

Awaiting the Light

An Advent Journey through Scripture



2024 Daily Lectionary Devotional

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Introduction

The Advent season is a time of profound significance in the Christian liturgical calendar, marking the beginning of the church year and ushering in a period of anticipation, reflection, and preparation. Derived from the Latin word “adventus,” meaning “coming” or “arrival,” Advent is a season that invites us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ—both in remembrance of his first coming in the Nativity and in anticipation of his second coming at the end of time. It is a time when we are called to slow down, contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation, and renew our hope in the promises of God.

Advent is a season rich with symbolism and meaning. It spans the four Sundays before Christmas, each week offering a progressive deepening of our spiritual journey. The liturgical color for Advent is traditionally purple, associated with penitence and royalty. It reflects the dual nature of the season: a time of repentance and preparation for the coming King. In some traditions, the third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, is marked by the color rose, symbolizing joy amidst the season’s more somber tones.

The themes of Advent—hope, peace, joy, and love—are central to the Christian faith. They guide our reflection during this time as we prepare to welcome the light of Christ into the world. Each candle of the Advent wreath, lit progressively over the four weeks, represents these themes and serves as a tangible reminder of the light that grows brighter as we draw closer to the celebration of Christmas.

Advent is also a time of waiting. But it is not a passive waiting; it is an active, expectant, and hopeful waiting. We wait for the fulfillment of God’s promises, for the coming of God’s kingdom in its fullness, and for the day when all things will be made new. This waiting shapes our spiritual lives, teaching us patience, deepening our trust in God, and reminding us that, as the Apostle Paul writes, “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11, NRSV).

One of the most meaningful ways to engage with the Advent season is through the discipline of the Daily Lectionary. The Lectionary is a collection of scripture readings assigned for each day of the church year, designed to guide believers through the entirety of scripture systematically and reflectively. By following the Daily Lectionary during Advent, we immerse ourselves in the rich tapestry of biblical texts that speak to the themes of the season—prophecies of the Messiah’s coming, the longing of God’s people for redemption, and the promises of God’s salvation.

The practice of engaging with the Daily Lectionary during Advent is not just about reading scripture; it is about allowing scripture to shape our lives. It invites us into a rhythm of daily encounters with God's Word, providing stillness and reflection amid what can often be a hurried and chaotic time of year. As we meditate on the assigned passages, we are reminded that Advent is not merely a countdown to Christmas but a journey of spiritual preparation.

This discipline helps us cultivate an attitude of attentiveness to the movement of the Holy Spirit, the deeper meaning of the season, and how God is at work in our lives and the world. It encourages us to slow down, listen, and respond to God's call with open hearts.

Moreover, the Daily Lectionary connects us with the broader Christian community. Knowing that Christians worldwide are reading and reflecting on the same scriptures daily creates a sense of unity and shared purpose. It reminds us that we are part of a larger story that stretches back through the centuries and will continue until the fulfillment of all things in Christ.

As we journey through Advent with the guidance of the Daily Lectionary, our hearts are gradually transformed. The season's emphasis on waiting, repentance, and hope leads us to a deeper understanding of God's love and grace. We become more aware of the light dawning in our lives and the world, a light that no darkness can overcome.

Advent calls us to be countercultural. While the world rushes ahead to Christmas with its commercialism and consumerism, Advent invites us to slow down, wait, and prepare. It teaches us that true joy and peace are found not in the season's busyness but in the quiet moments of reflection and deepening our relationship with God.

As we light the Advent candles, read the scriptures, and pray and reflect each day, we are drawn closer to the mystery of the Incarnation—the Word made flesh, dwelling among us. We are reminded that God's promises are true, that God is faithful, and that, even in the darkest times, Christ's light shines bright.

In this booklet, "Awaiting the Light: An Advent Journey through Scripture," you are invited to embark on this journey of preparation and anticipation. Through the discipline of the Daily Lectionary, may our hearts be stirred with hope, our spirits be filled with peace, our lives be marked by joy, and our souls be enveloped in God's love. May this Advent season be a time of profound spiritual renewal as we await the coming of the Light.

November 28: Trust in God's Guidance

Biblical Passage: Psalm 25:1-10 (NRSV)

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Reflection

The psalmist lifts his soul to God, expressing deep trust in God's guidance. Psalm 25 reminds us of the importance of relying on God's wisdom and mercy in a world of distractions and uncertainties. As we begin the Advent season, we are invited to follow God's paths, which lead to truth, mercy, and steadfast love.

Prayer

Lead us in your truth, O God, and teach us to trust in your guidance. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Trust in God's guidance is a journey of faith and hope.

