

ADVENT PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS



Sit in stillness and listen to what your heart prays. Ruth Jewell
Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46

Advent is a time of preparation and waiting and many of us are not good at waiting! We do well with preparation for the most part...if we know what it is we are meant to do! But the thing is the waiting and the preparation to which we are called this season is about being not doing, about God's time not ours.

I have put together 4 prayers and meditations for each of the Sundays in Advent in hope that they will provide some inspiration for this season of hope, peace, joy and love. If you have an Advent wreath then the prayers might be prayed with the lighting of each candle. If that is not your family tradition, they may be prayed anytime, anywhere, and with intention.

Whether you use these offerings or not, it is my sincere desire that this season offers you the space and opportunity to become closer to God who is coming into the world. Hark a thrilling voice is sounding, ... with His words of love draw near. (Hymn 59)

First Sunday of Advent: HOPE

Holy and Gracious God, we prayer that as we light this candle, so too will a fire of Hope be kindled in our hearts. May we hold this Hope gently, as we are urged to stay awake and prepare for a most amazing event! As we prepare to receive the Christ Child, may we be ever-mindful of our love for you, and Yours for us. This will keep the

flames of Hope burning throughout this Advent season and beyond. We pray in the name of Emmanuel. AMEN

For most of us this is not our first Advent, and yet, it is our persistence and engagement in it again and again which forms us more deeply as Christians. It is that persistence and willingness to come again and again to the manger, to the altar, to the font, which fuels our Hope in waiting not just for the perfect remembrance of the birth of the Christ child but for the second coming in glory! We know from Paul's letters that it is this persistence which leads to Hope and "hope does not disappoint". (Romans) How can this be we ask? We certainly have known disappointments and our hopes have not been satisfied always. The message of the Gospel, the message of John the Baptist, the message of Advent is that holy Hope comes in the still waiting and preparing of a way in our hearts for love incarnate. God, Emmanuel, was present, is present, and will be present in the world transforming our hearts and the heart of all creation. That is our HOPE! As Emily Dickinson writes: "Hope is the thing with feathers"! It is the lightness of being which we pray will inhabit our hearts that we might be sustained as we wait and awake when He comes!

Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE

Holy and Gracious God, we pray that this new candle, alongside the first, will illuminate the Peace for which we hope. May we reflect this season on moments when we have known Peace, however fleeting, however thin. May we prepare to receive the Prince of Peace and new visions of Peace. And may the Peace which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of the coming of the Savior in unexpected ways and forms. AMEN

Never has the saying been more needed than now! The saying about Peace which has been spread across t-shirts and mugs reads as follows: Peace is not the absence of chaos; it is the stillness in its midst. Peace for us is Christ who came into a broken and conflicted world and dwelt among us preaching and being peace in the midst of these fractures. And so in Advent are we called to be this peace that we might know this peace and reflect it in the world. We are called albeit in the midst of a broken and terrifying world to be still and know God in its midst as well. We are called to find and appreciate the "peace of wild things" and "to lie down with the wood drake" (Wendell Berry). One way to know this Christlike peace is through contemplative prayer. To sit with God and let the noise pass through like clouds and to invite the Holy Spirit to gently breathe in and through you. Come Holy Spirit, come and fill us with your Peace. You alone are Holy.

Third Sunday of Advent: JOY

Holy and Gracious God, we give you thanks for the promise of Joy. As we anticipate and prepare for Joy to be born in the world, may we be ever-mindful of all the places in our lives, and those of others, where there seems to be little Joy and thus,

may its presence be especially felt. Joyful, Joyful, we adore Thee today and evermore.
AMEN

Joy is not the same as happiness or giddyness or bliss. Joy is deep and joy is transformative. Joy comes often as a surprise (C.S. Lewis) when we have traveled below the frivolous material aspects of our culture and rested and remained with the fruits of the Holy Spirit: when we have been generous, when we have been grateful, when we have been patient, when we have been kind. Joy is the byproduct of living into our true selves and shedding our false identities. Joy comes from being more not doing more. Joy also comes from giving. Bishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama who collaborated on the Book of Joy say it in many different ways but none more poignant than that in Africa when someone comes into a village the question asked is not How are you? It is How are we? Imagine living into a life of concern and care for the entire community. How the we is doing is more important and joy producing than the !!!!!

Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE

Holy and Gracious God, we light this candle to Love. Love, which endures all things. Love, which saves all things. Love, which sustains HOPE, PEACE, and JOY! Love immeasurable and incarnate is coming into the world in humility with grace. May we be amazed. May we be so touched that we fall to our knees in devotion. May we be filled with this Love and reflect it in the world. How silently, how silently, LOVE enters in. How peacefully and joyfully may it abide. AMEN

Jesus did not come to start a religion; Jesus came to start a movement. We have labeled that movement various ways including Christianity but Advent offers us the opportunity to reexamine the label, the institution, and put on the armor of social movement, the armor of light! Michael Curry calls this the way of love. Religions have all kinds of rules and hierarchies. The Jesus movement is totally inclusive and free flowing. "When love is the way — unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive — when love is the way, then no child will go to bed hungry in this world ever again. When love is the way, we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream, and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook." (Michael Curry) When love is the way, we will be ready for His coming in great glory!