SEA CHANGE CHURCH · ADVENT 2026

Waiting for the Light

A short reading for each day of Advent, November 29 through Christmas Eve. We move back and forth between the prophets who promised a coming King and the gospel accounts of how he came, with a thought and a prayer for each day, a Monday practice of silence and a Thursday fast, and links to messages from our own Advent and Christmas series over the years.

Week 1	Hope · Nov 29 to Dec 5
Week 2	Peace · Dec 6 to Dec 12
Week 3	Joy · Dec 13 to Dec 19
Week 4	Love · Dec 20 to Dec 24

seachangechurch.org/advent

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DAY 1 · WEEK 1: HOPE

A Great Light

Sun, Nov 29 · Read **Isaiah 9:1-2**

> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
>
> Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Isaiah spoke these words to the region that had been overrun first. Zebulun and Naphtali sat on Israel's northern border, the first ground lost when Assyria came down, and the people everyone else had written off. God's promise starts there. It starts in the place that had known the most darkness for the longest time. Advent begins the same way. We don't open the season by pretending everything is bright. We start by naming where it is dark: in the world, in our homes, and in us. Centuries later Jesus moved his ministry to Galilee, the very region Isaiah named, and Matthew saw the promise kept (Matthew 4:12-16).

PRAYER

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light, now in this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; so that on the last day, when he comes again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the First Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Light in the Galilee
Isaiah: Messiah · Dec 10, 2023 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 2 · WEEK 1: HOPE · MONDAY SILENCE

Your Prayer Has Been Heard

Mon, Nov 30 · Read **Luke 1:5-17**

> But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.”
>
> Luke 1:13 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful for decades and childless for all of them. Luke calls them righteous and blameless, and then adds the sentence that sat over their whole marriage: they had no child. When the angel appears in the temple, he tells Zechariah his prayer has been heard. Most likely it was a prayer the two of them had stopped praying years before. God's timing did not cancel their faithfulness, and their faithfulness did not force God's timing. Many of us carry a request we quit bringing up because it hurt too much to keep asking. Advent gives us room to pick it back up.

MONDAY SILENCE

Fifteen minutes of silence. We set a timer, put the phone in another room, and sit with today's verse. When our minds wander, we come back to one phrase from it.

In the quiet we bring back one prayer we stopped praying, and we leave it with God without filling the silence.

PRAYER

Lord, let your merciful ears be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and so that we may receive what we ask, make us ask for what pleases you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Zechariah

Shopping for Hope...Finding Faith · Dec 1, 2024 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 3 · WEEK 1: HOPE

The Messenger

Tue, Dec 1 · Read **Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6**

> Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.
>
> Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Malachi is the last book of our Old Testament, and it closes with a promise. A messenger would come first to prepare the way, an Elijah who would turn the hearts of fathers to their children. Then the prophets go quiet, and roughly four hundred years pass with no new word recorded. When the angel speaks to Zechariah in Luke 1, he picks up Malachi's language almost word for word. God had not forgotten. He was keeping a promise on a longer timeline than anyone expected, and that matters for us in seasons when heaven feels quiet. Notice too what the messenger's work looks like in Malachi 4:6: hearts in families turning back toward each other.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, at your first coming you sent your messenger to prepare your way before you. Grant that those who serve and steward your mysteries may likewise prepare and make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, so that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found a people acceptable in your sight; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Third Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

The Right Side of History
Shopping for Hope...Finding Faith · Dec 8, 2024 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 4 · WEEK 1: HOPE

The Beginning of the Gospel

Wed, Dec 2 · Read **Mark 1:1-8**

> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”
>
> Mark 1:1-3 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Mark skips the manger entirely. There are no shepherds, no wise men, and no birth story at all. His first sentence calls it the beginning of the gospel, and then he goes straight to a man in the wilderness wearing camel's hair. For Mark, the good news begins with preparation. John's message was simple: repent and get ready, because someone greater is coming. People walked out of Jerusalem into the desert to hear it and confessed their sins in the Jordan. John's version of getting ready had less to do with decorations than with clearing ground. Making a straight path means removing what's in the way, and most of us already know what that is for us right now.

