



*Seeking
God's Face*

Praying with the Bible
through the Year

Seeking God's Face

Praying with the Bible
Through the Year

Written and compiled by Philip F. Reinders

Foreword by Eugene H. Peterson

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Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year

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For Owen and Lily—
answers to prayer and sources of many more—
may the gladness of the gospel make your lives a living prayer

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FOREWORD



“Wendy, do you ever pray?”

She shook her head negatively. “No. Never.” Then a shy, self-deprecating smile played at the edges of her lips. “Sometimes I wish upwards.”

I didn’t know Wendy very well. I had married her and Jacob, a young man who was a member of my congregation, six months earlier. I met with them three or four times for conversations about marriage and their understanding and expectations of it. I remembered that Wendy was quite open about having no Christian commitment and only the sketchiest acquaintance with church. They were both immature. I asked them if and when they found difficulties in their relationship that they come back and talk with me.

Now she was back. I hadn’t seen her or Jacob since the day of the wedding. Things were not going well with their marriage; I wasn’t surprised. I suggested a marriage counselor that I trusted.

“Wendy, marriage is wonderful but complex, and being human is complex—a lot of things can go wrong. You and Jacob aren’t doing too well on your own. Dr. Shelly would be a good companion with you as you learn how to understand and give yourselves to one another. You probably ought to think in terms of several months.”

She wanted me to tell her what she could do on her own. She wasn’t interested in “several months.” I never saw her again.

But her sentence, “Sometimes I wish upwards,” stayed with me. It burrowed into my imagination and has lodged there ever since as a wonderful naming of what I began to think of as “pre-prayer”—a spontaneous response “upwards” out of the self-enclosed nature to meaning or fulfillment, or, who knows, God?

“Sometimes I wish upwards” is a nudge towards prayer, an opening crack of a door into mystery, a seed that if nurtured could soon

become prayer. I am convinced that everyone wishes upwards sometimes, maybe even often. The wish upwards is evidence, I've come to think, that everyone has the stuff within them, the capacity, even the longing, to be a person of prayer. But also, more often than not, nothing comes of it. The wish has no root in relationship, in language, in love, in God.

The life of prayer doesn't start from scratch. The wish upwards is evidence of a readiness to pray. But how do we get from wish to prayer? How do we get the elusive, wispy, insubstantial wish embodied into actual prayer?

This book, *Seeking God's Face*, is one way. The Christian community in every generation has written and published daily prayer books to accomplish this transition among men and women, followers of Jesus, who want their relation with God and their family and friends and neighbors to be something more than a wish upwards.

Daily prayer books take different forms and enter into different cultures and times, but most of them share certain essential characteristics that provide congenial conditions for developing a life of mature prayer, no longer praying by fits and starts, "clouds without rain . . . autumn trees, without fruit . . . wild waves of the sea . . . wandering stars . . ." (Jude 12-13).

Seeking God's Face melds prayer and Scripture into a companionable guide for becoming a participant—both listening and speaking—in the great salvation conversation that is the Christian gospel.

Prayer. Prayer is as natural and simple as language itself. The only difference between prayer and our mother tongue as we commonly use it is that in prayer God is a major voice. We all learn language without formal instruction. We are wondrously created with all the bodily parts in throat and mouth and ears that are necessary to speak and listen. A prayer book respects this basic and elementary at-home-ness, this aptitude that we all have for prayer. A prayer book is not a book about prayer, not an explanation of prayer, not a theological essay on prayer. It is prayers, usually brief, to be prayed.

Prayer is a natural and authentic substratum of language. But there is irony here: prayer, language at its most honest, is also the easiest form of language to fake. We discover early on that we can pretend to pray, use the words of prayer, practice the forms of prayer, assume postures of prayer, acquire a reputation for prayer, and never pray. Our “prayers,” so called, become a camouflage to cover up a life of nonprayer.

Set prayers are prayers provided for us to keep our praying in company with our ancestors, prayers of others so that we stay in touch with the authentic world of prayer revealed in our Scriptures. They are prayers that we can use to distinguish prayer from prayer impostors, fantasy, and magic. They are prayers that do not depend on our own initiative, prayers that don't wax and wane according to the phases of our moods.

In my home, a great deal of our common life is integrated into preparing meals, considering the tastes and circumstances of those who will be present, setting the table, eating the meal, cleaning up after the meal. No single meal is quite like another. They are many variables: the kinds of food that make up the meal, which members of the family will be there, guests that we anticipate. We enjoy the work. But occasionally we run out of energy and imagination. When that happens, we drive a few miles to a favorite restaurant in order to have someone else do it for us: shop for the food and prepare it, set the table, serve the meal, clear the table, and wash the dishes. A “set” meal: someone else whom we trust does it all for us. All we have to do is pick up the fork that has been set before us, eat the meal that has been set in place, and leave the cleanup to others.

When we are young children, all our meals are set meals, set before us without thought or preparation on our part. Gradually we learn to do it for ourselves and for others as we grow up. But it is still nice to have someone do the work for us when we are tired or without appetite. The analogy to prayer is not exact but it is close enough in this context.

The classic set prayers for Christians and Jews are the psalms. And the most prayed prayer in the church is a set prayer, the Lord's Prayer: “Pray then like this . . .”

Scripture. All prayer is language—language in conversation, conversation between God and us. The most frequent distortion of prayer takes place when we fail to listen to God’s word to us. We do all the talking, demanding that God do all the listening.