November 29: Living in the Light

Biblical Passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (NRSV)

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Reflection

Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians encourages them to live in a way that honors God, maintaining a spirit of joy, prayer, and gratitude. As we prepare for Christ's coming, we, too, are called to live in the light, embracing a lifestyle of constant readiness and openness to God's will. Advent is a time to renew our commitment to holy living.

Prayer

God of light, help us to live in a way that reflects your love and grace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Living in the light of God transforms our hearts and minds.

November 30: Watching and Waiting

Biblical Passage: Luke 21:20-24 (NRSV)

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Reflection

Jesus speaks of great distress and tribulation, yet he also calls for vigilance and readiness. In Advent, we are reminded that waiting for Christ's return involves an active posture of watchfulness. We must be aware of the signs of the times, not in fear but in hope, trusting that God's purposes will be fulfilled.

Prayer

Keep us watchful, O God, as we await the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Watchfulness expresses faith in God's promises.

December 1: Signs of Hope

Biblical Passage: Luke 21:25-36 (NRSV)

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Reflection

The imagery of cosmic signs and distress is contrasted with the assurance that redemption is drawing near. In Advent, we look for signs of hope in our world, knowing that God's salvation is at work even in chaos. Christ's coming is a beacon of hope that invites us to lift our heads in anticipation of God's transformative power.

Prayer

Give us eyes to see your signs of hope, O God, and hearts ready to receive your salvation. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Hope shines brightest amid darkness.

December 2: God's Promises Fulfilled

Biblical Passage: 2 Peter 3:1-15a (NRSV)

This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Reflection

Peter reminds the early Christians of God's patience and faithfulness in fulfilling promises. The delay of Christ's return is not a cause for doubt but an invitation to live holy and godly lives as we wait. Advent is a time to reflect on God's promises, trusting they will be fulfilled in God's perfect timing.

Prayer

Strengthen our faith, O God, as we trust in fulfilling your promises. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's promises are sure and steadfast, even in the waiting.

December 3: A Prayer for the King

Biblical Passage: 2 Samuel 7:18-29 (NRSV)

Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD; you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people, O Lord GOD! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know it. Therefore you are great, O LORD God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself, doing great and awesome things for them, by driving out before his people nations and their gods? And you established your people Israel for yourself to be your people forever; and you, O LORD, became their God. And now, O LORD God, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, confirm it forever; do as you have promised. Thus your name will be magnified forever in the saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant; now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you; for you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

Reflection

David's prayer is a profound response to God's covenant promise of an eternal dynasty. In Advent, we recall the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus, the King of Kings. Like David's, our prayers are rooted in gratitude and trust in God's covenantal love as we anticipate the coming of Christ's reign.

Prayer

May our hearts be filled with gratitude, O God, as we await the coming of our King. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Gratitude shapes our prayers as we await God's kingdom.

December 4: Refining Fire

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 1:24-31 (NRSV)

Therefore says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes! I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you delighted; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. The strong shall become like tinder, and their work like a spark; they and their work shall burn together, with no one to quench them.

Reflection

Isaiah's prophecy describes a refining process in which God purifies and restores the people. Advent is a season of preparation, where we open ourselves to God's refining work in our lives. As we await Christ's coming, we seek to be purified to stand in God's presence with hearts made clean.

Prayer

Purify our hearts, O God, and prepare us for your coming. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's refining fire prepares us for the fullness of life in Christ.

December 5: The Dawn from on High

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:68-79 (NRSV)

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Reflection

Zechariah's prophecy celebrates the coming of the Savior, who will bring light to those in darkness. In Advent, we rejoice in the dawn from on high that visits us in Christ, bringing guidance, peace, and salvation. Our hearts are filled with hope as we prepare to receive this light anew.

Prayer

Shine your light upon us, O God, and guide us toward peace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Christ's light dispels our lives' darkness.

December 6: To Live is Christ

Biblical Passage: Philippians 1:18b-26 (NRSV)

Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Reflection

Paul's words express a deep commitment to living for Christ, whether in life or death. Advent calls us to this same radical devotion, where our lives are centered on Christ's presence and purpose. As we await Christ's coming, we find our true life in him, living each day as an offering to God.

Prayer

May our lives reflect your love, O Christ, as we await your coming. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Living for Christ is our highest calling and profound joy.

December 7: Sent to Proclaim

Biblical Passage: Luke 9:1-6 (NRSV)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Reflection

Jesus sends the twelve with power and authority to proclaim the kingdom of God. In Advent, we, too, are sent as messengers of this kingdom, sharing the good news of Christ's coming. Our mission is to bring healing, hope, and the message of salvation to a world in need.