PRAYER

Almighty God, by your providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Savior by preaching repentance. Make us follow his teaching and holy life, so that we may truly repent as he preached; and following his example, help us to speak the truth steadily, to name wrong boldly, and to suffer patiently for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Saint John Baptist's Day, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 5 · WEEK 1: HOPE · THURSDAY FAST

Comfort, Comfort

Thu, Dec 3 · Read **Isaiah 40:1-5**

> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.
>
> Isaiah 40:1-2 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Isaiah's first thirty-nine chapters carry a lot of hard news. Chapter 40 opens with a turn, and God repeats himself: comfort, comfort. He tells the prophet to speak tenderly, literally to speak to the heart. The people had been through exile and loss, and much of it came from their own choices. God doesn't skip over that. He says the debt has been dealt with. Then comes the promise of a road through the wilderness, valleys lifted and mountains brought low, so the glory of the Lord can be seen by everyone. All four gospels reach for this passage when they introduce John the Baptist. In Isaiah, God's comfort shows up as a road. He builds his way to people who could not get to him.

THURSDAY FAST

We set food aside today, for one meal or for the whole day, and let each hunger pang turn us toward prayer. If fasting from food isn't wise for us (pregnancy, diabetes or another medical condition, a history of disordered eating), we fast from something else, like screens or social media.

When hunger comes, we read Isaiah 40:1 again and let God speak comfort before we reach for it somewhere else.

PRAYER

Merciful Lord, we ask you to grant your faithful people pardon and peace, so that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 6 · WEEK 1: HOPE

The Light Shines

Fri, Dec 4 · Read **John 1:1-5**

> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
>
> John 1:4-5 (ESV)

THOUGHT

John starts his gospel before Bethlehem, before creation, in the beginning. The child in the manger is the Word who was with God and was God, the one through whom everything was made. John doesn't want us to miss how big the baby is. Then he adds a line many of us need in December: the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The verb is present tense. The light is still shining. John doesn't claim the darkness has disappeared. He says it has not overcome the light.

PRAYER

Blessed Lord, you caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may hear it, read it, mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it, so that by the patience and comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and always hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

John 1:1-5

Christmas Eve · Dec 24, 2017 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 7 · WEEK 1: HOPE

A Shoot from the Stump

Sat, Dec 5 · Read **Isaiah 11:1-5**

> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
>
> Isaiah 11:1-2 (ESV)

THOUGHT

By the time Isaiah wrote this, David's royal family tree was headed for the axe. A stump is what's left when the life looks gone. Isaiah says a shoot will come up from it anyway, from Jesse, David's father, back at the root. God would start again from what looked finished. The new king would carry the Spirit of the Lord: wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might. He would judge the poor with fairness and not by what his eyes see. Most of us have a stump or two of our own, a relationship or a calling or a hope that got cut down. Isaiah's promise was spoken over exactly that kind of ground.

PRAYER

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people, so that, bearing the fruit of good works in abundance, we may be abundantly rewarded by you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Sunday next before Advent, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Stumps and Roots
Isaiah: Messiah · Dec 17, 2023 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 8 · WEEK 2: PEACE

Let It Be

Sun, Dec 6 · Read **Luke 1:26-38**

> And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.
>
> Luke 1:38 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Mary was young, engaged, and from a town nobody thought much of. The angel's news would cost her reputation and could have cost her marriage. She asked one honest question, how will this be, and got an answer that explained very little except that nothing will be impossible with God. Her reply is one of the most important sentences in Scripture: let it be to me according to your word. She said yes without having the details. Her peace came from trusting the one who made the plan, since she understood very little of the plan itself.

PRAYER

Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, so that, as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ through the message of an angel, we may be brought by his cross and passion to the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Let It Be
Shopping for Hope...Finding Faith · Dec 22, 2024 · Harry Wilson

From Promise to Presence
From the Cradle to the Cross · Dec 21, 2025 · Harry Wilson

NOTES

A Sign Called Immanuel

Mon, Dec 7 · Read **Isaiah 7:10-14**

> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
>
> Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

THOUGHT

King Ahaz was terrified. Two armies were marching on Jerusalem, and he had already decided to look to Assyria for help instead of God. Isaiah offered him a sign, any sign, as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. Ahaz turned it down in language that sounded pious, saying he would not put the Lord to the test. God gave the sign anyway. A virgin would conceive and bear a son called Immanuel, God with us. The promise came to a king who didn't want it, in a moment of fear and bad decisions. God's commitment to be with his people never depended on how well they were handling things.