Scripture provides the major way in which God speaks to us. Scripture is a huge story with many voices, but the primary voice is God’s voice. God has the first word. If we are going to get the story straight, it is important that we let God have the first word, and really listen; I mean *really* listen. Jesus’ story of the soils is a story about prayer: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

So if listening is required, silence is indispensable. Silence is a commonly overlooked element of language in general, but it must not be. Especially it must not be overlooked in the language of prayer. It is not as if the Old Testament prophets and poets and the New Testament apostles and Jesus—mainly Jesus, “the Word made flesh”—speak the revelation of God to us, and now in prayer we get to say our piece. Silence in prayer, which consists mostly in attentive listening, is nonnegotiable. Listening, which necessarily requires silence on our part, is as much a part of language as words. The colon and the semicolon, the comma and the period—all of which insist on silence as part and parcel of speech—are as essential to language as nouns and verbs. But more often than not, silence gets short shrift in our prayers. Yet if there is no silence, our speech degenerates into babble.

“But God doesn’t answer. Why don’t I get any answer?” It is the most frequent complaint regarding prayer. The obvious response is “Are you listening? Have you spent as much time listening as you have speaking?”

Only out of disciplined, quiet, attentive listening is it possible then to answer God’s speech in free prayers, unscripted—not “set” this time—prayers responding to the story. We can respond as participants, as we experience our story being assimilated into God’s story. “Let your Bibles become all autobiographical” is the way one pastor, Alexander Whyte, put it.

For Scripture is not basically a book of information in which we learn about “the furniture of heaven and the temperature of hell.” It is not for the most part a history book in which we learn all about

the cultures of the ancient East. And it certainly is not a science text in which we are instructed in the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It is a conversation between God and God's people—us. God creating us and God saving us, while we are given generous time to speak our belief and doubt, our praise and pain—whatever—and while we take our place in this marvelous story that comes together in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

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INTRODUCTION



We are creatures of habit. Knowingly, perhaps mostly instinctively, we crave and create meaningful patterns to our living. It's so mundane we miss it—three religiously observed, square meals, meticulous hygiene rhythms, the morning ritual of making and savoring the first cup of coffee, a kiss to loved ones as you head out the door, habitual email checks, the exercise regimen or daily walk, watching the evening news or catching up online. All are pieces to the daily puzzle of ordering our days, and we notice when one is missing.

Like the God who created us, we nail down the disorder of our day into a framework of meaning. We simply can't enjoy the freedom of life without a form, some skeletal structure on which to hang the flesh of our days. This dynamic operates not only in everyday living but also as we walk out our faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer is an essential part of that faith, communing with the God we love. But a frustrated prayer life has to rank as one of the more universal Christian experiences. What's behind this struggle? We're not opposed to prayer; we have plenty of need to pray to God; we're interested. Yet so few of us pray well.

Part of our struggle is that we lack a suitable form for praying. Many of us have picked up the idea that only spontaneous prayers are authentic, that we can't use the words of someone else to honestly pray to God. We figure prayer should be like musical improvisation, something spontaneous and free. Of course, only the most accomplished musicians can improvise, after mastering the musical forms and structures that set in place the foundation for improvisation. Likewise in prayer, we find a freedom and depth in our communion with God as we learn the words and forms that help us commune with God. For beginners in prayer (including most of us), we need to develop an adequate way to carry our prayers to God.

But there's more to our struggle with the practice of prayer. The simple truth is we've oriented our lives around other practices. We've already created a form for our lives and have conformed our living to work deadlines, the pace of parenting, school schedules, media rhythms, and soccer practices. These can be good, and yet the pattern of this world can sabotage a life of prayer—and to live without prayer is to be deformed, no longer conformed to Christ.

But all is not lost. We've at least shown the capacity to form some habits, to practice regular routines. The beginnings of a healthy life of prayer are sometimes found in understanding the habit or practice-nature of much of the Christian life.

Part of God's salvation work in us is to conform our lives to the likeness of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 8:29). Following Jesus, the Way, involves finding and living a new way of life. Conversion is a change of mind as well as practice, a new direction and new habit of being.

Living as a disciple of Jesus is nothing less than a new way of thinking and believing, and yet it is so much more. Christian beliefs open up a whole new world, the kingdom of God. How do we step into and inhabit the kingdom of God? We need a *habitus*, a Jesus way of being, a Christ way of life. And that *habitus*, or way, is composed of regular habits and practices that give intentional and embodied shape to our living.

One of the most basic Christian practices as we live into God's kingdom and live out the way of Jesus is that of a regular prayer rhythm. *Seeking God's Face* is a guide to developing and practicing the habit of daily prayer through a fixed, common prayer.

Let me explain that a bit, because it might be new to some. For many of us, prayer is a clearly defined activity—it's what you do when you close your eyes, fold your hands, and silently speak to God. But Christian prayer can be a far richer conversation with God, a back-and-forth exchange of speaking and listening, through Scripture, quiet listening, and personal address.

For centuries, Christians have practiced a form of prayer called a "daily office." The office is the practice of praying at fixed times throughout the day, most fully developed in Benedictine monas-

teries as a way to structure the day around prayer. There were seven separate times of prayer, centered on Scripture and set prayers. Variations of these offices have been developed over the years, including vesper services, books of common prayer, or even mealtime prayers or devotions. All are forms of this prayer office, a way to get prayer into the rhythm of our daily lives.

This book flows out of that practice, but in a much simplified form, using a fixed and common prayer meant to be prayed once per day at a time of your choosing (more on how to use this prayer book later). But let's think about this practice—a fixed and common conversation with God—and how it might shape our lives.

Fixed—that the prayers are fixed means they are to be prayed at a certain time of the day (that's yours to figure out). At some time in our heavily scheduled lives, we choose to set aside time from our activity to commune with God. We are so shaped by our clocks and calendars that we're easily persuaded our days are measured by the physics of planetary revolutions and rotations around the sun. By setting aside a fixed time to pray, we interrupt our regular rhythms, reminding ourselves that our lives are oriented around the Son, Jesus Christ, that life is measured by grace and shaped by the life of Jesus.

