

Advent

FOR MARRIED COUPLES

2021



PRAY

BUILD UNITY

TALK

LEARN MORE

ACT

LOVE BETTER

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Meditations by William C. Wacker

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601 River Ridge Parkway
Eagan, MN 55121

Introduction

Advent and the Christmas season present one of the most important chapters in the story of God's good creation, his great love for us, and his rescue of humanity. Moreover, it is an ongoing story, and we have a place in it. It is our story!

However, all the media, including social media, bombard us with an overwhelming amount of information. It is exceedingly difficult to sort out what is true from what is not. The result is often fear, division, and unrest. On top of that, the consumer society kicks into high gear at Christmastime. These confusing voices clamor for our attention and shape our view of reality. One of the reasons for praying with the Scriptures as a couple is to hear the truth clearly and to find and maintain our place in the true story of the world.

Special feasts and the seasons that prepare us to celebrate them are vital for our lives and our marriages. The Scriptures and our prayer together help to refocus us. We are living signs that point to God's great love for his people, a love that became incarnate in the birth of his son Jesus. When our marriages are marked by peace and unity, that peace and unity shows; we become living proclamations of the birth of Jesus and the difference that it really makes in the world.

We offer these daily Scriptures and meditations as a way to help busy couples to stay connected during the hectic Advent season.

A note on the meditations on the Scripture readings

In this Advent series, we will list all the citations for the readings each day. And while we will print out in full only one of those daily readings, most of these meditations will have both the Old Testament reading and the Gospel in mind. We encourage you to have a Bible ready to look up the other reading for the day.

The weekday readings in the Catholic lectionary are divided into three sections.

- **November 29–December 8:** Readings from Isaiah, the prophet of Advent. The meditations have the gospel in mind and follow this pattern: (1) the promise, (2) the promise fulfilled in Jesus, (3) our response.
- **December 9–16** Readings from the gospel are about John the Baptist. The meditations focus on the question, *Who is John the Baptist?*
- **December 17–24** The gospel readings focus on the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. This year we will interrupt that sequence on December 21 with a reflection on the first reading from Song of Songs.

Note: During Advent several feast days take precedence in the lectionary. For example, the feast of St. Andrew occurs on Tuesday, November 30, and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is on Sunday, December 12. We have chosen to use the Advent readings for those days.

However, we have kept the readings for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, which falls on Wednesday of the second week of Advent this year.

The Day of The Lord: A Key to Understanding Advent

One of the great promises that God makes in and through the prophets is that the day will come when he will act in a definitive way to set the world to rights. He will heal creation, he will bring justice, he will raise up the lowly and bring down the haughty and proud. It will be “the day of the LORD”¹ or “the day of the messiah.” It is more than a single day; it is an age, it is the whole reign of God. The prophets often simply referred to it as “the age to come,” or “in those days”, or “on that day.”

Among the many great promises is that “on that day” a great king from the line of David will come. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will rule with justice and love.

The Jews at the time of Jesus had been waiting for their long exile in Babylon to come to an end. It was true that they had returned from Babylon to the land, but they were still subject to foreign powers, and they had not seen the glory of the Lord return to their temple. They were longing for the true King, the Messiah, to come. In him God would act. God would defeat their enemies, return to the Temple, and usher in the great and glorious day of the Lord. On that day the resurrection would occur and creation itself would be healed and transformed. There would be a new heaven and a new earth.

The New Testament proclaims that the day of salvation has dawned in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. He has mounted his throne and ascended to his rightful place with his Father. That glorious, long-awaited day has begun in the present, and will be fulfilled when Jesus returns in glory, defeats all the enemies, and hands everything over to his Father so that “God will be all in all” (1 Cor 15:24–28).

The word “advent” means an arrival or a coming. It is the season when the Church celebrates the “arrival” of the Messiah at his birth. The Church looks with longing to his coming at the end of the present age, when “the day of the LORD” will be fully realized.

That the King is coming is very good news for us as well. The King is here. And he is coming again in all of his glory and splendor—to set the world right, to defeat death, to restore creation.

