent also reminds us that God can use the weak, poor, and insignificant among us to continue his work of redeeming this world until the second, glorious advent of Jesus.

**REFLECT:**

*Once in royal David's city,  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby,  
In a manger for His bed:  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ, her little Child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And His shelter was a stable,  
And His cradle was a stall:  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.  
For He is our childhood's pattern;  
Day by day, like us, He grew;*

*He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles, like us He knew;  
And He cares when we are sad,  
And He shares when we are glad.*

*And our eyes at last shall see Him,  
Through His own redeeming love;  
For that Child so dear and gentle,  
Is our Lord in heaven above:  
And He leads His children on,  
To the place where He is gone.*

- C.F. Alexander

**PRAY:**

*Almighty God of inexhaustible power and glory, you often accomplish your wondrous plan through our weakness, frailty, poverty, and insignificant status. Grant us grace so we may be faithful in the small, seemingly insignificant tasks and opportunities before us each day, that through them, our lives may anticipate the arrival of our King to consummate your plan in which you have allowed us to play a part; through Jesus, your coming Son, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*

– December 12 –

**READ:** Revelation 12:1-6

We often overlook (or completely miss) John's nativity story in Revelation 12. John's story fulfills the promise God made in Genesis 3:15 that, though a conflict between Satan's seed and Eve's seed would result from the Fall, one day Eve's seed would triumph, crushing the serpent's (Satan's) head. Since the garden conflict, humanity longed for the fulfillment of God's promise to destroy the evil one. The Advent of God's Son was that moment. Satan received a mortal blow with the coming of the one who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter" (v. 5; Psalm 2:9). Our dying enemy still seeks to destroy and harm. We wait in eager hope for the Second Advent of God's Son to finish the job He began that first Christmas.

**REFLECT:**

*A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe,  
His craft and pow'r are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide  
Our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He-  
Lord Sabaoth His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim-  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo! his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly pow'rs,  
No thanks to them-abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still-  
His kingdom is forever. – Martin Luther*

**PRAY:**

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

– Jesus of Nazareth

## - December 13 -

### READ: Philippians 2:5-8

Materialism, especially during the Christmas season, can capture our hearts and lead us away from allegiance to King Jesus. However, we should not allow the plague of materialism to cause us to think the material world is inherently evil. That was one mistake of the early heresy Gnosticism. Christians affirm that God, in the person of Jesus, took on human nature including a material body. The Incarnation of Jesus stands in the center of Christian belief. C. S. Lewis puts it well: "...the Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe and rose again, bringing nature with Him. It is precisely one great miracle. If you take that away, there is nothing specifically Christian left." Advent celebrates our God becoming one of us in order to redeem us. Advent also anticipates the day He will come again "in the flesh" to win final victory over evil and live with us here in the new creation.

### REFLECT:

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.*

- Nicene Creed

### PRAY:

*Almighty and everlasting God, who has given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and be born of a pure virgin; grant that we, being regenerate and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit after the image of this same blessed and glorious Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

- A Book of Common Order

- December 14 -

**READ:** Luke 4:14-21

Reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue, Jesus defined his vocation, the purpose for which he was born. Jesus, the Son of God, came to put the broken, fallen world right. The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the day when God would step in and fix the world with justice, healing, and freedom for those in all sorts of bondage, and bring peace and blessing. Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's words. The birth of the Messiah in David's city began the final stage of God's plan to redeem our lost world. This Advent, while we celebrate the coming of the solution to life's problems, we long for the return of the One who will finally heal our broken hearts, spirits, bodies, relationships, and world.