"Fixed" also refers to set Scriptures and prayers. Many of us are not familiar with using set prayers, preferring extemporaneous praying. But sometimes we just feel flat, like there is nothing flowing in our hearts. Does that mean we can't pray? Is our relationship with God dictated by our feelings? No. We can allow Scripture passages we didn't choose and the words of others to lead us deeper into communion with God.

Common—our culture is so deeply formed by an individualistic ethos, which has imprinted our faith as well. We're pretty much convinced we can follow Jesus solo, that our individual spiritual experience is paramount to our faith. A practice of common prayer, sharing words with other Jesus followers (who may not be physically present but are praying the same Scripture and prayers on the same day) begins to root us more deeply in Christian community. Common prayer interrupts our privatized faith and reminds us

that we can't do this alone, that we find ourselves in the company of others who share this journey with Jesus.

Conversation with God—how often do we fly through the day without a thought towards God or how faith might intersect our living? A practice of intentionally setting aside time and space presses the pause button on the blur of busyness to open a space and time to seek God's face. It expresses, in an embodied way, our intention to live life in the presence of God. In our prayers we bring our lives to God and pay attention to God's Word, listening for the living voice of God in the Bible, allowing it to read our lives.

This is all for a larger purpose. You don't practice scales simply for the joy of hearing them; you practice to play beautiful music. We practice prayer so that we might know and follow Jesus, which is, of course, to be out in the world, engaged in God's mission. That task is sometimes difficult and demanding, and a regular practice of prayer keeps us alive and well while we serve the world in the name of Jesus.

My secret hope is for this prayer book to be part of a resurgence in God's mission, to help catalyze a new order of sent Jesus-people, shaped by God and living out the good news of the kingdom in their local communities. I'm praying and hoping that a renewed practice of prayer, along with many other of the Christian spiritual practices, will be conduits for the explosive power of the gospel, for a renewed commitment and energy for Christ and his cause.

HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER BOOK



Each day of prayer contains a number of different elements—an invitation into God’s presence, times of quiet, Scripture, free prayer, a set prayer, and a closing blessing. All of this is meant to be experienced as prayer. We may not be used to this way of praying, but think of it as an extended conversation with God—God invites you to be with him; you quietly enjoy his presence, listen to his Word, and respond to him with the reality of your life; and God sends you with his blessing.

Of course, there is freedom within this form. Centuries ago English cleric William Law captured the right balance between our need of a form for prayer and yet the freedom we can enjoy in prayer to follow promptings from the Holy Spirit. His helpful direction is that most “Christians ought to use forms of prayer at all the regular times of prayer. It seems right for every one to begin with a form of prayer. If, in the midst of his devotions, he finds his heart ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotions, he should leave his form for a while and follow those fervors of his heart, till it again wants the assistance of his usual petitions.”¹

I’ve attempted to make daily prayer simple. That doesn’t mean easy, just uncomplicated. I’ve often been frustrated with more complex and liturgical prayer books that require flipping pages, finding the right dates, and hunting down portions of Scripture. The mechanics of such over-involved praying became a barrier to actual prayer for me. I’ve tried to avoid that in this book and have everything you need for one day’s prayer on one page.

I’m assuming that most of us don’t have the luxury of stopping several times a day for fixed prayer. Instead, I’ve tried to create a simple office that can be prayed in one session. The time you take can vary, but I hope that you’ll leisurely enjoy God’s presence;

¹ William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1948), p. 91.

don't race through it, but linger with God. I'd suggest you start by carving out twenty minutes for each day. But see how you might expand that time, enjoying the quiet, dwelling in God's Word. And do think about setting up a regular time to pray. Pick out the time of day when you are most alert and available to God.

I imagine you will do this privately, on your own. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you won't be distracted. But consider this hopeful thought—there may be many others who will be praying with you. If we all pray this daily office together, we may do so privately and yet be connected as a wide community of prayer. Perhaps it might be good to find a local group of people to form a small community centered on praying this office together. You can pray it on your own and yet know that each person is also praying the same prayers and meditating on the same Scriptures—that might help shape coffee conversations or online chats you have throughout the week.

On a macro level, the prayer book follows the seasons and celebrations of the Christian calendar—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time (there's a brief introduction to each season at the beginning of that particular section). The intention in following this calendar is to mark our time with Jesus, taking our lives and placing them in the story of Jesus, allowing the shape and rhythm of his life to shape our days.

You'll notice a box near the beginning of each prayer entry. Since Christian seasons and holidays are not bound to our calendar, they move around from year to year. The box is a simple way for you to find the corresponding calendar date on which to pray your daily prayer.

Within each of the seasons, each day of prayer is a complete “office” to pray. Each day contains a number of elements for you to pray with, either quietly or aloud. Again, consider the whole time as prayer, a gentle conversation with the God who loves you.

Invitation: we begin our prayers invited into God's presence, welcomed into all the reality of the kingdom, of which we are so often unaware. The invitation is a way to open ourselves to the greater gospel reality, to become mindful of God's presence.

Quiet: there are two specific places where you're encouraged to quiet your heart and mind, to enjoy stillness before God. We hardly know what to do with silence in our wired world, with constant communications intruding into our lives. For us to hear God's voice, we must regularly practice silence. Cultivating a stilled, attentive heart before God and quieting down actual noise and internal noise is a vital step in preparing to hear God's voice. You can start with a brief period of silence, but experiment and challenge yourself with longer times of quiet.

Bible Song: each day there will be a psalm to pray. The Psalms have always been the prayer book of God's people—the "school of prayer," as Augustine called them, teaching us to respond to God. We'll be praying a different psalm each day, working our way through the 150 psalms twice in one year. During some seasons, however, we'll focus on a few specific psalms for the season.

