

Advent, 2021

Come,
thou
long-expected Jesus.

Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins

release us.

Let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's
strength and consolation,

Hope of all the earth
thou art;

Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Advent

“Advent” means the arrival or coming of something. In the church, the season of Advent eagerly anticipates the arrival of Jesus at Christmas (and His second coming as well). Even though Jesus already came to Earth many years ago, we

are always eager for Him, seeking Him, desperate

for Him. Advent can be a once-a-year opportunity for a tune-up and refocus. It is a time of waiting and expectation, an opportunity to re-train our expectations on Him.

This year our Advent selections will include a broader-than-usual selection of scripture to remind us that Advent captures and wraps up longings that have always been in the heart of mankind.

Advent starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

Using this booklet

After many years of following Jesus, the Apostle Paul still yearned to know Jesus (Php. 3:7-14). Use this book by yourself, with your family, or with friends to help draw your attention back to

...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... -Php. 3:8

Jesus again and again during the season. Use it to fan the flames of a seeking heart, anticipating the fulfillment of Christmas.

Every day, lighting the Advent wreath if you have one, take a few minutes to walk through the day’s devotion, read aloud the scripture, think through or discuss the reflections and use the “Pray” section as a springboard to get started in prayer.

If you miss a day, just keep going; don’t be discouraged!

First Sunday in Advent

November 28, 2021

First day of Advent

*Come,
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.*

Pending Joy

Read

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... 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.... and the ransomed of the LORD will return. 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.

~Selected from Isaiah 35:1-10

Think

This passage looks forward to a new exodus and deliverance by God—first in the return of the exiles, second in the coming of the Messiah and ultimately in eternity. Always, God's presence means joy to us.

Pray

Don't settle for a substitute! Pray that God will help you find your joy in Him most of all. Express your longing for *Him*. The one who seeks Him will find Him.

2nd day of Advent

Mon., Nov. 29

Read

For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. ~ 1 Chronicles 16:26-27

Think

Joy has always been found in the presence of God. No wonder one of the themes associated with Jesus' coming is joy! In this passage, David is organizing worship to the one true God. What a contrast to idols made by hands! Our living God is preceded by splendor and majesty and JOY is found in His presence.

Pray

When you pray, remember you are in communication with the living, relational God. There is an unbreakable tie between God's presence and joy.

3rd day of Advent

Tue., Nov. 30

Read

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield ~ Psalm 5:11-12

Think

When we take our place in God, when He is our shelter, we find his protection brings rejoicing.

Pray

As you pray include some of these words from the verses above: "refuge," "protection," "surround," "shield," "joy," "bless," "love" and "favor."

Wed., Dec. 1

Advent, day 4

Read

Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. On that day they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” ~Zephaniah 3:14-17

Think

In these words that appear near the end of Zephaniah after sections of strong judgement, God reminds His people that restoration and blessing are coming. And (surprise!) part of that is *God* doing the rejoicing—over His people!

Pray

Have you ever thought of God rejoicing over YOU? Pray today from the perspective of God’s joy over you.

Thur., Dec. 2

Advent, day 5

Read

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ~Luke 2:8-12

Think

What greater news is there? Jesus is come as Rescuer, Savior. There is a solution now to our debilitating, damaging sinfulness!

Pray

Do we get “used to” the greatness of Jesus our Savior and miss the joy of His coming? Pray and praise today with renewed delight in Him.

6th day of Advent

Fri., Dec. 3

Read

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. ~ Psalm 16:11

Think

Advent is about expecting, waiting, anticipating. As you look forward to God's path for your life—i.e., all His guidance on how to act, what to prioritize—do you find it a path of *life*?

Do you find yourself discovering more and more that His path means *joy* in His presence, *eternal pleasures* crowding into your life?

Pray

As you live a surrendered life to the Lord, pray that you do not miss the joy in His presence, and the eternal pleasures that are found in Him—even in the hard and difficult times.

7th day of Advent

Sat., Dec. 4

Read

So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy ~John 16:22

Think

Jesus tells his disciples that even though they are about to go through a very difficult time, a time of rejoicing is coming after He is raised from the dead. It is like a woman's difficulty in childbirth compared to the greater joy after the child is born. The same principle will be even more true when Jesus comes again!

Pray

It seems sometimes like the world gets worse and worse. As you pray, remember that the coming of Jesus in His nativity, or in His second coming, means great joy out of proportion to the difficulty experienced.

Second Sunday in Advent

December 5, 2021

The 8th day of Advent

HOPE

long-expected
Israel's
strength and consolation.
Hope of
all the earth
thou art;

Waiting, but Waiting in Hope

Read

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

~Lamentations 3:21-24

Think

The Lord's people have always waited on Him. Even when the expectation of the Messiah was only beginning to be focussed, His people had hope: the certain expectation of His constantly-renewed love and compassion, guaranteed by His always-steady faithfulness.