**REFLECT:**

*Hark! The glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long;  
Let every heart prepare a throne and every voice a song.*

*He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure;  
And with the treasures of His grace to enrich the humble poor.*

*He comes the prisoners to release in Satan's bondage held;  
The gates of brass before Him burst, the iron fetters yield.*

*Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, thy welcome shall proclaim;  
And heav'ns eternal arches ring with thy beloved Name.*

*- Phillip Doddridge*

**PRAY:**

*Sovereign Yahweh, you sent your Son, Jesus, into our corrupt, dysfunctional world to cure its ills, root out and destroy its evil, and bring goodness and peace. This Advent, as we give thanks for the birth of Jesus, we look with expectation for His coming again. So, come quickly King Jesus. Come heal us of all our physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual infirmities. Come free us from the bondage of evil, sin, and death. Come shower us with the blessings of your presence so our joy may be complete. In the name of our Savior, for whose Second Advent we wait, Amen.*

## - December 15 -

### **READ:** Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Matthew 2:1-18; John 1:45

From the words of Deuteronomy 18, the Jewish people came to expect that God would send them a "second Moses" (see John 1:45). Perhaps, like the first Moses, he would serve not only as a prophet, but would be their deliverer. It is not by accident that Matthew draws parallels in his gospel between Jesus and Moses. In chapter two alone we find the infant Jesus' life in danger from the edict of a king. By God's protection, Jesus survives the slaughter of Hebrew baby boys. Jesus "comes out of Egypt." Does this sound familiar? (see Exodus 1:8-2:10; 14) Jesus came as the "new Moses" not merely to fill the role of God's prophet, but to be our deliverer. This Advent, we wait for the return of this "new Moses" to lead us out of the "Egypt" of our present world and take us into the "Promised Land" of His new creation.

### **REFLECT:**

*Law represented God's will, the ultimate standard of life, and the true goal of human nature. Yet many within Judaism knew that the law did not represent the final state of things. It was an interim measure, a staging post on the way to something better. Many waited for the fulfillment of the law – for the culmination of the hopes of Israel in God's anointed one, the Messiah. A new prophet was awaited, who would be as Moses, and know God face to face. A new king was expected, who would restore the fortunes of Israel's great monarch David. A new priest would come, in the line of Aaron, who would finally purge the guilt of his people. . . .*

*The same God who delivered Israel from captivity in Egypt will act again, this time to redeem all his creatures from the limits of their sinful and finite existence. But when will this happen? And in what way? And who will be the new Moses, leading a new people of God to a new promised land?*

- Alister McGrath

### **PRAY:**

*Jesus, you entered our world as a baby. You grew to be a prophet who told us of God's love for us and plan to deliver us from our slavery to the powers of sin. Yet, you were more. You are also our deliverer, our "Moses." The cross is our "Exodus." Thank you for rescuing us and making us your new people. We now wait for your return to lead us into our "Promised Land," your new world to come. Help us to be faithful until that day. Amen.*

## - December 16 -

### READ: Revelation 5:1-5; Genesis 49:8-12; Numbers 24:5-9

Sheep, donkeys, cattle, camels, and even dogs show up in Nativity scenes during Advent. The latter two were definitely not present the first Christmas and likely the others were not in the room with Mary when she gave birth. One animal never portrayed in Nativity scenes did appear that night - a lion! The long-promised Lion of the Tribe of Judah arrived in the person of Jesus. The words of Genesis 49:9 and Numbers 24:9 led later Jews to identify these texts with the Messiah. The Apostle John picks up on that imagery and presents Jesus as the Lion of Judah who has the authority as King to put into effect (that's the meaning of opening the scroll) God's plan of judgment and redemption. During this season, we celebrate the coming of the Lion of Judah and we anticipate His royal return to bring full and final judgment and redemption.

### REFLECT:

*"They say Aslan is on the move . . ."*

*"Who is Aslan?" asked Susan.*

*"Aslan?" said Mr. Beaver. "Why, don't you know? He's the King. He's the Lord of the whole wood, but not often here, you understand... But the word has reached us that he has come back. He is in Narnia at this moment... He'll put all to rights as it says in an old rhyme in these parts:*

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again."*

*"Is - is he a man?" asked Lucy.*

*"Aslan a man!" said Mr. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the great Lion."*

*- C. S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

### PRAY:

*Jesus, Lion of Judah, at your First Advent, you came to redeem this world and put it right. You established your reign as King and provided a place in your kingdom for me. Guide me to understand your role as King over my life. You ask for my obedience. Help me faithfully follow your commands as I wait in expectation for your Second Advent when you will fully restore this fallen world and judge evil once for all. Amen.*