MONDAY SILENCE

Fifteen minutes of silence. We set a timer, put the phone in another room, and sit with today's verse. When our minds wander, we come back to one phrase from it.

We name what we're afraid of, then go fifteen minutes without reaching for the usual fixes.

PRAYER

O God, you are the author of peace and the lover of harmony; to know you is eternal life, and to serve you is perfect freedom. Defend us, your humble servants, in every attack of our enemies, so that, trusting surely in your protection, we may not fear the power of any adversary; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Peace, Morning Prayer, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 10 · WEEK 2: PEACE

He Did as the Angel Commanded

Tue, Dec 8 · Read **Matthew 1:18-25**

> “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife,
>
> Matthew 1:23-24 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Matthew tells the Christmas story from Joseph's side. Joseph learned Mary was pregnant and knew the child wasn't his. He was a just man, and he had already settled on a kind response: end the engagement quietly so she wouldn't be shamed. Then God interrupted the plan. In a dream the angel told him to take Mary as his wife and name the child Jesus. Matthew ties it straight back to Isaiah 7: Immanuel, God with us. Joseph never speaks a recorded word in the gospels. What we have is what he did. He woke up and obeyed, and that obedience protected Mary and Jesus. For most of us, trusting that God is with us will look a lot like Joseph's kind of faith, quiet and practical.

PRAYER

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers. Because in the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, give us the help of your grace, so that in keeping your commandments we may please you in will and in deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the First Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

The Immanuel Life
Isaiah: Messiah · Dec 3, 2023 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 11 · WEEK 2: PEACE

Prince of Peace

Wed, Dec 9 · Read **Isaiah 9:6-7**

> 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 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Isaiah gives the coming child four names. Wonderful Counselor, whose wisdom we can actually lean on. Mighty God, strength we don't have. Everlasting Father, steady and present and not leaving. Prince of Peace, the one who brings shalom, a Hebrew word that means more than calm. It means things made whole, the way they were supposed to be. Isaiah adds that the increase of his government and of peace will have no end, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. The peace in this passage rests on God's zeal more than our effort. Many of us are trying to manufacture peace this month by managing schedules, budgets, and family dynamics. Isaiah points us to a child with the government on his shoulder.

PRAYER

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsel, and all just works come: give your servants that peace which the world cannot give, so that our hearts may be set on obeying your commandments, and so that, defended by you from the fear of our enemies, we may live our days in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Peace, Evening Prayer, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 12 · WEEK 2: PEACE · THURSDAY FAST

Blessed Is She Who Believed

Thu, Dec 10 · Read **Luke 1:39-45**

> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”
>
> Luke 1:41-42 (ESV)

THOUGHT

After the angel left, Mary went to the one person who might understand: her relative Elizabeth, pregnant herself after years of waiting. Before Mary could explain anything, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped and Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit. She blessed Mary before Mary said a word about what had happened. Two women carrying impossible news found each other, and each confirmed what God was doing in the other. God rarely means for us to carry his promises alone. December can be isolating, even in a full house. Part of how faith holds up is having people who recognize God's work in us when we can barely trust it ourselves.

THURSDAY FAST

We set food aside today, for one meal or for the whole day, and let each hunger pang turn us toward prayer. If fasting from food isn't wise for us (pregnancy, diabetes or another medical condition, a history of disordered eating), we fast from something else, like screens or social media.

Many of us fast better together. We ask one person to fast with us today and pray for each other when hunger comes.

PRAYER

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time to make our common prayers to you with one accord, and you promise that when two or three are gathered together in your name you will grant their requests. Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and prayers of your servants as may be best for us, giving us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer of Saint Chrysostom, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 13 · WEEK 2: PEACE

Little Bethlehem

Fri, Dec 11 · Read **Micah 5:2-5a**

> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. … And he shall be their peace.
>
> Micah 5:2, 5a (ESV)

THOUGHT

Bethlehem was a small town, too little to be counted among the clans of Judah. Micah says that's exactly where Israel's ruler would come from, one whose origins reach back to ancient days. Centuries later, when the wise men asked Herod where the Messiah would be born, the scribes quoted this verse (Matthew 2:5-6). God has a habit of choosing small places and overlooked people. Micah adds that this ruler would shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, and his people would live secure. Then he sums it up: he shall be their peace.