¹ LORD (in all capital letters) is the traditional way of indicating that the Hebrew word is God’s name, Yahweh. When we quote the Scripture text directly, we will follow this practice, using all capital letters. In the meditations, we will use “Lord.”



First Sunday of Advent: November 28, 2021

Jeremiah 33:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2; Luke 21:25–28,34–36

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." ³⁴

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise ³⁵ like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. ³⁶ Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

Meditation

One of the more challenging tasks we have as readers of highly symbolic literature is to accurately decode the symbols. There are, of course, multiple layers of meanings. What did the original author intend to say to his original audience? Is great cosmic distress a metaphor? If so, for what? Do the signs point to events in the near or distant future? Who is this Son of Man character?

Jesus answers the question by evoking Daniel 7:13-14: "As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . ¹⁴ To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed." Jesus is that Son of Man; he is the Messiah, the human being who will come with great power and glory to reverse the course of human history. His coming would be an event of such significance that it could only be described with great cosmic symbols. And yet Jesus will redefine power and glory. Both will be most clearly revealed in his self-emptying love on the cross. And both will be verified in the resurrection. Everything has changed. New creation has burst into the midst of the old. Nothing will ever be the same.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



First Week: Monday, November 29, 2021

Isaiah 2:1–5; Matthew 8:5–11

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² In days to come, the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; ³ many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the LORD'S mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Meditation

The promise: The day will come when nations will stream to the Lord's house. They will turn their weapons of war into tools to care for God's good creation. They will abandon war colleges and cease to fight with each other. That will be a great day!

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: The stream of nations coming to the Lord began as a trickle. A Roman centurion, both a Gentile and an integral part of the most powerful fighting force in the world, came humbly to Jesus (Matthew 8:5–11). The centurion demonstrated the kind of faith that Isaiah had anticipated. It was the kind of faith that Jesus had not seen in anyone in Israel.

Our response: We have come from all over the world. We are called to believe with the centurion that while we are unworthy, Jesus still desires to share one life with us. That belief should be reflected in the way in which we live. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord and work for peace.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week: Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Isaiah 11:1–10; Luke 10:21–24

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading Isaiah 11:1–10

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. ² The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, A spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, ³ and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, ⁴ But he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. ⁵ Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. ⁶ Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. ⁸ The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. ⁹ There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea. ¹⁰ On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Meditation

The promise: On that day the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon the son of David. When he rules all creation will be healed. The chaos that was reintroduced into God's good, ordered creation with the first sin will be undone. Traditional enemies will live together in peace. He will establish God's kingdom in the most wonderful and unexpected ways.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: That day has arrived in Jesus, the son of David, who was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21). He rejoiced that all things had been handed over to him. In him, God has made himself known.

Our response: We are truly blessed because we too have seen what prophets and kings longed to see. The Son has revealed himself to us. We participate in the great day of the Lord, which began with the birth of a small child in a small village in Judah.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week: Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Isaiah 25:6–10a; Matthew 15:29–37

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 25:6–10

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; ⁸ he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces; The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" ¹⁰ For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

Meditation

The promise: On that day there will be a great banquet. It will be the most wonderful feast one can imagine. On that day death will be destroyed and all tears will be wiped away. On that day God will save us.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: In Jesus that day has arrived. He cures the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others (Matthew 15:30), and in his death and resurrection, he will defeat our great enemy, death. That day has arrived, and Jesus hosts a great feast. He turns seven loaves of bread and a few fish into a feast for the great multitude. And there are leftovers!

Our response: In the breaking of the bread we will continue to know the Lord and be fed. He is the broken bread and poured-out wine. For he is the Lord for whom we have looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week: Thursday, December 2, 2021

Isaiah 26:1–6; Matthew 7:21, 24–27

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 26:1–6

On that day they will sing this song in the land of Judah: "A strong city have we; he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us. ² Open up the gates to let in a nation that is just, one that keeps faith. ³ A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; in peace, for its trust in you." ⁴ Trust in the LORD forever! For the LORD is an eternal Rock. ⁵ He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down; He tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust. ⁶ It is trampled underfoot by the needy, by the footsteps of the poor.

