



ADVENT

2023



INTRODUCTION

ADVENT: LONGING & HOPE

In 2 Cor 4, Paul writes to a church caught between longing and Hope. Paul preaches that God has “Let light shine out of darkness,” and this everlasting hope is found in the face of Jesus.

Jesus’ bright hope changes the way we experience darkness and longing. Because of hope in Jesus, “we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed,” and, most of all, walking in the way of Jesus’s real death open a mysterious path to experiencing his real life.

Our deepest longings find their expression in the powerful hope that Jesus offers.

This devotional was prepared so you could walk through Advent 2023 coming close to your longing and experiencing hope more deeply.

Advent is the season when the Church anticipates Jesus’ second coming through remembering his incarnation. We recall all who prophesied of his coming to God’s people in Holy Scripture and mark the season with 4 weeks of preparation, examining our lives and repenting of our sins. And, finally, we celebrate what Christ has done for us and what he will do when his kingdom comes fully.

One of the gifts of our Anglican tradition are the thoughtful and faithful prayers passed down for the building up of our faith and life together. Among some of the most beautiful prayers we have are The Advent Collects (found on pg. 598–9 of your Book of Common Prayer). Collects are succinct prayers to be read at the beginning of every service, and unique to each week of the Christian year. They gather (or collect) our wayward intentions and focus our prayers toward our true purpose of worship – God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The four Advent collects, in particular, name our longings and desperate need through hopeful prayers that orient and prepare us for Jesus’ incarnation at Christmas and his return.

This devotional invites you to the simple path of keeping a Holy Advent by focusing on one collect for each week of Advent, and drawing out the themes of **Anticipation, Preparation, Jubilation, and Celebration**. We've also provided the Sunday lectionary readings on which we'll preach during worship. Use it for your individual prayers, in your small group, or with your spouse/family. There are discussion questions for each week for you to consider, as well.

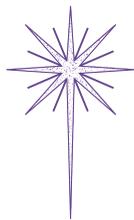
Using this devotional might look like:

1. Open your time of prayer/devotion by praying the collect for that week.
2. Consider one or more of the scriptures for that week. Maybe read one each day.
3. Read the reflection and considering the discussion questions privately or with others.
4. Record your thoughts or prayers in the "Journal" section.
5. Close your time by praying the collect.

We hope this deepens your knowledge and appreciation for our rich tradition and provides a common direction for our spiritual lives this Advent.

As you begin this devotional, keep in mind that the culmination will be an act of celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas Eve. Go into it with the knowledge that you are not alone, and that your hopeful longing will be met by joyous celebration!

In the grace and peace of Christ,
Holy Trinity Staff



ANTICIPATION



COLLECT

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK:

Isa 64:1-9a - Psalm 80 - 1 Cor 1:1-9 - Mark 13:24-37

Here we are between Christ's three Advents (*adventus* means "coming"). In his birth, Christ has come to "visit us in great humility;" Christ will come again "in his glorious majesty" when he returns at the end of the age; and in the meantime, we know that He comes to be with us (Immanuel, God with us) through the Holy Spirit. In every Advent, we long for Christ to be present and for the redemption He brings.

As you walk through Advent, remember His first coming, be attentive to how He is with us now, and anticipate His final coming, where he will redeem all things and every knee shall bow and tongue confess that He is Lord (Phil 2). Let us ask the Lord to prepare our hearts in this season, to clear out what distracts and pollutes—"casting away the works of darkness", letting the light of His word shine in our hearts, "putting on the armor of light".

Questions to Consider:

- **Isa 64:1-9a** - How do you identify with the prophet calling God to rend the heavens and come down? What is he anticipating and how does it echo your own anticipation?
- **Ps 80** - The psalmist calls out, "Restore us, O God" three times! How is your own desire for God to Shepherd, restore and save echoed in this psalm?
- **1 Cor 1:1-9** - What does Paul give thanks for? What gives him hope for the Corinthians and how is this hope for us, too?
- **Mark 13:24-37** - What does Jesus have to say about his coming again? What posture are we invited to and how might we encourage one another in it?

FOR YOUR DAILY REFLECTION AND PRAYER

1. Pray the Collect each day.
2. Consider using the reflection and texts on the last page throughout the week. Go slow and savor the scriptures.
3. If you gather with others this week (*we encourage it!*), choose a text and spend time discussing.
4. Pray and Listen to the Lord.
5. Close your time of prayer with the Collect.

PRAYER JOURNAL AND NOTES

CONSIDER RECORDING YOUR PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS BELOW.