## - December 17 -

### READ: Isaiah 52:7-10

The gospel (“good news”) is the royal proclamation that Jesus is King. We tend to think of the gospel as only a New Testament idea. However, as Isaiah shows us, we find the gospel in the Hebrew Bible, too. Notice the “good news” in Isaiah 52:7 is “Your God reigns.” In other words, Israel’s God, Yahweh, is King. At Advent, we celebrate Yahweh coming in the person of Jesus to once more be King. This gospel was announced by angels to shepherds—“a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah [King]” (Luke 2:11)—and by magi to Herod—“Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2). As we celebrate the birth of our King this Advent season, we need to look forward to His glorious return when we will experience, in full the gospel Isaiah, the angels, and the magi proclaimed. At that time, the “King of Kings” will arrive (Revelation 19:16). So, like the Hebrew people, we wait.

### REFLECT:

*Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild-  
God and sinners reconciled!”*

*Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th’angelic hosts proclaim,  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”*

*- Charles Wesley*

### PRAY:

*O King of all nations, who reigns with perfect wisdom and justice, your royal coming in Bethlehem in ages past anticipates your regal return. Give us the courage to announce your kingship to all whom we meet today, that they may, like the magi, bend their knee in allegiance to you and join with us in looking for your glorious arrival; through Jesus our King, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

## - December 18 -

### READ: Jeremiah 33:14-17; Matthew 1:1-17, 20-21

Genealogies are not the most exciting reading. However, they were of immense importance in the ancient world, especially for tracking royal lines. Matthew 1 presents us with an ancient version of Ancestry.com. Here we find the royal lineage of Joseph and Jesus as descendants of King David. Matthew not only tells us with words that Jesus legally descends from David (a requirement to be Messiah), but he shows us symbolically. Matthew groups the genealogy of Joseph and Jesus into three divisions of 14 ancestors. Also, Matthew places David in the fourteenth position in this genealogy. Why? This is Matthew's way of reinforcing the fact that Jesus descends from King David and thus, has claim upon David's throne. Hebrew letters were assigned a numerical value. Ancient Hebrew contained only consonants, so David's name (transliterated) is DVD. The 'D' had the numerical value of 4; the 'V' had the numerical value of 6. When added (D + V + D), the numerical value of the letters of David's name equaled 14. Thus, the 14 generations and the name of David taking the fourteenth spot in the genealogy. Matthew wanted to make it crystal clear that this Jesus, son of Joseph, son of David, is the Messiah. Perhaps genealogies are a little more interesting than we first thought.

### REFLECT:

*Had anyone ever addressed Joseph—a humble laborer living far from the circles of power in Jerusalem—by the titles of his ancient lineage? Who would think to speak to this common man in the language of a distant ancestry long past and long forgotten? I guess God would. And by identifying Joseph as a child of kings, he also identifies Joseph's calling: to parent the promised heir of David who would rule a new Israel and, at last, bring that people back into a relationship with their God.*

- Sandra Richter

### PRAY:

*Jesus, son of David, though royalty, you came to live as a commoner—like us—and die the death of a criminal. This Advent, we celebrate your life for us and your death for us that we might be redeemed. We worship you as Messiah and the One who fulfills the world's hopes. We watch in eagerness for your glorious return as King of Kings. Blessed be your royal name forever. Amen.*

## - December 19 -

### READ: Luke 2:1-7; Romans 1:1-4

Luke's birth narrative begins with what looks like mere historical context for Jesus' birth. This is true, but it is much more than that. Luke sets up a conflict that will eventually lead to this baby's death three decades later. It will also lead to the deaths of multitudes of His followers – even to this day. The baby King in the manger will threaten the kingdoms of the world, not only the Roman kingdom. Paul is not oblivious to this fact when he opens his letter to Christians living in Caesar's city, Rome. He explicitly announces Jesus by names reserved only for the Roman Emperor: "Son of God," and "Lord." The gospel is that Jesus, the baby in the manger, is the one, true King of the world; Caesar is not. This King who came in humility at His First Advent, will return in glory at His Second Advent.