Allow the psalm to speak for you or expand your worship of God. There will be times when a psalm does not match or connect with your immediate experience—you may hit a psalm of praise during a difficult time, a lament on a spring day bursting with life. Allow the psalm to move you beyond your immediate reality and experience, deeper into God's reality. And remember you are praying with a wide community of Christians—a specific day's psalm may not fit your circumstance, but it is expressing someone else's experience. Perhaps someone in your church or neighborhood is going through what the psalm is expressing. And it's likely something you'll go through one day, so go to school now and learn how to respond to God with a full range of emotion.

Bible Reading: every day has a further reading from the Bible, a word from God. The Bible readings will follow the particular season, allowing us to read through the story of God's salvation. This is not a time to exegete the text or to read it for information, but to listen for God's voice for you, to allow God's Word to address your life.

Dwelling: this part of the prayer time may be a new way for you to encounter God's Word and listen for his voice. It's rooted in the ancient Christian tradition called *lectio divina*, which is simply a way to read the Bible, slowly, contemplatively, and leisurely, not

seeking information but to hear the personal address of God. *Lectio divina* assumes that prayer is a two-way conversation and enables us to dialogue with Jesus by hearing and responding to the Word of God.

We're used to studying the Bible, analyzing it for truths to understand or mining it for lessons to live out, but we are mostly unschooled in listening to it. The goal of *lectio divina* is to grow in companionship with God, to be a personal participant in the story of God, lovingly listening for God's Word, allowing the text to get into us and read our lives.

How does that happen? Each day there are a series of brief instructions to lead you through this way of listening to Scripture. But let me offer a quick overview.

First, quiet yourself so that you can hear God. Then simply read the Scripture, preferably aloud and slowly. As you do this, listen for the word that addresses you—a word, thought, phrase, or image that grabs your attention, that jumps off the page for you. Don't analyze it or study it, but simply receive this word. (Turn aside any doubts about whether this is God or your imagination; trust that God desires to be in conversation with you and is addressing you.) Then read through the same passage again and listen for the way this word connects with your life. Reflect on how God is addressing your life. Next, enter into conversation with God. Honestly offer to him any feelings this text has surfaced in you, any resistance you feel, any comfort you sense. Ask Jesus, "Why did you give me this word today?" And then, finally, let this word sink deep into your life. Yield yourself to God's direction and leading; rest in his presence.

Free Prayer: as a part of the prayer time, there's opportunity for you to speak your heart to God in a time of free prayer, bringing to God the needs and concerns of your life, family, work, and church. It may seem like an oxymoron, but I've added a few suggested prayer items for the free prayer, in case you are stuck or would like to pray for something in addition to your personal needs.²

² I'm indebted to David Adam's *The Rhythm of Life*. (Harrisburg, Penn.: Morehouse Publishing, 1996) for the idea, and to *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2004) for some of the prayer requests.

The suggested free prayer items are focused in a weekly flow of seven daily groupings—Sunday: the resurrection of Jesus and our experience of the risen Jesus; Monday: the created world and our stewardship of it; Tuesday: the incarnation of Jesus and our living out the faith; Wednesday: the world and our local communities; Thursday: the Holy Spirit and spiritual renewal; Friday: the cross of Christ and those who suffer; and Saturday: the Church and our local church family. Each week (usually Sunday) we'll also pray the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: following the free prayer is a set prayer. Each of these prayers is rooted in a Reformed confession of faith.³ The Reformed confessions are a full and rich theological foundation for the Christian life—thoughtful and soul-nourishing. This is God-reality named clearly. They remain a convincing testimony, deep wisdom to be cherished and absorbed.

But for many people I've met in my pastoral work, both Christians and non-Christians, these confessions seem to have a diminished capacity to connect. The theology remains as relevant as ever, but whether it's the catechetical format, the historical distance, or the language, the confessions seem removed from people's experience and daily lives.

So why not take the living theology that feels remote and bring it close by folding it into the most basic Christian activity of prayer? In these prayers, the content of faith is turned God-ward; it is Christian theology in a kneeling posture. Like honest prayer, sometimes the confessions question or lament, and other times they confess and praise, bringing all of our lives before the face of God.

These historical confessions have provided Christians with a place to stand firm, but they also give us a place to humbly kneel. In fact, those two postures are deeply connected; our personal creed, what we believe, is found and formed in what and how we pray (the Latin motto *lex orandi, lex credendi*). If we can begin to weave these core Christian beliefs into our prayers, most likely we'll find

³ The set prayers flow out of the Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Confession, or Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Some are word for word renditions, others a prayerful paraphrase, and still others a riff on a phrase or thought from the confessions.

them trickling into our minds, embedded in our hearts, and lived out in our lives.

For some of us, this form of set prayer may be foreign and feel a little stiff. Accept those feelings and yet try to stick with it, allowing the prayers to give a larger voice to your spirit and to grow a fuller prayer life.

Blessing: The time of prayer closes with a final blessing, reminding us of God's good intentions for our lives, sending us out knowing we live in the context of grace.

Enough talk about prayer; now go and seek God's face in prayer. Commune with Father, Son, and Spirit, and give my greetings to God.

Key to Abbreviations

<i>Example</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
BC 2	Belgic Confession, Article 2
CD 1.9	Canons of Dort, First Point, Article 9
HC 5	Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 5
WC 8.2	Westminster Confession, Chapter 8, Point 2
WLC 6	Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 6
WSC 7	Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q&A 7

ADVENT



Introduction

Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival”) is the four-week season of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. A good celebration requires proper preparation for us to fully enjoy it. During December, however, we mostly confuse helpful readiness for the hustle of Christmas shopping, parties, and preparations. The Advent season, more reflective in nature, can feel out of sync with all this noise and busyness.