Prayer

Empower us, O God, to proclaim your kingdom with boldness and love. Amen.

Thought for the Day

We are called and sent to be bearers of God's kingdom.

December 8: Preparing the Way

Biblical Passage: Luke 3:1-6 (NRSV)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Reflection

John the Baptist's call to prepare the way of the Lord echoes through the ages, inviting us to make straight paths for Christ's coming. Advent is a time of preparation, where we examine our hearts, repent, and make room for the Savior. The wilderness of our lives is transformed as we welcome the Lord.

Prayer

Prepare our hearts, O God, to receive your Son with joy and expectation. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Preparing the way for Christ to transform our lives.

December 9: Comfort My People

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 40:1-11 (NRSV)

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Reflection

The prophet Isaiah brings comfort and hope to a weary people. Advent is a season where we, too, hear God's words of comfort, assuring us of God's presence and care. As we await Christ's coming, we are called to be agents of comfort and hope in our world.

Prayer

Comfort us, O God, and make us instruments of your peace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's comfort sustains us as we wait for Christ's coming.

December 10: A Sign of Unity

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 19:18-25 (NRSV)

On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun. On that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them. On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

Reflection

Isaiah's vision of Egypt and Assyria worshiping alongside Israel powerfully represents unity in God's kingdom. In Advent, we long for the day when all nations will unite in worship, united by Christ. This vision challenges us to work for peace and reconciliation, preparing for the day of Christ's reign.

Prayer

Unite us, O God, in your love as we await the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's kingdom is a place of unity and peace for all people.

December 11: Strengthen the Weak

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 35:3-7 (NRSV)

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Reflection

Isaiah's prophecy speaks of strengthening the weak and fearful, promising a time of healing and restoration. Advent reminds us that Christ comes to bring healing to our broken world. As we prepare for his coming, we are called to be agents of strength and healing, embodying Christ's love to those in need.

Prayer

Strengthen our hearts, O God, and make us vessels of your healing grace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Christ's coming brings healing and strength to the weary.

December 12: Joy in Salvation

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 12:2-6 (NRSV)

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Reflection

Isaiah's song is one of joy and thanksgiving for the salvation God provides. In Advent, we are invited to rejoice in the salvation that Christ brings, a joy that flows from the wells of God's grace. This season is a time to celebrate the deep and abiding joy that comes from knowing we are loved and saved by God.

Prayer

Fill our hearts with joy, O God, as we rejoice in your salvation. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The joy of salvation is a gift that sustains us in all seasons.

December 13: A Famine for Hearing

Biblical Passage: Amos 8:4-12 (NRSV)

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat." The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who lives in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt? On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and from, seeking the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.

Reflection

The prophet Amos warns of a time when there will be a famine, not of bread, but of hearing the words of the Lord. Advent challenges us to be attentive to God's word, to listen deeply, and to act on what we hear. In a world filled with noise, we are called to make space for God's voice, allowing it to guide and sustain us.

Prayer

Open our ears, O God, to hear your word and respond in faith. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Listening to God's word is essential to living a faithful life.

December 14: The Birth of John

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:57-66 (NRSV)

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Reflection

The birth of John the Baptist is a moment of great joy and wonder as God's promises begin to unfold in the lives of Elizabeth and Zechariah. Advent is a time of expectancy, where we watch for how God works. Like John's birth, the arrival of Christ brings new beginnings and hope to our lives.

Prayer

Help us recognize your works, O God, and rejoice in fulfilling your promises. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's promises bring new life and hope.

December 15: Bearing Fruit

Biblical Passage: Luke 3:7-18 (NRSV)

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Reflection

John the Baptist calls the crowds to repentance, urging them to bear fruits worthy of repentance. Advent is a season of introspection, where we examine our lives and seek to align our actions with God's will. Bearing fruit is the evidence of a life transformed by God's grace, a life that reflects the coming kingdom.

Prayer

Transform our hearts, O God, and help us to bear fruit that honors you. Amen.

Thought for the Day

True repentance is revealed in the fruits of our actions.

December 16: The Peaceable Kingdom

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 11:1-9 (NRSV)

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Reflection

Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom, where even natural enemies live in harmony, is a powerful image of God's future reign. We long for peace and all creation to live in harmony in Advent. This vision inspires us to work for peace and justice, anticipating the day Christ's kingdom will be fully realized.

Prayer

Grant us your peace, O God, and help us to be peacemakers in our world. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's kingdom is a place of peace and harmony for all creation.