Meditation

The promise: On that day a great song will fill the land. The song will be about God's protection for those who trust him. Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock. He will protect the nation that trusts in him, but will humble those who are proud.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus told a parable about two builders (Matthew 7:24). One is wise, the other foolish. The wise builder builds on rock, the foolish on sand. The house built on rock will survive the inevitable storms of life; the other will collapse. Jesus is the Rock!

Our response: Sing Advent and Christmas songs with today's readings in mind. Listen to the promise and be wise. Hear God's words and act on them. Trust Jesus. Build your life and marriage on Jesus. He is the eternal rock.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week: Friday, December 3, 2021

Isaiah 29:17–24; Matthew 9:27–31

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 29:17–24

But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard be regarded as a forest! ¹⁸ On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. ¹⁹ The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. ²⁰ For the tyrant will be no more and the arrogant will have gone; All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, ²¹ those whose mere word condemns a man, Who ensnare his defender at the gate, and leave the just man with an empty claim. ²² Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham: Now Jacob shall have nothing to be ashamed of, nor shall his face grow pale. ²³ When his children see the work of my hands in his midst, they shall keep my name holy; they shall reverence the Holy One of Jacob, and be in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, and those who find fault shall receive instruction.

Meditation

The promise: On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The poor and the lowly will find justice and peace. Our enemies will be defeated, and the tyrants cut off.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: That day has arrived. Two blind men asked Jesus to heal them (Matthew 9:27). He asked a simple question: “Do you believe that I can do this?” They said yes. Jesus opened the eyes of the two blind men.

Our response: Jesus asks us the same question: “Do you believe that I can do this?” What is your response?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week: Saturday, December 4, 2021
Isaiah 30:19–21, 23–26; Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 30: 30:19–21, 23–26

O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem, no more will you weep; He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you. ²⁰ The Lord will give you the bread you need and the water for which you thirst. No longer will your Teacher hide himself, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher, ²¹ While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: "This is the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the right or to the left. ²³ He will give rain for the seed that you sow in the ground, And the wheat that the soil produces will be rich and abundant. On that day your cattle will graze in spacious meadows; ²⁴ The oxen and the asses that till the ground will eat silage tossed to them with shovel and pitchfork. ²⁵ Upon every high mountain and lofty hill there will be streams of running water. On the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall, ²⁶ The light of the moon will be like that of the sun and the light of the sun will be seven times greater (like the light of seven days). On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people, he will heal the bruises left by his blows.

Meditation

Promise: "No more will you weep; He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you. ²⁰ The Lord will give you the bread you need and the water for which you thirst. **No longer will your Teacher hide himself**, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher." You will see creation itself restored. On that day the LORD will bind up the wounds of his people.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus was teaching in public (Matthew 9:35). He was moved to compassion. He sent his disciples out to begin the restoration of creation by healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and driving out demons.

Our response: We are called to be agents of transformation. We are called to be the Lord's hands and feet, called to bind up the wounds of his people.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Sunday of Advent: December 5, 2021

Baruch 5:1–9; Philipians 1:4–6, 8–11; Luke 3:1–6

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 3:1–6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.³ He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, ⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Meditation

In the wild territory along the Jordan River, John baptized people and called them to repentance. He was preparing the way for Israel's God to return as their rightful king and true Lord. At long last Israel's exile was coming to an end. Herod's sons were put on notice. Their reign was coming to an end. So too was that of the Roman emperor, who presumptuously claimed to be son of god and lord of the world. John's mission was to announce that the true Son of God, the true Lord of the world, was coming. The course of human history was about to change.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week: Monday, December 6, 2021

Isaiah 35:1–10; Luke 5:17–26

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 35:1–10 (*excerpt*)

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. ² They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to them, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. ³ Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, ⁴ Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; With divine recompense he comes to save you. ⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing. . . . ⁸ A highway will be there, called the holy way; No one unclean may pass over it, nor fools go astray on it. ⁹ . . . It is for those with a journey to make, and on it the redeemed will walk. ¹⁰ Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; They will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee.

