

Advent
REFLECTIONS

2021



AWAITING
Arrival

written by
Rev. LaShaundra McCarty



"COMING" ADVENT

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here,
Till the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, O Come - Emmanuel

Even though television and social media feeds during November and December are barraged with advertisements of sales and a focus on consumerism, the core meaning of this season is found in Advent. The word advent is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” It is a month-long observance of the much awaited coming of Christ to a world that is desperately anticipating his arrival.

The people of Israel had heard for generations that a savior was coming. He was proclaimed to be the King, who would establish a kingdom. With his arrival, he was bringing hope, joy,

love, and peace. For many, these gifts that he brought us are acknowledged by the lighting of a candle for each Sunday leading to Christmas Day. It is a time to remember the promises of God, God’s forgiving nature, and God’s ever-abiding presence. Let us celebrate the coming of the King!

“

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Psalm 25:1-10
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36

Lord
Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming
among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your
kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Henri Nouwen



DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

MONDAY

Psalm 90; Num 17:1-11; 2 Peter 3:1-18

PRAYER

Omnipotent God, Increase our faith that we may have staying power to keep believing. Keep our dreams tucked away defiantly incubating even when outer appearances would seem unfavorable. Give us the faith to keep looking ahead and moving forward. Give us the ability to outlast doubt. May we fight through all opposition holding to promises that You will fulfill.

Amen.

Take a moment to write or draw what you are feeling during this season, whether the sentiment is happiness or sadness.

TUESDAY

Psalm 90; 2 Sam. 7:18-29; Rev. 22:12-16

PRAYER

Gracious God, the season of Advent has come. We began to anticipate the coming of Christ into the world. Our world which on beautiful sunny days appears flawless but truly isn't. Our world consists of war and travail, deception and unease, poverty and disease, selfishness, and hate. Yet, You placed the very essence of Yourself in Your son and brought him into the world as innocent child on the behalf of the world. During this season, we commemorate his birth because even with the list caused by human imperfections, You are perfect in our weaknesses.

Amen.

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

WEDNESDAY

Psalm 90; Isaiah 1:24-31; Luke 11:29-32

PRAYER

There are certainly woes but there are also joys. There are reasons to grieve. Yet, there is much to celebrate. There is fear of what will be but there is also love that conquers trepidation. Love, which is what You placed in that manger when You gave these sometimes confused and inconsistent inhabitants of the world a child name Emmanuel. Into this world, You bring us Your son. Thank you for unmerited favor. Thank You for Your gift to us, Gracious God.

Amen

THURSDAY

Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 3:5-12; Philippians 1:12-18a

PRAYER

Faithful God, who changes not, thank You for Your mind-blowing offer to take our shortcomings, sins, fears, our... our everything onto Your shoulders. Thank You for carrying what we accumulated. Thank You for sharing the load so that we would not be overtaken by it. Thank You. Thank You Christ.

Amen

Take a moment to look around your home, community, or city. Where do you see God?



DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

FRIDAY

Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 3:13-18;
Philippians 1:18b-26

PRAYER

Merciful God, before we knew that we needed a Savior you saved us. Before we knew that we would crave your companionship, you offered your presence. Before we knew that we would have a need, You give us your provision. You anticipate our needs and wants. Thank you for being so mindful of us.

Amen.

SATURDAY

Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 4:1-6; Luke 9:1-6

PRAYER

Gracious God, Jesus coming to the world is a gift of immeasurable impact, but it was not for us to keep to ourselves. The joy of him dwelling amongst humanity to teach us how to love and live was meant to be shared. Help us to speak words, perform acts and live lives in honor of the teachings of Christ.

Amen.

How to Practice Breath Prayer

Initially, begin by practicing deep breathing. Take in full, deep breaths from your diaphragm (stomach). Be sure to not just breath from your chest. Take in and release 10 full breaths. Relax and observe what is happening in your body. After you practice, incorporate scripture or characteristic of God into the breathes.

First, **breathe in**, speaking a biblical name or image of God. Second, **breathe out**, sharing a God-given desire or characteristic of God. For example, breathe in, "Emmanuel." Breathe out, "God with us." Breathe this breath prayer ten times.

