

ADVENT: WEEK 1

ADVENT HOPE

Bible Reading Plan:

Monday - Romans 8:22-25

01

Tuesday - Isaiah 7

02

Wednesday - Isaiah 9

03

Thursday - Micah 5

04

Friday - 2 Samuel 7:1-16

05

INTRODUCTION

'The Christian practice of time is one of the most powerful means of ancient spirituality, and it is currently being rediscovered by the church.' These words were written by Robert Webber who, perhaps more than anyone else, had been inviting the church to rediscover many of the riches of her spiritual traditions. One particular treasure that he highlighted was the observance of the Church Calendar where Christians observe seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.

This booklet is an attempt on behalf of 'The Gathering' to more fully and deeply engage with the season of Advent. For those for whom 'Advent' is something new and unfamiliar, we hope you will discover something of the beauty, mystery, richness, and challenge of the season as you join us on this journey. The word 'advent' itself comes from the latin word 'adventus', which means 'coming' or 'arrival' and is used to describe the period of the four weeks leading up to the celebration of Jesus the Messiah at Christmas.

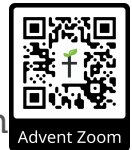
HOW TO USE THE BOOKLET

This first booklet is entitled 'Advent Hope' and focuses on the Old Testament expectation and longing for God to rescue and deliver his people by raising up an anointed one, a Messiah.

There are daily reflections from Monday to Friday and for each day there will be a Scripture to read. There will also be a quote, poem, prayer or song to help you engage with God during this time. At the back of the booklet you'll find space to write down anything that arises from your time each day.

SOME HELPFUL LINKS

To make this a communal journey as well as an individual one, we will also be hosting spaces over Zoom Monday to Thursday from 9-9:20pm to engage together on the day's reflection. Advent Zoom: <https://qrco.de/bbpjan>



We've also created a YouTube playlist where you can find the songs referred to in the booklet: <https://qrco.de/bbpemS>



To use the codes to the right, just scan them with your phone camera or QR code app.

MONDAY | DAY 1

Daily Scripture: Romans 8:22-25

Read the scripture in The Message version below.
Read slowly - you might want to read it out loud.

'All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.'

Romans 8:22-25 | The Message

Quote: Learning To Wait

'Celebrating Advent means learning how to wait. Waiting is an art which our impatient age has forgotten... The blessedness of waiting is lost on those who cannot wait, and the fulfillment of promise is never theirs. They want quick answers to the deepest questions of life and miss the value of those times of anxious waiting, seeking with patient uncertainties until the answers come'

| Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Questions to Ponder...

- 01 Why do you think that the Christian tradition thinks it is important to have a period of waiting and preparation before Christmas?
- 02 Do you agree with Bonhoeffer that 'waiting is an art which our impatient age has lost'? Why?
- 03 Are you able to name the things that you, your family and your community are waiting for from God?
- 04 What might it look like to wait well?

TUESDAY | DAY 2

Daily Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7

Find the above scripture in your bible and read slowly - you might want to read it out loud.

Advent Quote: Isaiah - The Advent Prophet

'If we are to enter into Advent in a truly spiritual and meaningful way, we must keep in mind the messages of Isaiah to Israel. The people of Israel were in a deplorable circumstance. Their lives, homes, nation, families, wealth, and positions in society were threatened by an impending political disaster that would throw them all into ruin. In addition they were in no spiritual condition to go through such a catastrophe. Repent, turn to God in true conversion, proclaimed Isaiah. Then hope in God's rescue, for God will surely send you a Savior and restore the greatness of Jerusalem.'

| Robert Webber

Advent Prayer

On this long dark night we await the coming of Christ. We long for the light of his presence, with us and in us. When our souls are deeply troubled, and our hearts break with the weight of sorrow, may our grief be seasoned with love, and our sorrow be buoyed by hope. In our times of God-forsakenness and estrangement, May we gaze on the innocent One, made perfect through suffering, and see in him our vulnerable God, who saves in weakness and pain. May our suffering empty us of pride, and lead us to true joy our only security, in Christ the infinite depths of God's grace.

| Christine Sine

Advent Song

O'Come O'Come Emmanuel

Have a listen to this beautiful song and let the words and melody take you deeper into the story of Advent. (Reminder: you can find a beautiful version of this song on our YouTube Playlist - see page 2)

WEDNESDAY | DAY 3

Daily Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-9

Advent Quote: A Fearless Inventory

"Advent is designed to show that the meaning of Christmas is diminished to the vanishing point if we are not willing to take a fearless inventory of the darkness. The authentically hopeful Christmas spirit has not looked away from the darkness but straight into it. Otherwise, the message is cheap and false."

| Rev. Fleming Rutledge

Questions to Ponder...

- 01 Do you agree with that Christmas is diminished by being unwilling to observe Advent? Why?
- 02 What might be on your list if you took a fearless inventory of the darkness?
- 03 What possible good can come from looking straight into the darkness?

Advent Poem: Advent Good Wishes

Give you joy, wolf,
when Messiah makes you meek
and turns your roar into a cry that
justice has been done for the poor.

Give you joy, lamb,
when Messiah saves you from jeopardy
and all fear is overwhelmed
by his converting grace.

Give you joy, wolf and lamb together,
as Messiah brings worldwide peace and,
side by side, you shelter
under Jesse's spreading shoot.

| David Grieve

THURSDAY | DAY 4

Daily Scripture: Micah 5:2

Advent Quote: King From Bethlehem

'The circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth also associate Jesus with David. Jesus and David share the same place of origin, the little village of Bethlehem. The Old Testament stresses that Bethlehem was David's family home (1 Sam. 16:1, 4, 18; 17:58). Jesus is also from Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5-6, 8, 16).

'The chief priest and scribes inform Herod the Great that the prophet Micah had long ago announced that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (Matt. 2:6). This King from Bethlehem would clearly be the Davidic Messiah.'

| C. L. Quarles

Advent Poem: Hope And Mystery

The Advent story
of hope and mystery,
anticipation, preparation,
a kingdom
of this world and the next,
and a king
appearing when we least expect it.
Heaven touching earth,
the footsteps of the divine
walking dusty roads
as once they did in Eden,
and a people,
searching for a Saviour,
and walking past the stable.
Open eyes and hearts,
that this might be
an Advent of hope to the world.

| John Birch

FRIDAY | DAY 5

Daily Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-16

Advent Psalm

Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said:

“I have set the crown on one who is mighty,
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
I have found my servant David;

He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the
Rock of my salvation!’ I will make him the firstborn, the
highest of the kings of the earth. Forever I will keep my
steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will
stand firm. I will establish his line forever, and his
throne as long as the heavens endure.

But now you have spurned and rejected him;
You are full of wrath against your anointed.
You have renounced the covenant with your servant;
You have defiled his crown in the dust
You have removed the scepter from his hand,
and hurled his throne to the ground.

| Psalm 89:19-21, 26-29, 38-39, 44

Advent Quote: Asking Tough Questions

'The acts of casting the crown into the dust, spurning the covenant, and destroying the fortifications (Psa. 89: 39–40) would usually be associated with the activities of Israel's enemies.

Here, however, God is the perpetrator of the hostile acts. How can these deeds be reconciled with his "love," "faithfulness," and "covenant" celebrated in the hymn and oracle (vv. 1–37)?

'Rather than dismiss these [difficult questions], the godly readers reflect, study, observe, listen, and gain wisdom. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is so much sweeter to godly readers when they have sat with the exiles in darkness and asked some tough questions.'

| W. Van Gemeren

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

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