

## Advent Devotion 2018

It's Advent!

Are you thinking of candles, wreaths, and evening worship? Does your memory wander back to a time when you excitedly opened another flap on an Advent calendar? Maybe you're running through a mental checklist of all the presents that you'd still like to purchase for your family members. And then, there are all the lovely decorations to consider: will you get a fresh wreath this year, or a couple new candles to adorn your dining room table?

Advent is a season of anticipation.

Are you looking forward to the warm glow and joyful sounds that are staples of Christmas worship? Are you already imagining the delightful giggles that erupt from your kids or grandkids as they open a gift? Are you putting together a fantastic Christmas dinner menu?

There's lots to think about.

Advent is a season of expectation, too, and hope, and preparation, and joy. It's a festive, exciting time of year.

During each of the four weeks of Advent that lead up to Christmas, we'll be reminded and encouraged with the good news that is the pinnacle of our joyful anticipation: the celebration of God's coming to earth and being born as a small, precious baby. He is truly Immanuel: God with us.

Even though we've heard this message countless times, it never gets old. The wonder and hope never grows dim, and the Christmas story is always heartwarming. In the words of Isaiah chapter 9: "*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light... you have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you...*" Christ is born! Praise God.

Perhaps one of the most curious things about the season of Advent is that it not only looks forward to gift of Christ's birth, but that it also looks forward to Jesus' second coming. Advent is all about what is to come.

This is good news. We need something to look forward to. Life can be monotonous, or depressing, or stressful: another heap of dirty dishes, playing taxi

driver for our kids, prepping meals for the billionth time, a move, a job loss, an emptying checking account, or declining health. And if all that isn't bad enough, the constant weight of our imperfections wears us down. We yell, cry, complain, and groan. We fail to uphold God's commandments. The guilt is real.

Graciously, for you and me, Advent hope spreads beyond this season in the church year. Because of Jesus' promise to return, we are *daily* blessed with a joyful hope and an eager anticipation that stirs up those mundane moments and gets us through the painful ones.

In the season of Advent, God's children are encouraged to prepare our hearts and minds for the moment of Jesus' return to earth. It will not be a time of fear, but a time of great rejoicing, and fulfillment, and thanksgiving.

Think again about the joy you will feel when you see your kids and grandkids smile when they open their presents. The joy we are given in Christ will be even greater. Picture the sights and sounds of a packed Christmas worship service. The praise at Jesus' return will be unlike anything we've ever heard. Remember the best Christmas dinner you've ever eaten: it is only a foretaste of the feast to come at Jesus' heavenly table. And think about how cozy, comfortable, and warm homes feel at Christmastime. Our heavenly home is being prepared for us right now, even at this very moment, and will be even more comfortable and beautiful.

Life will be perfect.

Advent is a very special time of year. We look forward to the music, the candles, and the special family time. We enjoy our wintery decorations, the delicious baked goods, and the lights. We celebrate, once again, the loving, majestic, and compassionate nature of our God: not a distant deity, but one who comes down to dwell among us, forgive our sins, make us clean, and promise to make all things new.

As Jesus promises in the very last verses of the Bible:  
“*Yes, I am coming soon.*” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

## **Prayer, Hymns, and Recitations**

Promised Savior,

In this season of expectation, prepare our hearts to seek you and be filled with hope and peace. We know that we fail to recognize and fail to follow your will in our lives. Lord, forgive us. Deepen our longing for your grace, your mercies, and especially for your return to take all believers to be with you. Bless our Advent worship, festivities, and families. Thank you for providing the cure to our fallen nature: your Son, Jesus, who came to our world as a little baby and accomplished our salvation.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### **Hymn: Savior of the Nations, Come**

Savior of the nations, come,  
Virgin's Son, make here Your home!  
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,  
That the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood,  
By the Spirit of our God,  
Was the Word of God made flesh-  
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

From the manger newborn light  
Shines in glory through the night.  
Darkness there no more resides;  
In this light faith now abides.

### **Psalm 16:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup> I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;**

*even at night my heart instructs me.*

**<sup>8</sup> I keep my eyes always on the LORD.**

*With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

**<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;**

*my body also will rest secure,*

**<sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,**

*nor will you let your faithful<sup>[b]</sup> one see decay.*

<sup>11</sup> *You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

**Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

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

O come Thou wisdom from on high,  
Who ord'rest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

**Read Advent Devotion Here**

**Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

O Come Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of al mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

**Prayer:**

Lord,

Bless us today and in this Advent season as we anticipate your second coming, find hope in the promise of a perfect life, prepare our hearts in expectation, and find joy in the birth of your Son in Bethlehem. We know you are coming soon. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.