Ponder these questions:

When are you most able to hear God's voice or feel God's presence?

In what ways has God been inviting you to come?

When is God most present with you and you most present with God?



Dear Jesus

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others.

Amen.

Prayer of Mother Teresa

Love

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

MONDAY

Psalm 126; Isaiah 40:1-11; Rom. 8:22-25

PRAYER

Loving God, You are faithful to us when we are so undeserving. You continue to uphold us though we often fail to remember how caring and loving Your ways are to us. You pull us kicking and screaming when should already know that whatever You are doing is for our greatest good. We spaz out when the mountain You set us before is steep and looks unclimbable. We unlace our boots and retreat sometimes quietly considering whether or not You thought through such a seemingly unconquerable goal for those who are far more comfortable traversing hills. We do all of this until we remember that we climb with You. You are not watching us stumble from the base to the apex from some remote place. You are not standing afar rejoicing in our fear, frustrations and fleeing. You are in front of us guiding us in where to step. You are beside us buffering our slips on the terrain. You are behind us keeping us upright. You are there surrounding us as we decide to take the climb. You support our agreement regardless of how reluctant. You solidify our courage, which is the ability to continue trusting You even when fear is present.

Amen.

TUESDAY

Psalm 126; Isaiah 19:18-25; 2 Peter 1:2-15

PRAYER

Gracious God, Thank You for the blessings that grace us daily. Thank You for blessings that come out of nowhere. Thank you for the gift of family—given and created. Thank you that You give us what is best for us. In Christ's name under the endless benevolence of Your grace, we pray.

Amen.



What acts of kindness will show this Advent?

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

WEDNESDAY

Psalm 126; Isaiah 35:3-7; Luke 7:18-30

PRAYER

God of Love,
Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.
He is a sign of your love. Help us walk in
that love during the weeks of Advent,
As we wait and prepare for his coming.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.

- Author Unknown

THURSDAY

Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 6:1-8; 2 Cor. 8:1-15

PRAYER

Almighty God, You know us better than
we know ourselves. You hear what we are
unwilling to say to others. You see in us
what we are often unable to see in our-
selves. Help us to believe what You reveal.
Help us to hear Your testimony of us over
the voice of others.

Amen.

Love is can be displayed in various ways.
It can be shown through words, acts of
kindness, compassion and affection.

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL LOVED?

HOW DO YOU EXPRESS LOVE?

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

FRIDAY

Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 8:4-12; 2 Cor. 9:1-15

PRAYER

Ever-present God, You shaped our features, personalities, and created us to be one-of-a-kind. You hear our inner yearnings, secret cries, and unexpressed feelings.

As we continuously place You as the center of our lives, strengthen our faith. Help us to learn how to trust and teach us how to truly live. May we always remember that You are God and are not limited to our understanding. Use us thoroughly in all aspects of our lives. Help us to be a blessing to others in this world.

Amen

SATURDAY

Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 9:8-15; Luke 1:57-66

PRAYER

Faithful God, You determine the fate of those who earnestly seek you. You are the game changer, who makes confused certain, the poor rich and the hungry full. You lift our heads during times of adversity. Our voices praise You because You are our strength. When we ask for your favor, may we be faithful enough to keep our promises to You. May we be people of our word when we make vows to You. Endow us with the capacity to both receive and honor the blessings. You are the foundation of our lives and it is in Your name that we pray.

Amen



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18



Dear

Dear Child of God, you are loved with a love that nothing can shake, a love that loved you long before you were created, a love that will be there long after everything has disappeared. You are precious, with a preciousness that is totally quite immeasurable. And God wants you to be like God. Filled with life and goodness and laughter—and joy.

God, who is forever pouring out God's whole being from all eternity, wants you to flourish. God wants you to be filled with joy and excitement and ever longing to be able to find what is so beautiful in God's creation: the compassion of so many, the caring, the sharing. And God says, Please, my child, help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what, my child? As you do this—hey, presto—you discover joy. Joy, which you had not sought, comes as the gift, as almost the reward for this non-self-regarding caring for others.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Joy

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

MONDAY

Isaiah 11:1-9; Num. 16:1-19; Heb. 13:7-17

PRAYER

Everlasting God, who hears even the mere minute whisper of our hearts, we surrender to this time of reflection and aim to grow closer to you. May our hearts be filled with gratefulness, joy and peace. Maintain our joy!

