

Advent Devotional

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THE STORY OF GOD

The Christian truth is not just a ragbag of detachable doctrines and ideas that you can rearrange in any order. "It's a story, the story of God and the world, the story of God and Jesus, the story of God and you and me. How do we learn this story? How do we make it our own?"

The Christian Year

"The Bible offers itself to us as a great story, a sprawling and complex narrative, inviting us to come in and make it our own. The Gospels, the very heart of scripture, likewise tell a story not merely to give us information about Jesus but in order to provide a narrative we can inhabit, a story we must make our own." Following the Christian calendar helps us at this point. It orders our year by the story of the Bible, by following "the key events in the life of Jesus: his birth at Christmas, his death on Good Friday, his resurrection on Easter Day, his Ascension forty days later, and his sending of the Spirit at Pentecost." This becomes "a solid framework within which to teach and live the gospel, the scriptures, and the Christian life."

At the heart of the traditional approach to the Christian calendar is, among other things, the deep truth that "the story you tell with your body, with your outward behaviour and habits, is the story you learn in your heart." The Christian year, if followed through faithfully, is an embodied story: "fasting and feasting by turns, kneeling in adoration at Christmas, following Jesus into the wilderness, singing Hosanna on Palm Sunday, sitting with Jesus at the Last Supper, following him to Calvary, singing for joy by the empty tomb, and so on. This is...a deep-rooted and long-tested...way of making real in our imagination and experience the story of God and the world which came to climax in Jesus and reaches out in love to us and the whole world."

The Advent Season

The Christian year does not begin on January 1, it begins with the season of Advent—four Sundays before Christmas. The giant cultural-machine of consumerism gone nuts treats this same period of time not as Advent but as the Christmas season. The shopping malls and radio stations shout "Buy! Buy! Buy!" and "Go! Go! Go!" and "Do! Do! Do!" But the Church shouts "Wait! Slow down! Listen! Remember! and Prepare!"

Saturday		December 13		Day 14
AM	Psalm 30, 32	Isaiah 8:1–15	2 Thessalonians 3:6–18	
PM	Psalm 43, 43	Luke 22:31–38	1 Samuel 3:1–21; 8:10–22; 9:15–10:9	
Sunday		December 14		Day 15
AM	Psalm 63:1–11, 98	Isaiah 13:6–13	Hebrews 12:18–29	
PM	Psalm 103	John 3:22–30	1 Samuel 16–17	
Monday		December 15		Day 16
AM	Psalm 41, 52	Isaiah 8:16–9:1	2 Peter 1:1–11	
PM	Psalm 44	Luke 22:39–53	1 Kings 17:1–16; 18:17–46	
Tuesday		December 16		Day 17
AM	Psalm 45	Isaiah 9:1–7	2 Peter 1:12–21	
PM	Psalm 47, 48	Luke 22:54–69	Isaiah 6:1–13; 9:1–7	
Wednesday		December 17		Day 18
AM	Psalm 119:49–72	Isaiah 9:8–17	2 Peter 2:1–10a	
PM	Psalm 49	Mark 1:1–8	Jeremiah 8:22–9:11	
Thursday		December 18		Day 19
AM	Psalm 50	Isaiah 9:18–10:4	2 Peter 2:10b–16	
PM	Psalm 33	Matthew 3:1–12	Micah 5:1–5	
Friday		December 19		Day 20
AM	Psalm 40, 54	Isaiah 10:5–19	2 Peter 2:17–22	
PM	Psalm 51	Matthew 11:2–15	Habakkuk 1:1–2:1; 3:16–19	
Saturday		December 20		Day 21
AM	Psalm 55	Isaiah 10:20–27	Jude 17–25	
PM	Psalm 138, 139	Luke 3:1–9	Malachi 4:1–6	
Sunday		December 21		Day 22
AM	Psalm 24, 29	Isaiah 42:1–12	Ephesians 6:10–20	
PM	Psalm 8, 84	John 3:16–21	Luke 1:26–38	
Monday		December 22		Day 23
AM	Psalm 61, 62	Isaiah 11:1–9	Revelation 20:1–10	
PM	Psalm 112, 115	John 5:30–47	Luke 1:39–56	
Tuesday		December 23		Day 24
AM	Psalm 66, 67	Isaiah 11:10–16	Revelation 20:11–21:8	
PM	Psalm 116, 117	Luke 1:5–25	Luke 1:57–80	
Wednesday		December 24		Day 25
AM	Psalm 45, 46	Isaiah 35:1–10	Revelation 22:12–21	
PM	Psalm 89:1–29	Luke 1:67–80	Matthew 1:18–25	