Meditation

The promise: God himself will come and save you. "Here is your God, he comes with vindication; With divine recompense he comes to save you." When our God comes, the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared, the lame will leap like a stag, and the tongue of the dumb will sing. Creation itself will be transformed. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the plain.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus does what only God can do: he forgives sins (Luke 5:20). To prove that it is God who is at work, Jesus also does what God does in the reading from Isaiah: he causes the lame to walk.

Our response: As we go about the tasks of ordinary family life, let's be aware that in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the God of the whole universe is present. And we get to celebrate his birthday!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week: Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Isaiah 40:1–11; Matthew 18:12–14

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Isaiah 40:1–11

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. ³ A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! ⁴ Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. ⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all mankind shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. ⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!" I answer, "What shall I cry out?" "All mankind is grass, and all their glory like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower wilts, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it. (So then, the people is the grass.) ⁸ Though the grass withers and the flower wilts, the word of our God stands forever." ⁹ Go up onto a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; Cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! ¹⁰ Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. ¹¹ Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, Carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

Meditation

The promise: Israel's long exile will come to an end. God himself will be like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering his lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care. When that happens, the glory of the Lord will be visible for all to see.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). He is the shepherd who does the will of his Father and searches for every lost sheep (Matthew 18:14).

Our response: This Advent season, reflect on the stunning truth that God, in the person of Jesus, desires to put his arms around you as an individual and as a couple.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week: Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Immaculate Conception: Genesis 3:9–15, 20; Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12; Luke 1:26–

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Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 1:26–38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, ³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" ³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God." ³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditation

The Bible dramatically opens with the Spirit of God hovering over a watery, chaotic, trackless void. Then God speaks. He orders the chaos; he creates heaven and earth as place where he can dwell forever with those beings who bear his own image and likeness. But something went terribly, tragically wrong, and the image bearers were exiled from the Garden. A new home, a new sacred space for God and man to dwell together must be created. In a remarkable turn, the Creator God sends the same Spirit that once overshadowed a watery chaos to overshadow a young woman, a willing servant. In the person of her child, God reveals, in the most dramatic way imaginable, his desire to join heaven and earth. Not side by side or one thing imposed on another, but two natures in one single person. That is the wonder of the Incarnation. That is the wonder of Christmas!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Second Week: Thursday, December 9, 2021

Isaiah 41:13–20; Matthew 11:11–15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 11:11–15

Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. ¹³ All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. ¹⁵ Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the one who is to come before the Servant of the Lord. His job is to sound a warning that when the Servant comes, the Servant will winnow Israel and he will judge the wicked. But he will console with tender mercy the needy and the weak. John's mission will be like that of the Servant. He will call the nation to repentance. His mission is to warn the people that the king is coming. Prior to Jesus, none greater than John the Baptist had been born. Whoever has ears ought to hear. Can you hear?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week: Friday, December 10, 2021

Isaiah 48:17–19; Matthew 11:16–19

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 11:16–19

"To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, ¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.' ¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? Some said he was possessed by a demon. He came preaching repentance and demonstrated the seriousness of his message by the way in which he lived. He believed what Isaiah had said, "If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river, and your vindication like the waves of the sea; Your descendants would be like the sand, and those born of your stock like its grains, their name never cut off or blotted out from my presence." (Isaiah 48:18-19) But they would not listen. The bridegroom came and the wedding banquet began (Matthew 9:15). But they would not listen. John says the king is coming Will we listen to him and the prophets who came before him?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week: Saturday, December 11, 2021