December 17: Bold Witness

Biblical Passage: Acts 28:23-31 (NRSV)

After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, 'Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.' Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Reflection

Even while under house arrest, Paul's bold witness to the kingdom of God reminds us of the power of the gospel. Advent calls us to be bold in our witness, sharing the good news of Christ's coming with courage and conviction. Advent is one of hope and salvation, a message we are called to proclaim to the ends of the earth.

Prayer

Empower us, O God, to be bold witnesses of your love and grace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

A bold witness to the gospel brings light to a needy world.

December 18: Wisdom's Call

Biblical Passage: Luke 7:31-35 (NRSV)

"To what then will I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.' For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

Reflection

Jesus critiques those who reject both John the Baptist and himself, likening them to children who do not respond to the calls of others. Advent is a time to heed the call of wisdom and recognize how God is speaking to us through the prophets' voices and Christ's teachings. We are invited to respond with open hearts and minds.

Prayer

Give us ears to hear, O God and hearts to respond to your call. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's wisdom calls us to listen and respond with faith.

December 19: A New Covenant

Biblical Passage: Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSV)

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Reflection

Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant written on the hearts of God’s people. In Advent, we celebrate the fulfillment of this covenant in Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection have brought us into a new relationship with God. This covenant is marked by forgiveness, love, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Write your covenant on our hearts, O God, and help us to live as your people. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The new covenant in Christ transforms our relationship with God.

December 20: Restore Us, O God

Biblical Passage: Psalm 80:1-7 (NRSV)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Reflection

The psalmist cries out for restoration, pleading with God to shine God's face upon the people. Advent is a season of longing, where we seek God's presence and restoration in our lives and the world. As we await Christ's coming, we echo the psalmist's prayer for God's light to shine upon us, bringing healing and renewal.

Prayer

Restore us, O God, and let your face shine so we may be saved. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's restoration brings healing and hope.

December 21: A Mother's Joy

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 66:7-11 (NRSV)

Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be delivered in one moment? Yet as soon as Zion was in labor she delivered her children. Shall I open the womb and not deliver? says the LORD; shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb? says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her—that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.

Reflection

Isaiah uses the imagery of a mother giving birth to describe the joy of Jerusalem's restoration. In Advent, we reflect on the joy that comes with the birth of Christ, a deep and abiding joy. This joy is not just for us but is shared with all creation as we celebrate the arrival of God's salvation.

Prayer

Fill our hearts with the joy of your coming, O God, and help us to share it with others. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The joy of Christ's coming is a gift for all creation.

December 22: Magnificat

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:46b-55 (NRSV)

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

Reflection

Mary's song, the Magnificat, is a powerful expression of praise and prophetic hope. In Advent, we join Mary in magnifying the Lord, rejoicing in God's mercy and justice. Her song reminds us that God lifts the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. As we await Christ's coming, we are called to embody this hope in our own lives.

Prayer

May our souls magnify you, O God, and may our lives reflect your mercy and justice. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's mercy lifts the lowly and brings justice to the world.

December 23: The Image of the Invisible God

Biblical Passage: Colossians 1:15-20 (NRSV)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Reflection

Paul's hymn in Colossians speaks of Christ as the image of the invisible God, the one through whom all things were created. In Advent, we celebrate the mystery of the incarnation, where the invisible God becomes visible in the person of Jesus Christ. This season invites us to gaze upon the face of Christ and see the fullness of God's love and grace.

Prayer

Reveal yourself to us, O God, in the face of Christ, that we may know you more fully. Amen.

Thought for the Day

In Christ, we see the fullness of God's love and grace.

December 24: The Light Has Come

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 9:2-7 (NRSV)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Reflection

Isaiah's prophecy of a great light shining in the darkness finds its fulfillment in the birth of Christ. On this Christmas Eve, we rejoice in the light that has come into the world, which dispels all darkness. As we celebrate Christ's birth, we are reminded that this light is a beacon of hope and salvation for all people.

Prayer

Shine your light in our hearts, O God, and let it guide us to the manger of your Son. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The light of Christ shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

December 25: The Messenger of Peace

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 52:7-10 (NRSV)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Reflection

On Christmas Day, we celebrate the messenger's arrival who brings good news and proclaims peace and salvation. The birth of Christ is the ultimate declaration of God's peace for the world. As we celebrate, we are called to be messengers of this peace, sharing the good news of God's love with all.

Prayer

Fill us with your peace, O God, and send us out as your messengers of love and grace. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The birth of Christ is the ultimate message of peace for all humanity.