Amen.

TUESDAY

Isa. 11:1-9; Num. 16:20-35; Acts 28:23-31

PRAYER

All-Sufficient God, Give us the resolve to not conform to the patterns of others. May Christ's example be our goal. Help us to stand in the heritage of holiness that Jesus modeled. May former misgivings that captured us during lapses of faith no longer dictate the patterns in which we live. Open new paths for us that allow us to receive what we need to be spiritually, mentally, and emotionally sound. Give us the strength to do so. In Your name we pray. Amen

Negativity Fast and Gratitude Feast

Having a joyful heart and joy-filled life springs in part from the words we profess. During this week of focusing on joy, join a fast on negativity and feast on gratitude for this week.

Tips:

- Avoid negative words, thoughts and acts toward yourself and others.
- Write a list of what you are grateful for and place it on your mirror.
- Start and end every day telling God what you are grateful for especially on the days that are challenging.
- Tell your family members and friends why you are grateful for them.

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.
Psalm 47:1

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 11:1-9; Micah 4:8-13; Luke 7:31-35

PRAYER

Within the genesis of all that is good, we find You. You create, shape and design that which gives us purpose, joy, peace and the purest essence of life, for which we thank You. Thank You. Through instances of challenges, ease, contemplation, thoughtlessness, solitude and overly populated frenzy, You are present. You adhere to no boundary in the realm of the mind, tangible parameters, spiritual bondage or freedom. You are unconfined and undefined. You are, the One who is held in our hearts, mind and spirit, yet neither forced to enter nor forced to stay. You are undefined and unconfined. You are the One who is described but defies full description, known yet never known in Your fullness. You are truly a Wonder— an unexplainable, “awe” provoking, soul-inspiring, wonder and we love You more than the mere words of our human vocabulary can ever allow us to attempt to express. We love You. You keep us together. You keep us coherent. You keep us whole. You keep us aiming. You keep us persevering. You keep us living. Due to You, we find power to continue, confidence to do what is brave and faith to withstand a stumble. In awe of our Magnificent God, Amen.

THURSDAY

Psalm 80:1-7; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10:10-18

PRAYER

Limitless, unconstrained, incomprehensible God, Your Spirit cuts through that which we consider inconceivable and gives birth to a limitless array of possibility. When You revealed Your vision for the people of Israel, You shared a spiritual possibility that could be manifested in the physical world. They had to learn to stay faithful while waiting on the manifestation of your word.

You taught us the power of “words.” Make us wise masters of the spoken word. May we be bold speakers of Your truth. May our words bring life to our lives and the lives of those around us as we learn to discern Your will and communicate that to those You wish to reach including ourselves. Bring to life to that which needs to be restored. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Speak Lord.

Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm 80:1-7
Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)
Hebrews 10:5-10



Shalom

Jehovah Shalom, You grant your children peace that passes understanding, which more often than not is a faculty reserved for the mind. Pass what human beings can understand is where your peace is found. Peace is a place beyond our physical realities. It is where the human spirit experiences the calm of God, even when turmoil and confusion feel like the order of the day. According to our eyes, peace is at times unattainable, but You offer it freely if we ask and willingly journey pass our barriers to get there. Teach us how to protect the sanctity of our peace.

Amen.

Peace

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

MONDAY

Psalm 113; Gen. 25:19-28; Col. 1:15-20

PRAYER

Benevolent Creator of all that is and ever will be, thank you for another beautiful day to experience Your abundant love and grace. It's beautiful not due to the weather or circumstances but due to our relationship with you, which not only gives us peace. Give us the ability to gain all that You would have us to gain in this time of preparation that we may reach your promises.

Amen.