Sirach 48:1–4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10–13

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 17:9a, 10–13

As they were coming down from the mountain, . . . the disciples asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; ¹² but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? The author of the first reading, Ben Sirach, knew that Elijah would come before the day of the Lord. "You, Elijah, are destined, it is written, in time to come to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD, to turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons, and to reestablish the tribes of Jacob. Blessed is he who shall have seen you before he dies" (Sirach 48:10-11). The prophet Malachi had also predicted that Elijah would return before the great and awesome day of the Lord (4:5). If Jesus is claiming that he is the Messiah, the logical question was, "What about Elijah?" To which Jesus replied, "I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him." Worse than that, they had killed John—and now the Son of Man will suffer the same fate at their hands. Blessed are we who recognize who John is, because through our recognition of him, we will see the one to whom he is pointing.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Sunday of Advent: December 12, 2021

Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Philippians 4:4–7; Luke 3:10–18

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 3:10–18

And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." ¹⁵ Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

Meditation

John baptized with water, part of the Jewish rituals of purification. Once purified, people could participate in the ritual life of the community. They could rightly worship in the Temple, for example. Yet something more than ritual purification was needed. Israel had to be radically transformed. John pointed to one who was coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. He was pointing to a great judgment that was on the horizon, when Israel's God returned in person as her true king. God's arrival in the person of Jesus would be the turning point, not only of Israel's history, but of all humanity. Fire would come in the form of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD: the price for failing to receive their savior. The Holy Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire at Pentecost: the gift for receiving their savior. Advent offers us the same choice.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Monday, December 13, 2021

Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a; Matthew 21:23–27

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 21:23–27

When he had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" ²⁴ Jesus said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' ²⁶ But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷ So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? The first reading offers an answer to the question Jesus' audience couldn't admit. He was like Balaam, one who hears what God says, and knows what the Most High knows. John's authority came from God himself. He was a prophet in the long line of prophets that God had sent to his people. And like the other prophets, the people would not listen, because it would mean they had to change. We are now compelled to answer the question, "Where was John's baptism from?" The birth of our Lord is coming soon. Are we ready? Will we listen?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Zephaniah 3:1–2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28–32

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 21:28–32

"What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'²⁹ He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went.³⁰ The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go.³¹ Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.³² When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the voice of the Lord calling for repentance. But the leaders of the people did not believe him. As the prophet Zephaniah said, "Woe to the city, rebellious and polluted, to the tyrannical city! She hears no voice, accepts no correction; In the LORD she has not trusted, to her God she has not drawn near." (Zephaniah 3:1–2). The prophet then warns that judgment is coming and only a humble remnant will remain. When John preached, only the dregs of society repented. All the others were like the son who said yes, but did not do what his father asked him to do. Which son are you?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation.*

Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Isaiah 45:6–8,21-25; Luke 7:18b–23

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 7:18b–23

John summoned two of his disciples ¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" ²⁰ When the men came to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'" ²¹ At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind. ²² And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the one who asked the question that is on everyone's heart and mind, "Are you the one?" Jesus answered by evoking the words of Isaiah. He echoed Isaiah 35:5–6 and Isaiah 61:1 when he said, "Tell John that you see me doing what God himself promised to do when he rescued his people and all the people of the world." Jesus was making a remarkable claim. In him, the God of Israel, their Lord, was at work. St. Paul would echo our first reading in his great hymn to Jesus in Philippians 2:10. So many centuries before, Isaiah had prophesied, "To me every knee shall bend; by me every tongue shall swear, Saying, 'Only in the LORD are just deeds and power'" (45:23–24). Jesus is indeed the **One!**

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Thursday, December 16, 2021

Isaiah 54:1–10; Luke 7:24–30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 7:24–30

When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. "What did you go out to the desert to see—a reed swayed by the wind? ²⁵ Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces. ²⁶ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is the one about whom scripture says: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.' ²⁸ I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹ (All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; ³⁰ but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.)