### REFLECT:

*Augustus was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. He became sole ruler of the Roman world after a bloody civil war in which he overpowered all rival claimants. Augustus, people said, was the 'saviour' of the world. He was its king, its 'lord'. Increasingly in the eastern part of his empire, people worshiped him, too, as a god.*

*Meanwhile, far away, on that same eastern frontier, a boy was born who would within a generation be hailed as 'son of God'; whose followers would speak of him as 'saviour' and 'lord'; whose arrival, they thought, had brought true justice and peace to the world...*

*But the point Luke is making is clear. The birth of this little boy is in the beginning a confrontation between the kingdom of God – in all its apparent weakness, insignificance and vulnerability – and the kingdoms of the world. Augustus never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. But within a century or so his successors in Rome had not only heard of him; they were taking steps to obliterate his followers. Within just over three centuries the Emperor himself became a Christian. When you see the manger on a card, or in church, don't stop at the crib. See what it's pointing to. It is pointing to the explosive truth that the baby lying there is already being spoken of as the true king of the world.*

- N. T. Wright

### PRAY:

*Advent God, we journey with you to Bethlehem's stable and a newborn King, ears attuned to the song of angels, eyes alert for Bethlehem's star. Forgive us on our journey if we are distracted by the tempting offers of this world. Keep our hearts aflame with the hope of Christmas, and the promise of a Saviour. Amen*

- [www.faithandworship.com/prayers](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers)

## - December 20 -

### READ: Ezekiel 34:15-16, 23-24; John 10:11-15; Revelation 7:17

Shortly before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and marched the Jewish people off into exile, Yahweh's presence left the Temple. The prophet Ezekiel describes that departure (Ezekiel 10). With the loss of the presence of Yahweh, Israel had lost everything. But Ezekiel gave the people hope telling them that, one day, Yahweh would return and be their shepherd. A glorious day would come when Yahweh's presence would once more dwell with them. And though the nation would return from exile, and build a second Temple, Yahweh's presence was not there. So they waited. They waited through centuries of turmoil, oppression, and injustice. More than 500 years later, a Galilean prophet would claim to be the shepherd foretold by Ezekiel. Yahweh, in the person of Jesus, was back with His people. Advent is the celebration of the coming of that Shepherd and the looking for His return when we will live in that city named "Yahweh is There" (Ezekiel 34:35).

### REFLECT:

*Not everyone can wait: neither the sated nor the satisfied nor those without respect can wait. The only ones who can wait are people who carry restlessness around with them, and people who look up with reverence to the greatest in the world. Thus Advent can be celebrated only by those whose souls give them no peace, who know they are poor and incomplete, and who sense something of the greatness that is supposed to come, before which they can only bow in humble timidity, waiting until he inclines himself toward us – the Holy One himself, God in the child in the manger. God is coming; the Lord Jesus is coming; Christmas is coming. Rejoice, O Christendom!*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### PRAY:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23)*

## - December 21 -

### READ: Luke 1:68-79; 3:1-6

The priest Zechariah offered up the song we read in Luke 1 after the birth of his son, John. Zechariah praises God for allowing his son to prepare the way for the one whose coming the prophets promised; the one who would rescue God's people and bring salvation to earth. Imagine knowing your son will announce the arrival of the Messiah! The person we know as John the Baptist announced the arrival of the Messiah and his kingdom. He called people to repentance in anticipation of Jesus' ministry. As we wait for the Second Advent of the Messiah, we, too, have the task of calling people to repentance in light of Jesus' return. Imagine knowing that we have the privilege of announcing the Second Coming of the Messiah! We also have the need to prepare ourselves for the arrival of our King and Savior. May He find us faithful when that day comes.