PREPARATION



COLLECT

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK:

Isaiah 40:1–11 – Psalm 85 – II Peter 3:8–18 – Mark 1:1–8

Advent calls us to “prepare the way of the Lord,” filling in hopeless valleys and making treacherous mountains flat (Isa 40) on the path to God’s glorious return. As we travel through Advent, we begin to see that our anticipation and waiting requires something of us. With all those waiting for Christ’s return, we begin preparing, clearing out, and cleansing our lives through repentance and prayer, for God’s good work to easily take root in us and among us.

Praise the Lord that God does not leave us to prepare alone. This week’s collect reminds us that God has spoken in the incarnation of the Eternal Word (John 1) in Jesus Christ, and continues to reveal, encourage, and comfort us through Holy Scripture – God’s inspired Word. God has given us Scripture to help us “hold fast” to the “blessed hope” of Christ through constant hearing, learning, marking, and digesting. In our longing and waiting, Scripture is the well of hope to which Christians return over and over and in which God promises to encounter us anew. It is a well that never runs dry.

Questions to consider:

- **Isa 40:1–11** – Where are the deep valleys or high mountains in your own life? What kinds of preparation does it take to trek through them? What exhausts you? What sustains you?
- **Psalm 85** – Where in Holy Scripture do you hear God speaking peace to you? What ‘wells of hope’ do you return to in scripture?
- **II Peter 3:8–18** – Peter says that repentance and learning are ways we “grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord” as we wait for Christ’s return. Where are those places in your life where you might ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord?’ What do you need to repent of? Where do you need increased knowledge of God’s story in Holy Scripture?
- **Mark 1:1–8** – Recall your own baptism. How did you prepare? Being raised to new life, what has been helpful to maintain your faith? If you haven’t been baptized, consider God’s call to die to self and be raised with Christ Jesus.

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COLLECT

O Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient toward the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world, we may be found a people acceptable in your sight; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK:

Isaiah 65:17-25 - Ps 126 - 1 Thess 5:12-28 - John 3:22-30 or 1:19-28

This week we light the pink candle and we turn toward joy! In the darkness and longing, we remember we are preparing for joy--for creation to be redeemed, for our grief and sadness to be healed and comforted, for unending communion with our God. JOY and REJOICING abound in each of the texts this week. Notice how many times they appear in this week's scripture readings. Pay attention to which occurrence or phrasing catches your ear or stirs your heart.

In this time of preparation, may we let God turn our hearts toward Himself; may He increase and we decrease in our self-preoccupation, self-promotion, self-preservation; may we listen to the prophets and all that came before to make ready Christ's way. May we, like John the Baptist and all the prophets before him, find joy in the long awaited Christ and the life to which he calls us. May we rejoice in anticipation together and may we taste joy this week!

Questions to consider:

- **Isa 65:17-25** - What are sources of joy in the new heavens and earth described by Isaiah? Which stirs anticipation in you?
- **Psalms 126** - What "great things" that the Lord has done for you could be a source of joy?
- **1 Thess 5:12-28** - What role does joy have in Paul's final instructions to the Thessalonian church? What would it look like for us to practice joy as a community this Advent?
- **John 3:22-30** - What did John the Baptist experience at Christ's coming? How might we echo his words of exaltation and likewise enter into joy?

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ADVENT FOUR / CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATION

COLLECT

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and as we are sorely hindered by our sins from running the race that is set before us, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK:

[II Samuel 7:1–17](#) – [Psalm 132](#) – [Romans 16:25–27](#) – [Luke 1:26–38](#)

Advent Four is often called “Annunciation Sunday,” in which we remember the Gabriel’s announcement of Jesus’s incarnation to Mary. Rev. Tish Harrison Warren reminds us that as the church together awaits Jesus’ coming, “. . . we remember two thousand years ago when one teenage girl, her belly swollen with life, was waiting to go into labor.”* Mary received Jesus and God’s work for the world that night, welcoming mighty grace with her own resounding “Yes! Let it be unto me!” (Luke 1:38).

This week’s collect joins in the life Mary receives, asking that we, too, may have the Lord’s power and grace stirred up within us.

As our trajectory in God’s mercy and grace speeds toward Christ’s redemption of the world, we pray that there is always growing anticipation, faithful preparation, and renewed jubilation – all bursting forth into celebration of Christ among us at Christmas.