John the Baptist has always felt like the right person to get me ready for Christmas—he’s the anti-Santa needed for our day. Trade the jolly laugh for an in-your-face intensity, the twinkle in the eye for a wildness about to interrupt your life, commanding our attention but always redirecting it towards Jesus. “Prepare the way for the Lord” is the Advent call to get ready for the coming Messiah.

But how do you prepare for a surprise? More than just remembering Christ’s first arrival, Advent hopes for Christ’s second coming. Advent is a season of expectant waiting, tapping into the sense we have that all is not well, the longing for the world to be made right again. It’s a season for restless hearts and people weary of a broken world who want, with all our being, to know there’s more than this.

Advent cultivates in us a discerning eye, helping us to spot the sin that clutters our lives and notice all the ways we need to be saved. By helping us to hope intensely for restoration, to feel our own need to be saved, Advent prepares us for genuine Christmas joy and faith in the One who saves us from our sin, Jesus.

During the Advent season we’ll use a selection of seven psalms connected with Advent themes, praying with portions of these same psalms each week of Advent.

Since Advent has a movable starting date, it is of variable length. Watch the dates column signaling when to move to Christmas Eve.

11/28/2010
11/27/2011
12/2/2012
12/1/2013
11/30/2014
11/29/2015
11/27/2016
12/3/2017
12/2/2018
12/1/2019
11/29/2020
11/28/2021
11/27/2022
12/3/2023
12/1/2024
11/30/2025

Week 1 of Advent—First Sunday of Advent

ADVENT—DAY 1



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 25:1-7

In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.

I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.

Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, LORD, are good.

BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 33:14-16

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

“In those days and at that time
I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.
In those days Judah will be saved
and Jerusalem will live in safety.
This is the name by which it will be called:
The Lord Our Righteous Savior.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for fellowship with the coming Jesus
- ❖ for spiritual renewal and refreshment

THE LORD’S PRAYER

PRAYER

Living God, I confess the slant of my heart to hate you and my neighbor. But that sounds so harsh—I’m not that bad, am I God? Yet if I am brutally honest I see that I’m in deeper than I dare admit, unless I am born again by your Spirit. Fill me with the greater hope this Advent season that in Christ’s love I am on my way to new life. In the Savior’s name, amen. (HC 5 & 8)

BLESSING

“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)

11/29/2010
11/28/2011
12/3/2012
12/2/2013
12/1/2014
11/30/2015
11/28/2016
12/4/2017
12/3/2018
12/2/2019
11/30/2020
11/29/2021
11/28/2022
12/4/2023
12/2/2024
12/1/2025

ADVENT—DAY 2



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 72:1-7

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.

May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.

In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 24:36-42

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the

other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your LORD will come.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the wonder of creation
- ❖ for the care of all creation
- ❖ for our capacity to see God in all things, every creature a word or book from God

PRAYER

Coming Savior, you are the Word, the wisdom, and the very image of the Father. Ready my ears to hear your word of truth, my heart to learn the ways of your wisdom, and my eyes to see the beauty of your likeness.
Amen. (BC 8)

BLESSING

“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)

11/30/2010
11/29/2011
12/4/2012
12/3/2013
12/2/2014
12/1/2015
11/29/2016
12/5/2017
12/4/2018
12/3/2019
12/1/2020
11/30/2021
11/29/2022
12/5/2023
12/3/2024
12/2/2025

ADVENT—DAY 3



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 80:1-3, 17-19

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us.

Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved. . . .

Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.
Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, LORD God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you

do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the call to follow Christ as disciples in this world
- ❖ for a love of and commitment to the communities in which God has placed us
- ❖ for those who work in business and industry

PRAYER

Everlasting God, it's Advent once again. We've eagerly waited for change, but it appears little has happened. Expand in me the great hope that one day I will be raised from this broken earth—changed in the blink of an eye—and that everything bent and bruised, curdled and corrupted, in me and this world, will be transformed into lasting goodness, righteousness, and truth. In Jesus' name, amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

*"Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people."
(Rev. 22:20-21)*

12/1/2010

11/30/2011

12/5/2012

12/4/2013

12/3/2014

12/2/2015

11/30/2016

12/6/2017

12/5/2018

12/4/2019

12/2/2020

12/1/2021

11/30/2022

12/6/2023

12/4/2024

12/3/2025

ADVENT—DAY 4



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins. . . .

I will listen to what God the LORD says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.
Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
The LORD will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

BIBLE READING: MARK 13:32-37

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with an assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for our national and local communities
- ❖ for the continent of Africa
- ❖ for areas of war and strife

PRAYER

Unexpected Savior, you are coming again, but this date, already marked down by the Father, isn't for me to know. But I'm curious, Lord, desiring a timeline or diagram, wanting to nail down a future that's out of my hands. In place of my faithless need to control, give me a watchful heart full of expectation and wonder. Amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

*“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)*

12/2/2010
12/1/2011
12/6/2012
12/5/2013
12/4/2014
12/3/2015
12/1/2016
12/7/2017
12/6/2018
12/5/2019
12/3/2020
12/2/2021
12/1/2022
12/7/2023
12/5/2024
12/4/2025

ADVENT—DAY 5



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 89:1-4

I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.
I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
‘I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.’”

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 63:16; 64:1, 6-9

But you are our Father,
though Abraham does not know us
or Israel acknowledge us;
you, LORD, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is your name. . . .

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would tremble before you! . . .
All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
No one calls on your name
or strives to lay hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have given us over to our sins.

