

*Oh Come Let Us
Adore Him* 

Advent Devotion 2024

Week Three

Scripture Readings · Reflections

Monday, December 16, 2024

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! ⁵ Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ⁷ Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

Reflection: If we can turn our preparations for the coming of Christ into bodily acts of prayer, we can know that "the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds": As you wrap gifts, pray for the life and love it represents. As you bake cookies and knead dough, add an extra dose of gentleness. As you sing carols, know that harmony is coming for your friends and your enemies. And take the time as you say the word "Advent" to slowly breathe in as you say "Ad" and out as you say "vent." Ad-vent. In doing so, your whole being will have prayed today and come to know a little bit more about our God of love who casts out all fear.

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

Hebrews 10:4-18

⁴ because it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵ Therefore, when he comes into the world he says,

You didn't want a sacrifice or an offering, but you prepared a body for me;

⁶ *you weren't pleased with entirely burned offerings or a sin offering.*

So then I said, "Look, I've come to do your will, God. This has been written about me in the scroll."^[a]

⁸ He says above, *You didn't want and you weren't pleased with a sacrifice or an offering or with entirely burned offerings or a purification offering,^[b] which are offered because the Law requires them. ⁹ Then he said, *Look, I've come to do your will.*^[c] He puts an end to the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ We have been made holy by God's will through the offering of Jesus Christ's body once for all.*

¹¹ Every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices over and over, sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹² But when this

priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right side of God. ¹³ Since then, he's waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for his feet, ¹⁴ because he perfected the people who are being made holy with one offering for all time.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit affirms this when saying,

¹⁶ *This is the covenant that I will make with them. After these days, says the Lord, I will place my laws in their hearts and write them on their minds.*

¹⁷ *And I won't remember their sins and their lawless behavior anymore.*^[d]

¹⁸ When there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Reflection: Okay - so lately none of us have wasted a perfectly good lamb to give God something he doesn't want. Now, imagine that you did, but, in the true spirit of modern Christmas, God came back to you with receipt in hand, returned the livestock (alive, of course), and asked to *exchange* it. What would you give him instead?

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Matthew 11:1-15

When Jesus finished teaching his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

² Now when John heard in prison about the things the Christ was doing, he sent word by his disciples to Jesus, asking, ³ "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

⁴ Jesus responded, "Go, report to John what you hear and see. ⁵ *Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them.*^[a] ⁶ Happy are those who don't stumble and fall because of me."

⁷ When John's disciples had gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: "What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? ⁸ What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who wear refined clothes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ He is the one of whom it is written: *Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.*^[b]

¹¹ “I assure you that no one who has ever been born is greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is violently attacked as violent people seize it. ¹³ All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came. ¹⁴ If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ Let the person who has ears, hear.

Reflection: What John's followers saw was just a beginning, a sampling of what the coming of the Kingdom of God and the end of this-world-as-we-know-it would bring. Jesus' main course was yet to come, in all its ugly horror and overpowering glory. On this side of the death and rising of Christ, we are looking forward to the rest of it, to Christ's return, bringing with Him the full force of the Kingdom of God. Christ is with us now, too, thanks to the Spirit, and we can live in the wonders of that till all is complete. So, even though Jesus has come, and is here. Something's afoot, and we wait for it to come. Can you find anything in your life that you take part in because of the Kingdom that is to come?

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Deuteronomy 34:1-4

Then Moses hiked up from the Moabite plains to Mount Nebo, the peak of the Pisgah slope, which faces Jericho. The Lord showed him the whole land: the Gilead region as far as Dan's territory; ² all the parts belonging to Naphtali along with the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as the entirety of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea; ³ also the arid southern plain, and the plain—including the Jericho Valley, Palm City—as far as Zoar.

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses: “This is the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I promised: ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have shown it to you with your own eyes; however, you will not cross over into it.”

Reflection: Joseph and Mary would have known the difficult history of their people in the Promised Land and the ongoing hope for God's fulfillment of the promise. They must have wondered what this promise meant for their baby and what their baby meant for the Promised Land. Could they have imagined the impact this Promised One would have for the whole world? We know what happened to Jesus, the Promised One. We have seen the impact on the Promised Land. What remains to be revealed is the impact

on us personally. What does it mean to have Jesus, the Promised One, in our lives? What does it mean to have the Promised One in our World?

Friday, December 20, 2024

Micah 5:2-5a

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah's forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days. ³ Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor gives birth. The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel. ⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock^[a] in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will dwell secure, because he will surely become great throughout the earth; ⁵ he will become one of peace.^[b] When Assyria invades our land and treads down our fortresses, then we will raise up against him seven shepherds and eight human princes.

Reflection: Micah proclaims the future ruler of Israel will not come from Jerusalem but from a little town. Micah's Bethlehem is not the town of "deep and dreamless sleep." Bethlehem was noted only for its sheep. When Jesus grows up, people marvel at the authority with which he speaks and acts. Micah proclaims that his strength and majesty comes from God and not from the power brokers, the king makers of Jerusalem. This Advent and Christmas pray that wealth, power and prestige not rule over your life but rather the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for love of the world.

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Luke 1:46b-55

⁴⁶ Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! ⁴⁷ In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. ⁴⁸ He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored ⁴⁹ because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. ⁵⁰ He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. ⁵² He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,

remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Reflection: Has there ever been a clearer song of hope for the lowly, the poor, the powerless? The promised Kingdom will raise them from their circumstances. They will sit at a place higher than even the rulers of the earthly kingdom. The coming Prince of Peace will save them through unending love. May we remember that the birth of Christ harkens the arrival of perfect love – the love we must show to all of God's people. May our outpouring of perfect love bring honor to the promised Kingdom and separate us from the earthly kingdom.