Questions to consider:

- **II Samuel 7:1–17** – God reminds David of his faithfulness in the past (v. 8). What God has “brought you out of?”
- **Psalm 132** – The psalmist remembers God’s covenant with David. What promises do you long for God to fulfill in your life?
- **Romans 16:25–27** – Like Mary, Paul writes about God’s “secret” bursting forth into the light, a mystery we will “receive.” How might we receive even the things we don’t fully comprehend?
- **Luke 1:26–38** – Where might God be calling you to say, “Yes! Let it be unto me!”

* (Warren, *Advent: The Season of Hope*, 74)

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CHRISTMAS

COLLECT

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born [this day] of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK:

Isaiah 62:6–12 - Psalm 97 - Titus 3:4–7 - Luke 2:1–20

This year is a rare occurrence where we celebrate Advent 4 and Christmas Eve on the same day. Our waiting is over! Jesus is born and our Savior has come! Our deepest longings have been met in Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Now it's time to celebrate what God has done for us.

We celebrate with the great feast in worship and Holy Communion, where we give thanks (eucharist means thanksgiving!) for all God has done for us in Jesus. In worship together, we cast off the *works of darkness* and proclaim the light of Christ. As we read and hear God's word preached, we *prepare our hearts, inwardly digesting* what God has done for us, and respond in repentance with confession. We offer ourselves, our prayers, gifts, and lives out of the *joy of God's forgiveness and promises to be with us*. And finally, we join with all the company of heaven to feast in Communion with Christ, *stirring up* in us the desire and power to go into the world and tell all about what Christ has done for us.

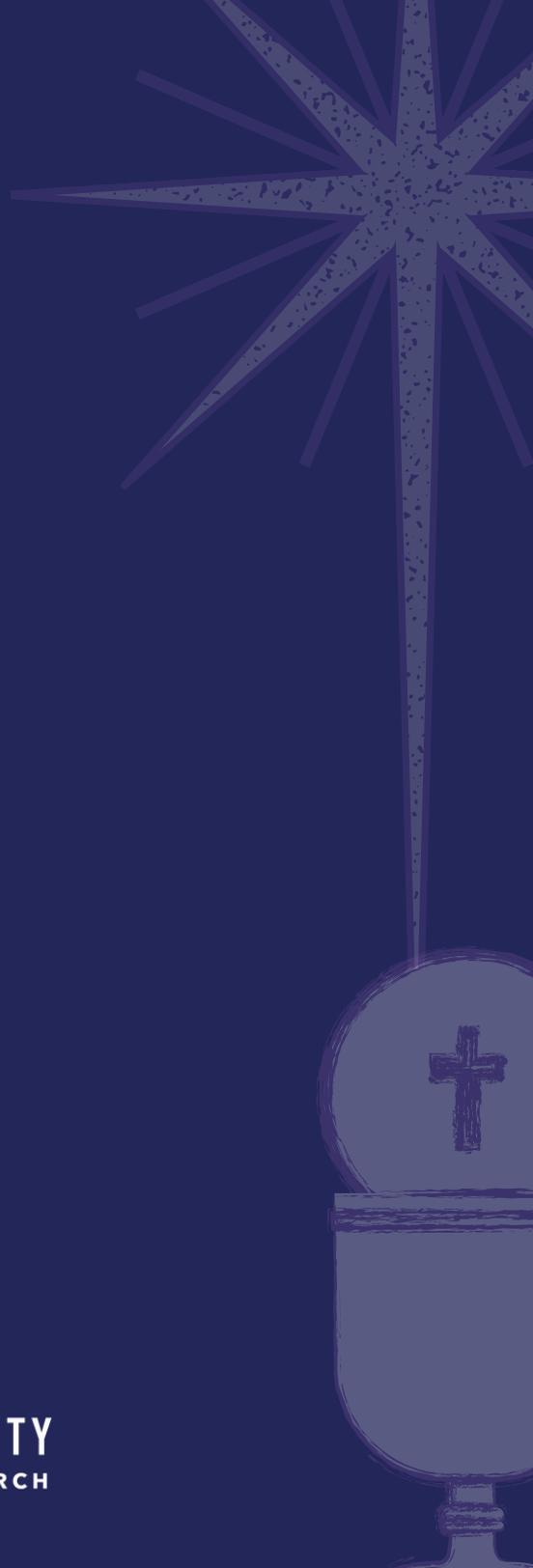
Over Christmastide, continue to feast and celebrate. Gather with Christian brothers and sisters; feast with friends and family; share with others the good work born into your life through Jesus.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

FOR YOUR DAILY REFLECTION AND PRAYER

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HOLY TRINITY
ANGLICAN CHURCH