Pray

As you pray, remember that your future is not vague and unsure. Rather you have steady, concrete HOPE in Jesus the Messiah!

9th day of Advent

Mon., Dec. 6

Read

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will fulfill the gracious 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 Righteousness. ~Jeremiah 33:14-26”

Think

The hoped-for, long-expected branch of David’s line, when He comes, will be called “Our Righteousness.” It is He, Jesus, (whose blood is the foundation of the new covenant Jeremiah foretells) whom we will claim as our righteousness before God.

Pray

As you pray include thanksgiving for this hope fulfilled: the new covenant (testament) Jesus made in his own blood.

10th day of Advent

Tue., Dec. 7

Read

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned....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... ~From Isaiah 9:2,7

Think

More details on the hope that will come in the Messiah: His just and righteous kingdom will bring a great light and a reign of peace which will only increase for ever. The “golden age of David” was just an imperfect preview of what the Messiah will bring.

Pray

Pray in the light of Jesus’ reign of peace and his righteous kingdom into which we are entering.

Wed., Dec. 8

Advent, day **11**

Read

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — the LORD, who 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 alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. ~Psalm 146:5-9

Think

Who is blessed? The answer here is in terms of the *location* of one's hope. Blessed is the one whose hope is "in the Lord." Have you ever heard someone refer to their "safe place"? Our safe place, our place with a certain future, is in the Lord.

Pray

Approach the Lord today with the assurance and confidence that comes from having your hope firmly rooted in Him.

Thur, Dec. 9

Advent, day **12**

Read

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning ~Psalm 130:5,6

Think

The five mentions of *waiting* in this passage describe the *posture* of hope. We are confident of the promised future. In the present we wait. Expect. Like those first waiting for the birth of the Messiah, we say "Come, thou long-expected Jesus!"

Pray

Pray from a posture of anticipation. Waiting. Dependence on the Lord's faithfulness.

13th day of Advent

Fri., Dec. 10

Read

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ~ Romans 8:25

Think

The hope of the believer is not a vague preference among possible futures (“I hope it doesn’t rain”) but a sure reliance on the future outcomes that God has promised. That doesn’t mean lackadaisical idleness, but steady dependence on the Lord all the way into forever.

Pray

Pray with a confidence that is patient. God is trustworthy. Rely on God’s outcomes.

14th day of Advent

Sat., Dec. 11

Read

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has 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 orgies 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. ~ Romans 13:11-14

Think

Hope, the more real and the more near it gets, ought to have increasing impact on what we do. This is true as we wait for the second advent of Jesus and for the coming of His eternal kingdom.

Pray

Pray that your behavior may reflect the closeness of your hope.

Third Sunday in Advent

December 12, 2021

The 15th day of Advent

LOVE

*Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins
release us,*

Love with Impact

Read

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

~Isaiah 55:1-3

Think

God has always been offering what only a few are willing to receive: His great love’s work in our lives. Our great good comes from His practical love, His willingness to pay the price to set us free from the power and penalty of sin.

Pray

As you pray today, remember that you don’t have to convince God to work for good in your life. He is working to convince *you* to walk in His good path and trust Him for the good work He wants to do.

16th day of Advent Mon., Dec. 13

Read

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ~Isaiah 55:3-7

Think

Love's purpose and cost are described with more clarity here than we have seen so far. The Lord's commitment to our good even at His own cost is painfully clear.

Pray

In your prayer, be amazed at what the Lord has done!

17th day of Advent Tue., Dec. 14

Read

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8

Think

Love has been at the center from the start. God's love, His commitment to our good even at His own cost, is in His very nature. His goal is to make love the center of our nature as well.

Pray

When we long for Jesus, we long for His transforming work in us. In your prayer include your desire to mirror the Lord's love for you in your love to others.

Wed., Dec. 15

Advent, day **18**

Read

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

~ Matthew 22:36-40

Think

As we seek to reflect to others the love we receive from the Lord, we are reminded that all the Lord’s requirements are outgrowths of love.

Pray

Pray that God’s “your good; my cost; no limit” love may be reflected from your life out to others.

Thur., Dec. 16

Advent, day **19**

Read

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

~John 3:16-19

Think

God’s love is an apt summary of his plan and purpose. His goal in Jesus is not to condemn the sinful world, but rescue the world from its sin.

Pray

Let your prayer line up with God’s loving purpose—His willing to invest everything for you—as you make the investments of time and energy to live in love for others.

20th day of Advent

Fri., Dec. 17

Read

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ~ 1 John 4:10

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ~Romans 5:8

Think

“He started it!” How often have we heard those words? In this case they are true! The initiative was God’s!

Pray

As you pray, remember that your relationship with God started at His initiative, not with your worthiness or performance.