PRAYER

O God, protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong and nothing is holy. Increase and multiply your mercy upon us, so that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may pass through things temporal in such a way that we do not lose the things eternal. Grant this, heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 14 · WEEK 2: PEACE

My Soul Magnifies the Lord

Sat, Dec 12 · Read **Luke 1:46-56**

> And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;”
>
> Luke 1:46-48 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Mary's song is called the Magnificat, after its first word in Latin. To magnify something is to make it look bigger so others can see it clearly, and Mary's song does that for God. It is also bold. She sings about God scattering the proud, bringing down rulers, lifting the humble, filling the hungry, and sending the rich away empty. A young woman from Nazareth looked at what God was doing through her and understood it would turn the world's order upside down. Living a Magnificat life means our lives work like that lens. People should be able to watch how we treat the overlooked and see a God who is near.

PRAYER

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Purity, Holy Communion, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Living a Magnificat Life
Shopping for Hope...Finding Faith · Dec 15, 2024 · Dr. James Smith III

NOTES

DAY 15 · WEEK 3: JOY

He Will Rejoice Over Us

Sun, Dec 13 · Read **Zephaniah 3:14-17**

> The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.
>
> Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Most of Zephaniah is judgment, dark and direct. Then the last chapter turns, and God tells his people to sing and shout and rejoice with all their heart. The reason given is God himself. He is in their midst, a mighty one who saves, and he rejoices over them with gladness and exults over them with loud singing. We usually picture worship moving in one direction, with us singing to God. Zephaniah shows God singing over his people. Before we work up any feeling of our own, God is already glad about the people he came to save, including the ones who don't feel very lovable this year.

PRAYER

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding. Pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you above all things, may receive your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Happiness vs. Joy
Joy to the World · Dec 16, 2018 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 16 · WEEK 3: JOY · MONDAY SILENCE

The Sunrise from on High

Mon, Dec 14 · Read **Luke 1:67-79**

> because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
>
> Luke 1:78-79 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Zechariah had been unable to speak for months, ever since he doubted the angel. When his son was born and named John, his mouth opened, and the first thing out of it was praise. His song, often called the Benedictus, is full of the Old Testament: the covenant with Abraham, the house of David, the words of the prophets. Then it turns to his baby son, who would go before the Lord to prepare his ways. It ends with an image of dawn, the sunrise visiting us from on high, giving light to people sitting in darkness and guiding our feet into the way of peace. Zechariah had a long silence to think about God's faithfulness. When he finally spoke, he had a lot to say.

MONDAY SILENCE

Fifteen minutes of silence. We set a timer, put the phone in another room, and sit with today's verse. When our minds wander, we come back to one phrase from it.

Zechariah's song came after a long silence. We sit with Luke 1:78-79 and let praise come after the quiet.

PRAYER

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Aid against All Perils, Evening Prayer, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 17 · WEEK 3: JOY

Strengthen the Weak Hands

Tue, Dec 15 · Read **Isaiah 35:1-6**

> Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”
>
> Isaiah 35:3-4 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Isaiah pictures the desert bursting into bloom and dry ground turning into pools of water. Then he gives instructions to the people still waiting for it: strengthen weak hands, steady feeble knees, and tell anxious hearts to be strong and not fear, because God will come. When he does, Isaiah says, blind eyes will open, deaf ears will hear, and the lame will leap like deer. The joy in this passage belongs to tired people telling each other that help is on the way. Some of us are the anxious hearts here, and some of us are called to speak to them, and in a given week it can be either.

PRAYER

Lord, stir up your power, we pray, and come among us, and with great might help us. Because our sins and wickedness badly hinder us in running the race that is set before us, let your generous grace and mercy quickly help and deliver us; through the work of your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, forever. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 18 · WEEK 3: JOY

Are You the One?