### REFLECT:

*In the wilderness a preacher  
burns our souls like desert sand,  
calling for fruit of repentance,  
says the kingdom is at hand.*

*There is One, says John, who's coming,  
who's the One that we desire.  
He will bathe you, not in Jordan  
but in the Holy Spirit's fire.*

*Prophet, can you help our hearts,  
so hungry for the dream we're waiting for?  
Prophet, can you help us turn  
toward that dawn, toward the open door?*

*Open up the heart to hoping:  
Christ the light that leads to day.  
Hear the message, see the vision,  
as the prophets point the way.*

*Saviour, can you help our hearts,  
still hungry for the dream we're  
waiting for?  
Saviour, help us now to turn  
toward that dawn, toward the  
open door.*

- Andrew King

### PRAY:

*Lord Jesus, forgive us when we live our lives without trusting in your promise that you will come again. Help us to be watchful and prayerful, and living in such a sense of expectation that we use our time modeling our lives on your example. Help us to hear afresh the challenge of John the Baptist to make our lives ready for your coming. May we be filled with an expectancy which causes us to make ourselves ready this Christmas for you to make your home with us. We seek afresh to straighten our crooked paths and make our lives holy places fit for our King. Amen.*

- thisischurch.com

## - December 22 -

### READ: Hebrews 2:10-18

We can only marvel at the wonder of the Incarnation (God taking on human flesh and nature) presented by the author of Hebrews. Unable to atone for their sins, God, in the person of Jesus, stepped into our world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. This is grace! He became one of us to liberate us from the bonds of the evil one. He became the once-for-all sacrifice to atone for our sins, thus allowing us access to the presence of the God who loves us and wants intimacy with us. This is redemption! And in becoming one of us, experiencing life in a fallen world like us, He identifies with us and can help us in our sufferings and temptations. The God of the universe came as a helpless babe, submitted himself to suffering as we do, and died a horrific death to atone for our sins. This is love! This same Jesus who arrived in the manger is once more coming to live with us as one of us—yet this time in a new world where neither “sins nor sorrows grow.”

### REFLECT:

*God became man. Even more, God became a baby — tiny, helpless, fully dependent...The God who made, rules, and upholds the world would now come down into the world. And not as the highest, strongest, and most powerful, but as the smallest, weakest, and most obscure. God was coming not on the clouds, but in a swaddle — fullness of divinity in a diaper.*

*Yes, Jesus was born in less than ideal circumstances — in unimaginable filth and germs by our modern Western standards and preferences. And He was born. That truth alone carries its own mystery and wonder without any added drama. When God came to save those who had sinned against him, He did not ride in on a powerful horse, but in the arms of those He came to save. - Marshall Segal*

### PRAY:

*In this season of expectation, we prepare to welcome Jesus, Messiah. Into the bustle of our lives and the hard to find moments of solitude, we prepare to welcome Jesus, Messiah. Into our homes and situations along with friends and families, we prepare to welcome Jesus, Messiah. Into our hearts, and those often hidden parts of our lives, we prepare to welcome Jesus, Messiah. For beneath the surface of your story is an inescapable fact. You entered this world as vulnerable as any one of us in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross. Our fears, our insecurities and our sins all that can separate us from God exchanged by your Grace for Love. We cannot comprehend the reasoning; only marvel that Salvation comes to us through a baby born in a stable, and reaches out to a world in need. In this season of anticipation, we prepare to welcome Jesus, Messiah.*

- [www.faithandworship.com](http://www.faithandworship.com)

## - December 23 -

### READ: Luke 1:26-38; John 3:16-17; 17:1-5

At the center of Christian belief lies the doctrine of the Trinity—God is one God existing as three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Godhead was involved in the Incarnation. Yes, the Son took on human nature and flesh, but the Father and Holy Spirit were intimately involved at the First Advent, and all through the earthly life of Jesus. It was the Father's plan and sending of the Son to fulfill redemption. The Apostle John makes clear in his gospel (John 3:16-17) that the Father gave up his Son and sent him into the world to save it. Jesus reaffirms the role of the Father sending Him into the world (John 17:1-5). It was the Holy Spirit who miraculously brought conception of Jesus to the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35). So, while God the Son in the manger draws our attention this Advent, we must not neglect the significance of the roles of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in the coming of the Messiah. We also wait for the Son to return again, once more sent by the Father according to his plan to unite with his bride, the Church, who is prepared by the Holy Spirit.