Yet you, LORD, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for spiritual renewal and a deep sense of repentance
- ❖ for the gifts and fruit of the Spirit in us
- ❖ for a gentle witness and a readiness to give a reason for the hope within us

PRAYER

God of all hope, in Jesus your salvation broke into our world, and his return gives purpose to our living in this broken world. Make me ready for that day when he comes again with great glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead, renewing and cleansing this tired world, making everything new. Make me ready for that future day by living hopefully today. In the name of our soon arriving Savior, amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

*“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)*

12/3/2010
12/2/2011
12/7/2012
12/6/2013
12/5/2014
12/4/2015
12/2/2016
12/8/2017
12/7/2018
12/6/2019
12/4/2020
12/3/2021
12/2/2022
12/8/2023
12/6/2024
12/5/2025

ADVENT—DAY 6



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.
Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 13:11-14

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe

yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for those living in poverty and suffering injustice
- ❖ for our capacity to suffer with others
- ❖ for those who are refugees

PRAYER

Sovereign God, on the coming judgment day the book on my life will be opened and a verdict will be given. Knowing that every idle work, every well-guarded secret and shadowed hypocrisy will be uncovered makes me want to run for cover. Remind me that just as you gave Adam and Eve garments to cover their shame, you dress me up in Christ-clothes that I might stand before you. Amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

*“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)*

12/4/2010

12/3/2011

12/8/2012

12/7/2013

12/6/2014

12/5/2015

12/3/2016

12/9/2017

12/8/2018

12/7/2019

12/5/2020

12/4/2021

12/3/2022

12/9/2023

12/7/2024

12/6/2025

ADVENT—DAY 7



INVITATION

*“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.” (Ps. 130:5)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 146

Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

I will praise the LORD all my life;

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in princes,

in human beings, who cannot save.

When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;

on that very day their plans come to nothing.

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD their God.

He is the Maker of heaven and earth,

the sea, and everything in them—

he remains faithful forever.

He upholds the cause of the oppressed

and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

the LORD gives sight to the blind,

the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,

the LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD watches over the foreigner

and sustains the fatherless and the widow,

but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

The LORD reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 3:12-13

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the flourishing of Christ's church everywhere
- ❖ for worship that glorifies God and gathers, unites, and blesses his people
- ❖ for new church plants and church planters

PRAYER

Almighty God, this coming judgment day stretches my imagination with strange wonders. Every man, woman, and child—anyone who has lived from the beginning until the end of the world—will be summoned by the voice of the archangel and the sound of your trumpet. Where will we all fit? Will we recognize others? Today, rest me in the greatest wonder—hearing the voice of Jesus confessing my name before the Father. Amen.
(BC 37)

BLESSING

“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.”
(Rev. 22:20-21)

12/5/2010
12/4/2011
12/9/2012
12/8/2013
12/7/2014
12/6/2015
12/4/2016
12/10/2017
12/9/2018
12/8/2019
12/6/2020
12/5/2021
12/4/2022
12/10/2023
12/8/2024
12/7/2025

Week 2 of Advent

ADVENT—DAY 8



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 25:1, 8-11

In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust. . . .

Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.
All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.
For the sake of your name, LORD,
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 11:1-5

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for Advent hope and joy
- ❖ for the courage to go and tell the good news

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER

Redeemer God, in righteousness you will judge all people. Keep me from making eternal pronouncements on others' lives, and help me trust that the coming day of judgment will reveal the glory of your wide mercy and firm justice. Keep me vigilant to work against evil and injustice, and yet hopeful for all people, trusting that your justice never fails and your mercy is fresh each day. Amen. (WC 33.2)

BLESSING

*"Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."
(Ps. 27:14)*

12/6/2010
12/5/2011
12/10/2012
12/9/2013
12/8/2014
12/7/2015
12/5/2016
12/11/2017
12/10/2018
12/9/2019
12/7/2020
12/6/2021
12/5/2022
12/11/2023
12/9/2024
12/8/2025

ADVENT—DAY 9



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 72:1-2, 8-11

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.

May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice. . . .

May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

May the desert tribes bow before him
and his enemies lick the dust.

May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him.

May the kings of Sheba and Seba
present him gifts.

May all kings bow down to him
and all nations serve him.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch 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 country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
And all people will see God’s salvation.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the wonder of creation
- ❖ for the care of creation
- ❖ for environmental concerns

PRAYER

Father, I am weary of all that is wrong with the world—murder of the innocents, a smeared and wrecked creation, tyrant-oppressed poor, hunger-withered children, exploited women, forgotten elderly, invisible homeless. I long to see that all these enemies—yours and mine—will be, once and for all, condemned, and all things crooked made straight. Set me to making way for your justice with renewed vigor. In Jesus our Deliverer’s name we pray, amen. (HC 52)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

12/7/2010
12/6/2011
12/11/2012
12/10/2013
12/9/2014
12/8/2015
12/6/2016
12/12/2017
12/11/2018
12/10/2019
12/8/2020
12/7/2021
12/6/2022
12/12/2023
12/10/2024
12/9/2025

ADVENT—DAY 10



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 80:1-2, 8-15

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us. . . .

You transplanted a vine from Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
You cleared the ground for it,
and it took root and filled the land.
The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches.
Its branches reached as far as the Sea,
its shoots as far as the River.

Why have you broken down its walls
so that all who pass by pick its grapes?
Boars from the forest ravage it
and wild animals feed on it.
Return to us, God Almighty!
Look down from heaven and see!
Watch over this vine,
the root your right hand has planted,
the son you have raised up for yourself.

