

Advent

Advent Week 1 (Nov. 29th)

Longing

Read: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 25; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; Matthew 24:32-51

“Advent...helps us to understand the fullness of the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, we must understand that our whole life should be an ‘advent,’ in vigilant expectation of Christ’s final coming. To prepare our hearts to welcome the Lord who, as we say in the Creed, will come one day to just the living and the dead, we must learn to recognize his presence in the events of daily life. Advent is then a period of intense training that directs us decisively to the One who had already come, who will come and who continuously comes.”

Pope John Paul II (Poland/1920-2005)

C.S. Lewis claimed that in this life the Advent-like stab of longing serves as a spiritual homing device, placed deep in our heart by God to lead us back to Him.

Ask: What are you really longing for this Advent? Is it God?

Pray: *Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being: You have made us for Yourself, so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*

Augustine of Hippo (Algeria/354-430)



Advent Week 2 (Dec. 6th)

Hoping for Hope

Read: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

The death of Christ annihilated at a stroke the Messianic expectations of the Apostles. Their dejection was complete. But if, of all that they had hoped, nothing was ever realized, this dejection could not have passed away. . . . We cannot explain (not bare conceivable possibilities, but) the actual state of the case, viz., the dejection of the Apostles at first, and what they were and did afterward. There must be some intermediate historical fact to explain the transition; something must have occurred to revive, with new power, the almost effaced impression; to bring back the flow of their faith which had so far ebbed away. The reappearance, then, of Christ among his disciples is a connecting link in the chain of events which cannot possibly be spared. It acted thus: Their sunken faith in his promises received a new impulse when these promises were repeated by Him, risen from the dead; his reappearance formed the point of contact for a new spiritual communion with him, never to be dissolved, nay, thenceforward to be developed ever more and more. According to their own unvarying asseverations, it was the foundation of their immovable faith in his person, and in himself as Messiah and Son of God; as well as of their steadfast hope, in his communion, of a blissful, everlasting life, triumphing over death. Without it they never could have had that inspiring assurance of faith with which they everywhere testified of what they had received, and joyfully submitted to tortures and to death.

Augustus Neander (1789-1850

Germany)

Ask: Where does your hope lie? Are you hoping in the promises of God?

Pray: *Almighty God, give us such a vision of your purpose and such an assurance of your love and power, that we may ever hold fast the hope which is in Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.*

Bosco Peters (New Zealand/Contemporary)

Advent Week 3 (Dec. 13th)

Active Anticipation

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; Luke 3:7-20

“Whenever God rules over the human heart as King, there is the kingdom of God established.”

Paul W. Harrison (USA/1883-1962)

“Imagine the church as a glimpse of the future living in the present. It is a community where people of every tongue and tribe and nation, separated by race and class barriers in this world, live together as the people of God. Every brokenness inflicted by sin is healed. God’s Spirit falls on women, old people, and youths - released from the mark of 2nd class citizens in a fallen world. The people of God live in harmony with all creation, then set out to live as if the future is here - with all that entails.

The future is about a community in which the barriers that separate people from God, other people, and creation are no more. As God’s eschatological community, we hope for ultimate redemption in the future. But in the present, we break down barriers and bear each other’s brokenness. Through this here-and-now experience, Christ’s bride, the church, begins to take on the beauty that will be hers when He comes to claim her as His own.”

Brad Harper (Contemporary)

Ask: How are you anticipating Jesus’ return? How can you live looking forward to His 2nd coming?

Pray: *Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by Your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of Your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer

Advent Week 4 (Dec. 20th)

Preparation

Read: Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80; Hebrews 10:1-10; Luke 1:39-55

“I’m a Christian and I will remain a Christian even to the point of death. Only to God will I offer my life. Even if I had a thousand lives, I would still offer them to Him.

Lorenzo Ruis (Philippines/1600-1637)

There’s a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring,
When our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
Weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long,
But His triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.

In the fading of the starlight we can see the coming morn; And the lights of men are paling in the splendors of the dawn; For the eastern skies are glowing as with lights of hidden fire, And the hearts of men are stirring with the throb of deep desire.

There’s a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air; And the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer; For the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne, And the travail of our spirit is the travail of His own.

He is breaking down the barriers, He is casting up the way; He is calling for His angels to build up the gates of day; But His angels here are human, not the shining hosts above, For the drum-beats of His army are the heart-beats of our love.

Hark! we hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell; ‘Tis the triumph song of Jesus, of our King Emmanuel; Zion, go ye forth to meet Him, and my soul, be swift to bring All thy sweetest and thy dearest for the triumph of our King.

Henry Burton (England/1578-1648)

Ask: How do I understand the Christmas story for my life in the here and now? What can I take away from preparing for this season that will carry through to the next year?

Pray:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

The Trisagion Prayers