### REFLECT:

*Savior of the nations, come;  
Virgin's Son, here make your home!  
Marvel now, O heaven and earth,  
That the Lord chose such a birth.*

*Not by human flesh and blood,  
By the Spirit of our God  
Was the word of God made flesh,  
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.*

- Martin Luther

### PRAY:

*God the Father, you sent your Son to visit us in time. According to your plan, he came not only to live with us, but to live as one of us in order to redeem us. Thank you for the gift of Jesus who makes it possible to live with you one day.*

*God the Spirit, you brought conception of Jesus upon Mary providing the Son with human nature and flesh. You led and empowered Jesus during his earthly ministry and redeeming death and resurrection. Thank you for the gift of your presence with Jesus, and now with us.*

*God the Son, you came to live among us as a human, experiencing life in this fallen world as we do. You know what it is like to be us. Thank you for your gift of identifying with us, teaching us about your Kingdom, and dying and rising for us so we may experience new life and fellowship with you, the Father, and the Spirit who dwell in perfect unity as the One, eternal God. Amen*

- December 24 -

**READ:** Luke 2:1-20

**REFLECT:**

*Silent night! Holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and Child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night! Holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light;  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.*

- Joseph Mohr

*Silent night! holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born!  
Christ the Savior is born!*

**PRAY:**

*O Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, prostrate before your crib, I believe you are the God of infinite majesty, even though I do see you here as a helpless babe. I humbly adore and thank you for having so humbled yourself for my salvation, as to will to be born in a stable. I thank you for all you did wish to suffer for me in Bethlehem, for your poverty and humility, for your nakedness, tears, cold and sufferings.*

*Would that I could show you that tenderness which your virgin mother had toward you, and love you as she did. Would that I could praise you with the joy of the angels, that I could kneel before you with the faith of Joseph, the simplicity of the shepherds. Uniting myself with these first adorers at the crib, I offer you the homage of my heart, and I beg that you would be born spiritually in my soul. Make me reflect in some degree the virtues of your admirable nativity. Fill me with that spirit of renunciation, of poverty, of humility, which prompted you to assume the weakness of our nature, and to be born amid destitution and suffering. Grant that, from this day forward, I may in all things seek your greater glory, and may enjoy that peace promised to men of good will.*

- Author Unknown

- December 25 -

**READ:** John 1:1-18

Joy to the world! The Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders of His love.

- Isaac Watts

**REFLECT:**

*"Joy to the World! Anyone for whom this sound is foreign, or who hears in it nothing but weak enthusiasm, has not yet really heard the gospel. For the sake of humankind, Jesus Christ became a human being in a stable in Bethlehem: Rejoice, O Christendom! For sinners, Jesus Christ became a companion of tax collectors and prostitutes: Rejoice, O Christendom! For the condemned, Jesus Christ was condemned to the cross on Golgotha: Rejoice, O Christendom! For all of us, Jesus Christ was resurrected to life: Rejoice, O Christendom!...All over the world today people are asking: Where is the path to joy? The church of Christ answers loudly: Jesus is our joy! Joy to the world!"*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**PRAY:**

*Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and to be born this day of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.*

- The Book of Common Prayer

## - December 26 -

Advent season has come and gone—all too quickly for some, not quickly enough for others. As the days now carry us farther from this season of waiting and anticipation, we must not allow our spirit of waiting and anticipation to fade. Jesus' Second Advent is still on the horizon. Might his glorious Second Coming be this year? Like the Jews of old, who waited and longed for their Messiah to come and put the world right, we too, should wait and long for His return – not only during Advent, but all throughout the year. On that wonderful day, wrongs will be righted, evil judged and the faithful vindicated and, best of all, the triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—will dwell with us forever in the new creation!

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*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

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The King shall come when morning dawns and light triumphant breaks,  
When beauty gilds the eastern hills, and life to joy awakes.  
Not as of old a little child, to bear and fight and die,  
But crowned with glory like the sun that lights the morning sky.  
The King shall come when morning dawns, and earth's dark night is past:  
O haste the rising of that morn, the day that aye shall last.  
And let the endless bliss begin, by weary saints foretold,  
When right shall triumph over wrong, and truth shall be extolled.  
The King shall come when morning dawns, and light and beauty brings.  
"Hail, Christ the Lord!" Thy people pray, come quickly, King of kings!

- John Brownlie



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