BIBLE READING: 2 PETER 3:8-13

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for God to equip us to serve in uniquely Christian ways in the public arena
- ❖ for our capacity to serve the common good
- ❖ for those who work in homemaking

PRAYER

Cleansing Lord, when you come again as judge of the living and the dead, you will be like a furnace of judgment that will consume everything evil and ungodly. But you will be a refining fire too, with a glowing, purified creation coming from the flames. Make this world beautiful for you and fitted for your kingdom; purify my heart so that I may envision that coming day. Amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

12/8/2010
12/7/2011
12/12/2012
12/11/2013
12/10/2014
12/9/2015
12/7/2016
12/13/2017
12/12/2018
12/11/2019
12/9/2020
12/8/2021
12/7/2022
12/13/2023
12/11/2024
12/10/2025

ADVENT—DAY 11



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 85:1-7

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.
You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.

Restore us again, God our Savior,
and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 1:68-79

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—
to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you?
Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or
mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn
your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for governments, leaders, and the needs of our world
- ❖ for the continent of Asia
- ❖ for areas of hunger, famine, and disease

PRAYER

Sure to come Savior, I believe your coming again will mean the righting of all that is wrong; it will complete your rescue plan and fully carry out your redemption. But that sweet comfort makes the waiting all that much harder. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, and redeem your people; come quickly and rescue us. Amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

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ADVENT—DAY 12



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 89:1-4, 20-24

I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.
I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
‘I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.’” . . .

I have found David my servant;
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.
My hand will sustain him;
surely my arm will strengthen him.
No enemy will get the better of him;
no wicked person will oppress him.
I will crush his foes before him
and strike down his adversaries.
My faithful love will be with him,
and through my name his horn will be exalted.

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 15:5-7, 13

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. . . .

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for spiritual renewal and a yearning to know God
- ❖ for family members and friends who do not yet have faith
- ❖ for racial reconciliation

PRAYER

God of hope, fill me with edge-of-the-seat anticipation as I wait for that unimaginable day when I will be crowned with glory and honor, hear you call out my name, and have you wipe away every tear from my eyes. May my hope for that good future temper the tragedy and mess of today. In Christ's name, amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

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ADVENT—DAY 13



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.

Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

BIBLE READING: MALACHI 3:1-4

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the

offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the ability to deny ourselves and serve others
- ❖ for the commitment to do justice and show mercy
- ❖ for those seeking asylum

PRAYER

Coming Jesus, how can I face your refining fire? I know I am broken and confess that I have sinned. Thank you for the rich comfort and confidence that you, my judge, have already stood trial in my place; you have removed from me the whole curse and court is adjourned. How can I thank you enough? Amen. (HC 52)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

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ADVENT—DAY 14



INVITATION

“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”
(Ps. 27:1)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 146:2, 6-10

I will praise the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. . . .

He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them—
he remains faithful forever.
He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets prisoners free,
the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.
The LORD watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Praise the LORD.

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 40:1-5

Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the LORD’s hand
double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for servant leadership, kingdom vision, godly stewardship, and effective organization of the local church
- ❖ for a deep missional identity to mark the local church
- ❖ for denominations, agencies, and programs

PRAYER

Satisfying God, it sometimes hurts to hope, and so I settle for less. I confess that I've often given my heart to impostors and counterfeits that can never deliver. Nurture in me a desire for your generous reward—a glory I can hardly begin to imagine—and a longing for that great day when I will fully enjoy your promises in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (BC 37)

BLESSING

“Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”
(Ps. 27:14)

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Week 3 of Advent

ADVENT—DAY 15



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 25:1, 16-22

In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust. . . .

Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart
and free me from my anguish.
Look on my affliction and my distress
and take away all my sins.
See how numerous are my enemies
and how fiercely they hate me!

Guard my life and rescue me;
do not let me be put to shame,
for I take refuge in you.
May integrity and uprightness protect me,
because my hope, LORD, is in you.

Redeem Israel, O God,
from all their troubles!

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 9:2, 6-7

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned. . . .

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you?
Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or
mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn
your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for fellowship with the coming Jesus
- ❖ for spiritual renewal and refreshment

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER

Wonderful Counselor and mighty God, I celebrate your coming to save, becoming a servant, and being made in human likeness. While it's easy to believe this was really good camouflage, I rejoice that this was no disguise but your delight. Quiet me with your love that knows the vulnerability of human life—you've been through it all, taking to yourself a real human nature with all its weaknesses, all but the sin. Amen. (BC 18)

BLESSING

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 16



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 72:1-2, 12-14

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice. . . .

For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 3:7-9, 15-17

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” . . .

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. 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 barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the beauty of creation
- ❖ for the care of creation
- ❖ for creative new conservation technologies

PRAYER

Holy God, lead me to repentance that brings life. Not the groveling show that's more about convincing you I'm worthy of your forgiveness, but the cut-to-the-heart kind of repentance that is grieved at my sin because of your holiness and glory. Move me by your mercy and lead me to a life of joyful obedience. Amen. (WC 15.2)

BLESSING

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.” (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 17



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 80:1-2, 14C-18

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us. . . .

Watch over this vine,
the root your right hand has planted,
the son you have raised up for yourself.

Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire;
at your rebuke your people perish.
Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.
Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called mighty oaks,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the call to follow Christ in your home, neighborhood, and workplace
- ❖ for a love of and commitment to the communities in which God has placed us
- ❖ for those who work in medicine; health professionals

PRAYER

Anointing Spirit, by sharing in Jesus' baptismal anointing I realize my own calling and purpose. Inspire me to be a bearer of good news wherever there is distress, a light in dark places, and a comforter in times of mourning. Flow through me to be an agent of your Jubilee kingdom. Amen. (HC 32)

BLESSING

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 18



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins. . . .

I will listen to what God the LORD says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.
Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
The LORD will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 35:1-2, 5-6, 8A, 10B

The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;

they will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendor of our God. . . .

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert. . . .