Wed, Dec 16 · Read **Matthew 11:2-6**

> Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”
>
> Matthew 11:2-5 (ESV)

THOUGHT

John the Baptist had announced Jesus with total confidence. Now he sat in Herod's prison, and from that cell he sent his disciples with a question: are you the one, or should we look for another? Doubt is not a new problem for faithful people. Jesus didn't rebuke John. He sent back a report drawn straight from Isaiah 35 and 61: the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised, the poor hear good news. He pointed John to what was happening and to what had been promised. Jesus answered John's doubt with evidence and Scripture, and with no shame attached. Advent has room for our questions too, and we're invited to bring them to Jesus directly, the way John did.

PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and so that we may receive what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

NOTES

DAY 19 · WEEK 3: JOY · THURSDAY FAST

Good News to the Poor

Thu, Dec 17 · Read **Isaiah 61:1-3**

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
>
> Isaiah 61:1 (ESV)

THOUGHT

In Luke 4, Jesus stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth, unrolled the scroll of Isaiah, and read this passage. Then he sat down and said that this Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing. It was his job description: good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, liberty for captives, comfort for those who mourn. Isaiah adds an exchange, a beautiful headdress instead of ashes and the oil of gladness instead of mourning. For many people December brings grief to the surface. Empty chairs, hard anniversaries, and losses that sting more under the lights. Jesus came for exactly those people.

THURSDAY FAST

We set food aside today, for one meal or for the whole day, and let each hunger pang turn us toward prayer. If fasting from food isn't wise for us (pregnancy, diabetes or another medical condition, a history of disordered eating), we fast from something else, like screens or social media.

We give the hunger to the people in our church who are grieving this Christmas and pray for them by name.

PRAYER

O Wisdom, who came forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other and ordering all things mightily and sweetly: come and teach us the way of prudence.

O Sapientia, the first of the O Antiphons sung in the last week of Advent (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

NOTES

DAY 20 · WEEK 3: JOY

They Rejoiced with Her

Fri, Dec 18 · Read **Luke 1:57-66**

> Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.
>
> Luke 1:57-58 (ESV)

THOUGHT

When Elizabeth's son was born, her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they rejoiced with her. A whole community had watched her long wait, and they shared the answer. Then came the naming. Everyone assumed the boy would be called Zechariah after his father. Elizabeth said John, and Zechariah, still unable to speak, wrote it on a tablet: his name is John. The name means the Lord is gracious. Zechariah's voice came back on the spot, and the story spread through the hill country of Judea. Part of our calling this month is to rejoice out loud with people when God is good to them.

PRAYER

O Adonai, and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

O Adonai, the second O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

NOTES

DAY 21 · WEEK 3: JOY

How Beautiful Are the Feet

Sat, Dec 19 · Read **Isaiah 52:7-10**

> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”
>
> Isaiah 52:7 (ESV)

THOUGHT

In the ancient world news traveled on foot. A city under threat waited on its walls for a runner, watching to see whether he carried word of victory or defeat. Isaiah pictures that runner coming over the mountains with good news: peace, salvation, your God reigns. The watchmen lift their voices and sing together, and even the ruins of Jerusalem break into song. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 10 to describe everyone who carries the gospel to others. Feet that have crossed mountains are dirty and sore. Isaiah calls them beautiful because of the news they carry. Most of us will cross paths with dozens of people this week, and some of them are waiting on the wall for good news.

PRAYER

O Root of Jesse, who stands as a sign for the peoples, before whom kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the nations shall seek: come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

O Radix Jesse, the third O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

NOTES

DAY 22 · WEEK 4: LOVE

Pierced for Our Transgressions

Sun, Dec 20 · Read **Isaiah 53:3-6**

> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.
>
> Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV)

THOUGHT

It can feel strange to read Isaiah 53 a few days before Christmas. This is the suffering servant, despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, pierced and crushed. We spent Advent 2022 in this one chapter, because the manger and the cross belong to the same story. The child born in Bethlehem came to carry our griefs and our sorrows. The punishment that brought us peace fell on him, and by his wounds we are healed. The love in Advent costs something, and Jesus paid it. Isaiah also says all of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each turning to our own way. When the season starts to feel thin, Isaiah 53 shows how far God's love was willing to go.