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the strange and haunting figure whose words and actions force us to choose. The choice? God's plan or our own plan. It is the fundamental choice we all have in life. The Advent readings invite us to find our own story in the great and ongoing story of God and his people. Imagine encountering John in the wilderness. You hear his voice; it disturbs you. You hear the challenge. How do you respond? Are you a tax collector who knows his or her own weakness and sin? Are you a Pharisee or a scholar of the law, confident of your own righteousness? As Moses said and John would agree, "Today I set before **you** life and death. . . . Choose life." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Friday, December 17, 2021

Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Matthew 1:1–17

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 1:1–17 (excerpts)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, **whose mother was Tamar**. . . .⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, **whose mother was Rahab**. Boaz became the father of Obed, **whose mother was Ruth**. Obed became the father of Jesse, ⁶ Jesse the father of David the king. David became the father of Solomon, **whose mother had been the wife of Uriah**. ⁷ Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, . . .¹¹ Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile. ¹²After the Babylonian exile, . . .¹⁵Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ Jacob the father of Joseph, **the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.**

Meditation

I found my great-grandfather's name on the 1880 census list. His name was right there along with those of his brothers, sisters, and parents. The next census listed his wife and the next one had my grandfather. Just names, dates, and the city they lived in. But now I had a piece of the puzzle that is me. Matthew does for Jesus what Ancestry.com did for me, only much more. Jesus is the goal toward which the whole of Israel's history has been inexorably heading. He is the one in whom the promises made to Abraham and David are fulfilled. He is the solution for the all-too-human story of sin and failing (prostitutes, adultery, murder, national exile). He is the one who ultimately makes sense out of my story, my genealogy, and the puzzle that is me and my spouse.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week: Saturday, December 18, 2021

Jeremiah 23:5–8; Matthew 1:18–25

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Matthew 1:18–25

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, ² but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. ²¹ She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. ²⁵ He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Meditation

We know that God is just in all that he does. We know too that Jesus is God. So, it would follow that Jesus was also just. He would be a righteous King who would govern wisely and do what was right in the land, as Jeremiah had said (23:5). But in the same way that the child Jesus had to learn from his parents how to walk and talk like any human child, he must have learned something about justice from his parents as well. In this case, he learned a lesson from Joseph. Joseph was a righteous man, a just man. It was fortunate that Mary and the divine child in her womb were at the mercy of a man whose sense of justice came not from the law, but from the prophets. The law would have killed Mary and the unborn baby. But Joseph believed, with Isaiah, that a bruised reed should not be broken or a dimly burning wick quenched (Isaiah 42:3–4). Jesus learned that lesson well. Matthew described Jesus with the very same language. "A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope." (Matthew 12:17)

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 19, 2021

Micah 5:1–4a; Hebrews 10:5–10; Luke 1:39–45

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.



Reading: Luke 1:39–45

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, ⁴² cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Meditation

Two women, unexpectedly with child
The barren one in her sixth month
The unmarried one not yet starting to show

What kind of reception will she find?
Shame or honor, support or rejection?
Families can be so unpredictable.

But where else to turn except to family?
She hastened to a little town, nestled in the
Hills of Judea, six miles from Jerusalem.

No shame awaited her.
"Blessed are you among women"
"Blessed is the child in your womb"

Rather the place of supreme honor
For the Mother of our Lord,
The Mother of God.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Week: Monday, December 20, 2021

Isaiah 7:10–14; Luke 1:26–38

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 1:26–38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, ³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" ³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God." ³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditation

What is the archangel Gabriel doing in her house? These are such strange words of greeting. What does he mean by "favored one"? Would you consider it a favor to be asked to bear a child out of wedlock? And what about poor Joseph, what will he think? How can this be? It will be as it was in the beginning. The Holy Spirit who hovered over the chaotic water and transformed it into the good creation will come upon her. New creation will spring from the willing woman's womb. What would you say? What was her response? "Oh, Gabriel, tell Him that the handmaid of the Lord says yes!"

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Week: Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Song of Solomon 2:8–14 or Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Luke 1:39–45

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Song of Solomon 2:8–14

Hark! My lover—here he comes springing across the mountains, leaping across the hills. ⁹ My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Here he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattices. ¹⁰ My lover speaks; he says to me, "Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come! ¹¹ For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. ¹² The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land. ¹³ The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance. Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come! ¹⁴ "O my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff, Let me see you, let me hear your voice, For your voice is sweet, and you are lovely."