The Advent Scripture Readings

During Advent our Scripture readings lead us to recall, simultaneously, “the preparation of Israel and the world for the coming of Jesus at Christmas and the preparation of the church and the world for his final second coming.” These two moments in history are umbilically joined together. The first is not only the preparation for the second, it forms a kind of template for it: preparing for Christmas teaches us how to prepare for the great and massive Advent that is still to come in the future. So during Advent we remember the great promises of both the Old and New Testaments “that one day the God who created the world will flood it with his glory, transforming it so that it thrills and throbs with his love, justice and peace.” In this renewed cosmos, we will have renewed “bodies and new tasks to perform, celebrating and implementing God’s victory over evil, injustice and death itself...[But] this Advent hope, this second-coming hope, isn’t something that will arrive simply by the steady work of the church, the eventual climax of a long, slow process. It will be a fresh act of grace, of new creation, completing what was done in the cross, the resurrection and the ascension, but also going way beyond them in the remaking of the entire cosmos.” “Learning to live appropriately between the two ‘comings’, under the rescuing rule of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit, is what it means to be Christian.”

The Spiritual Pilgrimage During Advent

In these wintry weeks leading up to Christmas, the Bible passages that shape our Advent journey are just what we need. Looking to the beginning of the great Story in light of its glorious end, we begin the year with our imagination stretched from the garden in Genesis to the city with a garden in Revelation. Through our worship on Sundays and our daily Scripture reading and prayer, let us remember afresh that the evil of this world is doomed to be judged and burned by fire when Christ returns and everything is made new and whole again, and let us more clearly see those habits, relationships, vices, and blockages that hold us in their power. As we open our lives more fully to God, may we “become more attuned to the joyous wonder of Christ’s incarnation and better prepared for the fierce glory of his return.”

**Last quotation is from Bobby Gross, Living the Christian Year. All other quotations from N. T. Wright, For All The Saints and N. T. Wright, “Advent Oratorio: Preface.”*

**The Scriptures that follow are for use in daily devotions. Adapted from The Church of the Incarnation*

The Daily Scripture Readings for Prayer and Meditation

Sunday		November 30		Day 1
AM	Psalm 146, 147	Isaiah 1:1–9	2 Peter 3:1–10	
PM	Psalm 111, 112, 113	Matthew 25:1–13	Genesis 1–2:3	

Monday		December 1		Day 2
AM	Psalm 1, 2, 3	Isaiah 1:10–20	1 Thessalonians 1:1–10	
PM	Psalm 4, 7	Luke 20:1–8	Genesis 2:4–3:24	
Tuesday		December 2		Day
AM	Psalm 5, 6	Isaiah 1:21–31	1 Thessalonians 2:1–12	
PM	Psalm 10, 11	Luke 20:9–18	Genesis 6:11–22; 7:17–8:12,20–9:17	
Wednesday		December 3		Day 4
AM	Psalm 119:1–24	Isaiah 2:1–11	1 Thessalonians 2:13–20	
PM	Psalm 12, 13, 14	Luke 20: 19–26	Genesis 12:1–7; 15:1–6	
Thursday		December 4		Day 5
AM	Psalm 18:1–20	Isaiah 2:12–22	1 Thessalonians 3:1–13	
PM	Psalm 18:21–50	Luke 20:27–40	Genesis 22:1–19	
Friday		December 5		Day 6
AM	Psalm 16, 17	Isaiah 3:8–15	1 Thessalonians 4:1–12	
PM	Psalm 22	Luke 20:41–21:4	Genesis 28:10–22	
Saturday		December 6		Day 7
AM	Psalm 20, 21	Isaiah 4:2–6	1 Thessalonians 4:13–18	
PM	Psalm 110, 116, 117	Luke 21:5–19	Genesis 37, 41–46:7	
Sunday		December 7		Day 8
AM	Psalm 148, 149, 150	Isaiah 5:1–7	2 Peter 3:11–18	
PM	Psalm 114, 115	Luke 7:28–35	Exodus 2:1–3:22	
Monday		December 8		Day 9
AM	Psalm 25	Isaiah 5:8–23	1 Thessalonians 5:1–11	
PM	Psalm 9, 15	Luke 21:20–28	Exodus 12:1–36	
Tuesday		December 9		Day 10
AM	Psalm 26, 28	Isaiah 5:13–25	1 Thessalonians 5:12–28	
PM	Psalm 36, 39	Luke 21:29–38	Exodus 19:16–20:20	
Wednesday		December 10		Day 11
AM	Psalm 38	Isaiah 6:1–13	2 Thessalonians 1:1–12	
PM	Psalm 119:25–48	John 7:53–8:11	Joshua 1:1–11; 6:1–20	
Thursday		December 11		Day 12
AM	Psalm 37:1–18	Isaiah 7:1–9	2 Thessalonians 2:1–12	
PM	Psalm 37:19–42	Luke 22:1–13	Judges 2:6–23; 6:1–8:28	
Friday		December 12		Day 13
AM	Psalm 31	Isaiah 7:10–25	2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:5	
PM	Psalm 35	Luke 22:14–30	Ruth 1:1–2:13; 4	