And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way. . . .
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for our national and local communities
- ❖ for the continent of North America
- ❖ for international crises

PRAYER

Incarnate Lord, why do we easily consider our bodies as shameful or something to get beyond, when you're quite fond of them? Forgive us for trying to be more spiritual than you are by denying our human earthiness. Overtake us with joy that you have come physically to this world, taking a face and sharing our flesh, for truly being our Immanuel, "God with us." Amen. (BC 18)

BLESSING

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 19



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 89:1-4, 35-37

I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,

‘I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.’” . . .

“Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—
and I will not lie to David—
that his line will continue forever
and his throne endure before me like the sun;
it will be established forever like the moon,
the faithful witness in the sky.”

BIBLE READING: JAMES 5:7-11

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for spiritual renewal and the joy of salvation to be experienced
- ❖ for the gifts and fruit of the Spirit in us
- ❖ for a readiness to give a reason for the hope within us

PRAYER

Ancient of Days, you had a beginning as a child; infinite God, you weren't ashamed to take on our frail and finite humanity. I praise you, eternal God, for becoming one of us, because my salvation and resurrection depend on the reality of your body. Amen. (BC 19)

BLESSING

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 20



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.
Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

BIBLE READING: 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-6

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and human beings, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for those living in poverty and suffering injustice
- ❖ for our capacity to suffer with others
- ❖ for those persecuted for their faith

PRAYER

Lord God, you defy all my tidy categories for understanding you, especially at Christmas. What a paradox the incarnation is—true God and authentic humanity knit into one person, your Son, Jesus Christ. I worship you for this marvelous mystery—as true God you conquered death by your power, and as a real human you died for me in the weakness of your flesh. Amen. (BC 19)

BLESSING

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.” (Luke 1:68)

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ADVENT—DAY 21



INVITATION

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 146:1-5

Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

I will praise the LORD all my life;

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in princes,

in human beings, who cannot save.

When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;

on that very day their plans come to nothing.

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD their God.

BIBLE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not put out the Spirit’s fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject whatever is harmful.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for unity in the church
- ❖ for Christian education: schools, colleges, seminaries
- ❖ for those who celebrate the birth of a child

PRAYER

Jesus, Prince of Peace: I've lost my childlike wonder and stuffed the emptiness with Christmas busyness and sappy sentiment. Remind me of the miracle of Christmas, that you not only assumed a human nature but a real human soul; you were fully human. Fill me with renewed wonder that you came to save me wholly, body and soul. Amen. (BC 18)

BLESSING

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them." (Luke 1:68)

Week 4 of Advent

ADVENT—DAY 22



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 25:1-5

In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.

I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.

Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be

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great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me according to your word.” Then the angel left her.

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you’d like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God’s presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for Advent hope and joy
- ❖ for sharing the good news

THE LORD’S PRAYER

PRAYER

Visiting God, eclipse my doubts and questions with the brightness of your presence, and like Mary, overshadow my life with your Holy Spirit, conceiving in me a true faith that receives Jesus Christ, making him my own and me your favored one. Amen. (BC 22)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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ADVENT—DAY 23



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 72:1-7

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.

In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for our role as caretakers of creation
- ❖ for the ears to hear God in creation
- ❖ for God's care and comfort in natural disasters and a creation that groans

PRAYER

Son of Man and Son of God, in real time, you were conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. Deity and humanity were inseparably joined together in you. Thank you for the way Christmas reminds me that faith is both material and mystical. No confusion, but lots of wonder. Amen. (WC 8.2)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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ADVENT—DAY 24



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 80:1-3

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us.

Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

BIBLE READING: LUKE 1:46-55

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for God to equip us to serve in uniquely Christian ways in the public arena
- ❖ for our capacity to serve the common good
- ❖ for those who work in education

PRAYER

Son of David, today I bow before you as my true King. You subdue me by humbling yourself as a helpless baby, you rule me by subjecting yourself, you defend me through a chubby infant's arm, and the hand of power that conquers all enemies is curled around a mother's finger. Amen. (WSC 26)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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ADVENT—DAY 25



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins. . . .

I will listen to what God the LORD says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.
Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
The LORD will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

BIBLE READING: MICAH 5:2-4

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for governments, leaders, and the needs of our world
- ❖ for the continent of South America
- ❖ for international relief agencies

PRAYER

God of place and time, you chose the little town of Bethlehem to be the birthplace of David and of David's greater Son. Make us aware of your active purpose in our towns and neighborhoods, so that we see them as places of promise in our time. Amen. (HC 19)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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ADVENT—DAY 26



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 89:1-4, 26-29

I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.

I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,

I have sworn to David my servant,

‘I will establish your line forever

and make your throne firm through all generations.’ . . .

“He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father,
my God, the Rock my Savior.’

And I will appoint him to be my firstborn,
the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

I will maintain my love to him forever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.

I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure.”

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 16:25-27

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to faith and obedience—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for spiritual renewal and a deep understanding of the gospel
- ❖ for racial reconciliation
- ❖ for new relationships with non-Christians

PRAYER

Wise God, thank you that Christ's incarnation was not a quick reaction to surprising circumstances but part of your eternal purpose, the unfolding of your long-ago decreed will. To think that my salvation is part of your grand eternal purpose leaves me stunned with joy-filled awe. Amen. (WSC 7)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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ADVENT—DAY 27



INVITATION

*“Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.” (Ps. 80:3)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1:1-6

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to faith and obedience for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the ability to deny ourselves and serve others
- ❖ for the commitment to do justice and show mercy
- ❖ for prisoners of conscience

PRAYER

Jesus, our brother and God's one and only Son, the eternal, natural Son of God, through your becoming human you have made a way for me to become God's adopted child—part of the family. I thank you and praise you. Amen. (HC 33)

BLESSING

May the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, shine on those living in darkness and guide our feet into the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78-79)

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