Meditation

The bride sings a song about her beloved. What is her beloved like? The beloved is larger than life. He is able to spring across mountains, leap across hills. His voice carries over great distances and yet speaks directly to her. A new season has dawned. It is springtime. Birds are singing, flowers blooming. She knows that he sees her beauty, and that she is altogether lovely in his eyes. With the tenderest of words she hears him beckon her to join him. Take a moment and hear the Lord call to you. Hear him call your name. It is the promise of Advent that our beloved is coming for us.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen



Fourth Week: Wednesday, December 22, 2021

1 Samuel 1:24–28; Luke 1:46–56

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 1:46–56

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; ⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in God my savior. ⁴⁸ For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. ⁴⁹ The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. ⁵¹ He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. ⁵² He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." ⁵⁶ Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Meditation

Irony: (1) humor based on using words to suggest the opposite of their literal meaning; (2) something said or written that uses humor based on words suggesting the opposite of their literal meaning; (3) incongruity between what actually happens and what might be expected to happen, especially when this disparity seems absurd or laughable.

Cosmic Irony: God has displayed his majesty and power.

- He has shown strength with his arm.
- He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
- He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.
- He has filled the hungry with good things, and
- He has sent the rich away empty.

How? By becoming a helpless human infant, born to a poor peasant family in a small, insignificant village six miles from the capital—a village that is so far out of the power loop that it might as well be 100 miles away.

Advent is the time to laugh with great joy at the delicious irony of our God and his plan. The King is almost here!!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Week: Thursday, December 23, 2021

Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Luke 1:57–66

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 1:57–66

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹ They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Meditation

Remember how afraid Zachariah was when the angel appeared to him? Well, imagine a whole village being frightened. Imagine the whole village, maybe a couple of hundred people, talking and whispering. Some were rejoicing with her; others were turning their heads away when Elizabeth walked by with her baby. What were they saying? An old, barren woman has given birth to a baby boy; a mute husband speaks after writing "John" on a tablet—not a family name at all. There are rumors about angels in the temple; her young cousin is pregnant—but by whom? What does all this mean? If God is really at work, how will Herod respond? How will Caesar respond? What do we do with all of this? What a curious mix of fear and hope they are experiencing. We are so close now. Advent is coming to an end soon. Hope mixed with fear of the Lord is good. Hope mixed with fear of Herod or Caesar is not hope at all.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Christmas Eve: December 24, 2021

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67–79

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**



Reading: Luke 1:67–79

Then Zechariah his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant, ⁷⁰ even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, ⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant ⁷³ and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, ⁷⁴ rescued from the hand of our enemies, without fear we might worship him ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us ⁷⁹ to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Meditation

The Holy Spirit moves Zechariah to announce that God is about to act in a strange and unexpected way. First, two babies are born. Then they will grow up into strong young men, cousins. One will announce, and the other will fulfill, the promises made nearly two thousand years earlier. It is a story that continues to echo through the ages to this very day. God acted, God is acting, God will act. He does not forget. He is never late. His arm is not too short to save. He is filled with compassion. The good news of Christmas is that God himself has come to rescue his people. Tomorrow we celebrate the fact that the love of God is so real that it is a person. It is Jesus, the Christ.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Christmas Day: December 25, 2021

Isaiah 52:7–10; Hebrews 1:1–6; John 1:1–18

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 1:1–18 (*excerpt*)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be ⁴ through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; ⁵ the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, ¹⁷ because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

Meditation

John's opening line, "in the beginning," deliberately echoes the majestic opening lines of the book of Genesis. Creation was always intended to be the place where human beings and God would dwell together. Tragically, we invited sin, darkness, and death into that good and beautiful creation. But darkness and death could never overcome the light that is God. Their victory is temporary. Rather than abandoning us to our folly, God became man and dwelt with us in the person of his Son, Jesus. In Jesus, we see the glory of God. In Jesus, we see and experience God's great love. In Jesus, God gives light and life to those who simply believe in him. What an incredible gift to unwrap this morning. Merry Christmas!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.