21st day of Advent

Sat., Dec. 18

Read

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. ~ 1 John 3:1-3

Think

God’s love has this concrete outcome: those who receive Jesus are called children of God. Knowing that we shall eventually be like him, we purify ourselves now.

Pray

Jesus came on a mission of God’s love. What are the results in the purity of your life? Pray for the transforming power of God.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 19, 2021

The 22nd day of Advent

PEACE

thou, Jesus

Let us find our rest in thee.

Peace. In-Jesus Peace.

Read

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. ~Isaiah 9:6-7a

Think

In this passage, written 700 years before Jesus came, He is named the Peace Prince. Peace in this context is not just a lack of conflict or the absence of war, but the wholeness, fullness and goodness of things as they really ought to be. All things will be summed up in Jesus and there is no limit to His peace.

Pray

Today as you pray, remember that everything, *everything* will find it's proper place in relation to Jesus. Pray for His perfect work in you and through you.

23rd day of Advent Mon., Dec. 20

Read

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ~Isaiah 53:5

Think

Our cure, reconciliation and restoration come as direct consequences of Jesus' own suffering. For our transgressions He was pierced, for our iniquities He was crushed, for our healing He was wounded.

Pray

Let the theme of your prayer be thanksgiving for the work of the long-expected Messiah.

24th day of Advent Tue., Dec. 21

Read

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ~ Acts 10:36

Think

Good news to Israel! Peace with God. It is easy to forget that our biggest need is to be at peace with God, our creator and our life.

Pray

As you pray check the status of that great gift Jesus won for you: peace with God. Is your relationship still clear? Unclogged by sin and reservation? Are you given over completely to Him?

Wed., Dec. 22

Advent, day **25**

Read

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ~Romans 4:25-5:1

Think

We. We have been justified. We have **peace**. We have gained access. We now stand. We rejoice. The work of the long-expected Messiah was not just some abstract theological principle, but a radical transformation of the fabric of our lives!

Pray

In your praying are you welcoming God's transformation-to-the-bone work? Are you given over to Jesus?

Thur., Dec. 23

Advent, day **26**

Read

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ~Ephesians 2:14-16

Think

Here is an example of Jesus's peace working outward toward others. Like love, His peace is reflected in relationships with others. He himself is not only the foundation of our peace with God, but the basis for living at peace with our neighbor.

Pray

In your prayer ask for God's insight into the ability you have to live at peace with others. He Himself is our peace...

C hristmas Eve

Fri., Dec. 24

Read

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” ~ Luke 2:13-14

Think

The angels announce the coming of God’s peace to those with God’s favor. They also announce the coming of Jesus.

This is not mere coincidence.

Peace comes in where Jesus does.

Pray

Suppose the peace you possess existed in proportion to how far you have let Jesus come into every corner of your life.

What would be the status of your peace?

C hristmas

Sat., Dec. 25

Read

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. ~John 14:27

Think

Peace doesn’t end with the Christmas announcement! Jesus, not long before he was to be crucified, told His men He was giving them an entirely new and different kind of Peace.

Pray

Jesus is still the Prince of Peace. We anticipate His peace and await all that will mean to us.

Pray with *your* world in *His* hands.

The Hymn

Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus is a yearning cry, a prayer of longing, that captures our heart's desire in waiting for our Lord. We tend to relate it first to the birth of Jesus, but it is equally applicable to our waiting for the second coming and to our daily thirst to know Jesus more.

Charles Wesley was inspired by Haggai 2:7,

I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty.

as well as a prayer he was familiar with,

"Born Your people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Your gracious kingdom bring By Your own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone; by Your all-sufficient merit, raise us to Your glorious throne. Amen."

and wrote our hymn in 1744. The hymn has two verses, but is sometimes seen with two additional recent verses by Mark E. Hunt.

Charles, born in 1707 was the 18th and youngest child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley and was the brother of the well-known John Wesley.

He was perhaps the greatest hymnwriter in the history of the Christian church. He wrote hymns that were full of Biblical theology, but written from a deeply committed heart and a life of practical holiness.

The hymn alludes to or relates to these passages:

Matthew 11:28; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 68:34; Joel 3:16; Haggai 2:7; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

by Charles Wesley

(14)

H Y M N X.

I.

COME Thou long-expected JESUS,
Born to set thy People free,
From our Fears and Sins relieve us,
Let us find our Rest in Thee :
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the Earth Thou art,
Dear Desire of every Nation,
Joy of every longing Heart.

II.

Born thy People to deliver,
Born a Child and yet a King,
Born to reign in Us for ever,
Now thy gracious Kingdom bring ;
By thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our Hearts alone,
By thine all-sufficient Merit
Raife us to thy glorious Throne.

Image from *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord* (1745)