TUESDAY

Psalm 113; Gen. 30:1-24; Romans 8:18-30

PRAYER

God of peace lead us into a place where our longings, unfulfilled desires, frustrations, and all else that proves disconcerting melts away. Even before these things are resolved grant us, peace of mind to handle them with You as the sole source of this heavenly solace. Give us the wisdom to seek you first daily. Calm our hearts and minds with Your peace.

Amen.

Breath Prayer

Initially, begin by practicing deep breathing. Take in full, deep breaths from your diaphragm (stomach). Be sure to not just breath from your chest. Take in and release 10 full breaths. Relax and observe what is happening in your body. After you practice, incorporate scripture or characteristic of God into the breathes.

First, **breathe in**, speaking a biblical name or image of God. Second, **breathe out**, sharing a God-given desire or characteristic of God. For example, breathe in, "**God is peace.**" Breathe out, "**Peace is in me.**" Breathe this breath prayer ten times.

Ponder these questions:

- What is disrupting your peace?
- What do you imagine peace to be?
- Where do you experience the most peace?

DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

WEDNESDAY

Luke 1:46b-55; Micah 4:1-5; Eph. 2:11-22

PRAYER

Purposeful God, Take that seed of confidence that we possess in ourselves to do what You are beckoning and nurture it into a seed-bearing tree with roots deeply planted in the soil of Your holy word, example of your holy Son, faithfulness of Christ's holy mother and proclamation of who You say we are. Grow it greatly as we affirm what You say and choose to walk behind You. Yes, Lord to what You have chosen. A call to all the world that You love.

Amen.

THURSDAY

Lk. 1:46b-55; Micah 4:6-8; 2 Peter 1:16-21

PRAYER

God, You supply all that we need to do what we are called to do and handle what we will face. We cannot turn away because the dream seems too big or the way to get there seems unlikely. We cannot turn away because we do not understand or it seems too difficult. We cannot turn away because our brothers and sisters are standing, waiting. We cannot deny them. We cannot deny You. Help your image bearers deliver your message.

Amen.



DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

FRIDAY

Nativity of the Lord

SONG OF WORSHIP “AGNES DEI”

Alleluia Alleluia
For our Lord God Almighty reigns
Alleluia Alleluia
For our Lord God Almighty reigns
Alleluia

Holy Holy
Are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
You are Holy

Holy
Are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
Amen

Holy Holy
Are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
You are Holy

Holy
Are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
Amen

SATURDAY

Nativity of the Lord

PRAYER

Powerful God, Transform us into worshipers craving your truth and presence. May we seek to know You and make You known. As we worship, break the bonds of anything that is not of You. Give us the freedom to dance, sing and pray unhindered. May the genuineness of our worship be contagious. In Christ's name,

Amen.



Reflect on the song “Agnes Dei.”

There are several versions on YouTube. Donnie McClurkin, Hillsong and Michael W. Smith all have a rendition on YouTube.

Listen to several versions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Best described as a “Citizen of the World” whether home or abroad, LaShaundra aims to positively impact the lives of those she encounters. After returning to the States after a short term assignment in South Africa through Global Ministries, she found herself fighting for space in a crashing market. After fruitless job-hunting during the height of the recession, she stopped asking for a job and created her own opportunity by entering the world of speaking and training.

Since 2009, she has worked with hundreds of ministries, nonprofits, entrepreneurs and companies to navigate the social media landscape, craft their visions and build dynamic teams. Watching leaders learn how to cultivate healthy communication or witnessing the intersection between vision and lived reality are moments LaShaundra lives for.

For over two years, she used this combination of experiences as the Public Information Officer/Community Relations Manager for the City of Gulfport Mayor’s Office. As the city spokesperson and liaison, she worked to build transformative relationships with the community.

Her educational background includes a Master of Divinity from Columbia International Seminary, Master of Arts in Digital Media Production from Emerson College and Bachelor of Arts in Radio & Television Production from the University of Central Florida. She is also an authorized partner of 5 Behaviors of a Cohesive Team and Everything DiSC, and Constant Contact Certified Partner.

LaShaundra currently lives in Biloxi, MS with her husband John McCarty, III and children, Caleb and Kylar.

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