PRAYER

O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens: come and lead the prisoner out of the prison house, who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Clavis David, the fourth O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Pain That Brings Peace
Isaiah: Messiah · Dec 4, 2022 · Joe Brandi

The Broken Jesus
Isaiah: Messiah · Nov 27, 2022 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 23 · WEEK 4: LOVE · MONDAY SILENCE

For God So Loved the World

Mon, Dec 21 · Read **John 3:16-21**

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
>
> John 3:16-17 (ESV)

THOUGHT

John 3:16 is so familiar it's easy to read past it. The verse sits inside a night conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a respected teacher who came quietly with questions. Jesus tells him that God loved the world, the whole rebellious and confused world, and gave his only Son. The next verse says God did not send his Son to condemn the world but to save it. Christmas is the giving in that verse. God's love moved him to send someone. For those of us who expect God to be mostly disappointed in us, verse 17 is a good place to stay for a while this week.

MONDAY SILENCE

Fifteen minutes of silence. We set a timer, put the phone in another room, and sit with today's verse. When our minds wander, we come back to one phrase from it.

We sit with John 3:17 and let it answer any voice that says God is disappointed in us.

PRAYER

O Dayspring, splendor of eternal light and sun of righteousness: come and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Oriens, the fifth O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

I Saw the Sign
John 3 in 3D · Dec 2, 2018 · Dr. James Smith III

NOTES

DAY 24 · WEEK 4: LOVE

A Righteous Branch

Tue, Dec 22 · Read **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.
>
> Jeremiah 33:14-15 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Jeremiah received this word while he was shut up in the court of the guard and Jerusalem was under siege. Babylon was about to destroy the city, end the line of kings, and carry the people away. From inside that, God said the days are coming when he would keep his promise and raise up a righteous Branch for David, one who would do justice and righteousness in the land. Then he gave the city a new name: The LORD is our righteousness. Two days before Christmas, plenty of us are under our own kind of pressure. God spoke this promise to people in the middle of theirs.

PRAYER

O King of the nations and their desire, the cornerstone who makes the two into one: come and save the human race, whom you formed from clay.

O Rex Gentium, the sixth O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

NOTES

DAY 25 · WEEK 4: LOVE

With Mary

Wed, Dec 23 · Read **Luke 2:1-7**

> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.
>
> Luke 2:5-7 (ESV)

THOUGHT

Luke anchors the birth of Jesus in real history: a Roman emperor, a census, a governor, and a long walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Joseph went to be registered with Mary, who was expecting. That small word with carries a lot. God did not send instructions from a distance. He came to be with us, inside an ordinary family on an inconvenient trip, and he was laid in a feeding trough because there was no place for them in the inn. The God of the universe arrived at the bottom of the guest list. Tomorrow is Christmas Eve. Before the rush starts, there's room today to simply be with him.

PRAYER

O Emmanuel, our King and lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior: come and save us, O Lord our God.

O Emmanuel, the seventh O Antiphon (Latin, 8th century or earlier). English translation prepared for Sea Change.

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

The Birth of Jesus Christ
From the Cradle to the Cross · Dec 24, 2025 · Adam Stadtmiller

NOTES

DAY 26 · WEEK 4: LOVE

Good News of Great Joy

Thu, Dec 24 · Read **Luke 2:8-20**

> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
>
> Luke 2:10-11 (ESV)

THOUGHT

The first people to hear the news were shepherds working the night shift. Shepherds sat low on the social ladder, and God sent angels to them first. The message was plain and certain: unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. The shepherds went with haste and found everything just as they had been told. Then they went back to the same fields and the same sheep, glorifying and praising God, because something had actually happened and they had seen it. Tonight, wherever we gather, the same news is for all the people, and that includes us.

PRAYER

Almighty God, you have given us your only Son to take our nature upon him, and at this time to be born of a pure virgin. Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may be renewed daily by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

Adapted from the collect for Christmas Day, Book of Common Prayer (1662)

FROM THE SEA CHANGE ARCHIVE

Joy Is Based on Certainty
Joy to the World · Dec 23, 2018 · Dr. James Smith III

NOTES