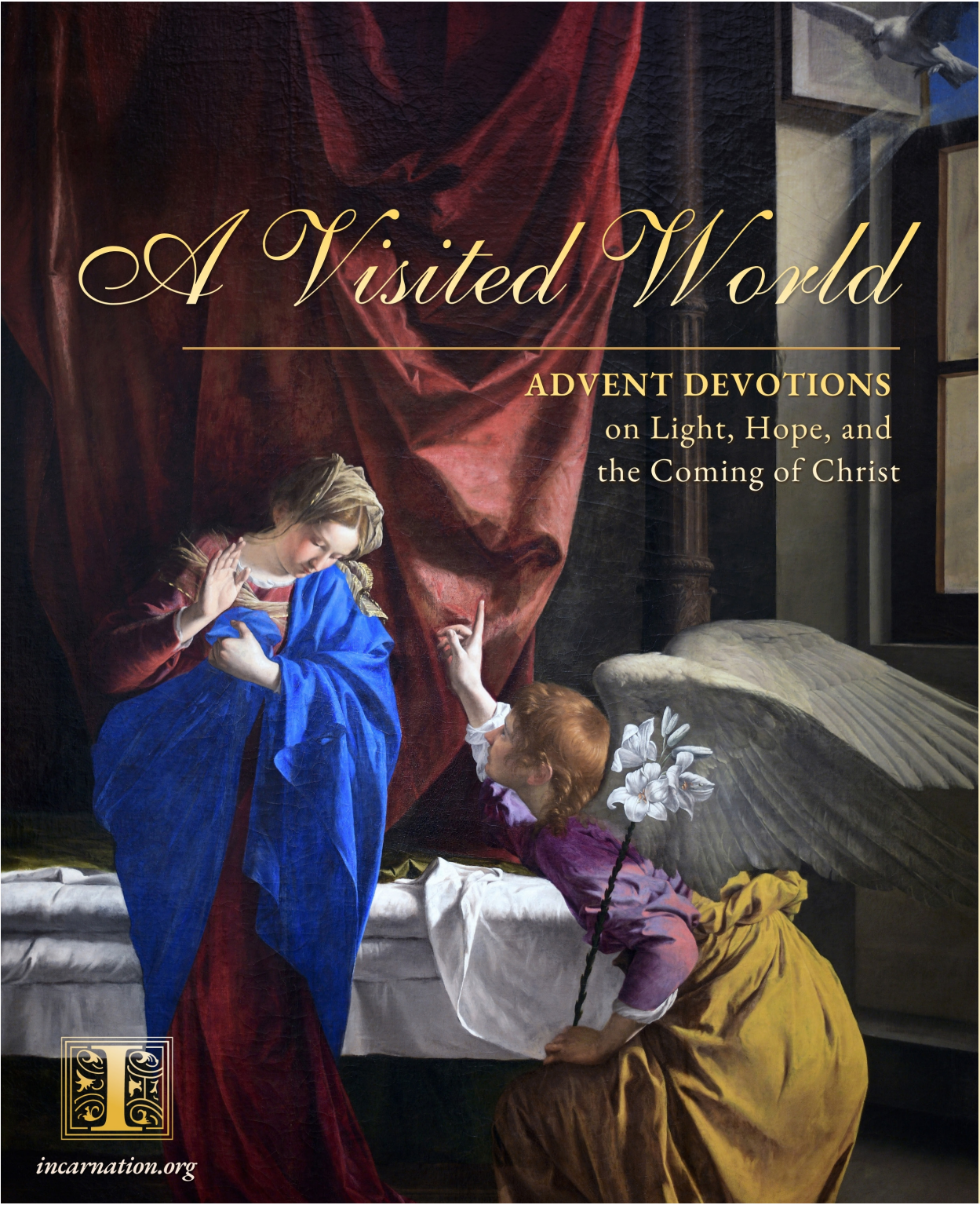




A Visited World

ADVENT DEVOTIONS

on Light, Hope, and
the Coming of Christ



incarnation.org

ABOUT THIS DEVOTIONAL

Advent is one of the most beloved periods in the church calendar, and for a good reason—the change in color, both liturgical and tonal, after a long season of “ordinary time,” the wonderful hymnody, the wreaths and candles, the lengthening of the day’s darkness and its attendant drama.

And yet, the actual liturgical beginning of Advent is starker than we sometimes recall. We enter Advent, after all, praying the Great Litany, that long and comprehensive prayer for mercy in the midst of the world’s suffering, and then are confronted by one of the greatest of Prayer Book collects on Advent I—darkness and light, mortality and humility, last days and judgment, death and immortal life. Now this is the stuff of Advent! There is little by way of sentimental peace, joy, and love here.

It’s also the stuff of our actual lives. Despite all of the greeting card language we often use around Christmas, deep down we can’t deny the darkness that threatens to engulf our lives. Each of our own homes bear their own burdens of broken relationships, failing health, and unspoken sadnesses. For so many of us the longer nights and colder temperatures seem intertwined with the gloom and frigidity of our hearts. The beauty of Advent is this: It is *here* into *just this* darkness that Jesus breaks. And while it may not feel like peace, or joy, or even love, what Advent does offer in spades is *hope*.

This little devotional is offered with that hope in mind. Each week offers the Collect for the week, a brief reflection, and the Daily Office readings to go along with our typical wreath-lighting liturgy for the home. Use as much or as little as you like, but we pray that this small devotional offers both a balm and a spur—that it comforts and unsettles, that it provokes honesty, but curbs despair. In short, that it can stir us up to hope, that God in Christ has shined a light into the darkness of our lives, and that his light will finally overcome the darkness that threatens.

May God fill your home with the hope of Christ this Advent, and may we brave the darkness in our world together as we await his coming in glorious light!

ABOUT ADVENT WREATHS

A tradition in the Church and in Christian families that dates back several generations, this wreath serves as both a reminder and an aid to walk through the Advent season. It consists of 1 pink and 3 purple candles on the wreath (one for each week of Advent), and 1 white candle in the middle (“Christ candle”) that is lit on Christmas Day.

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH CALENDAR:

ADVENT

November 30–December 24, 2025

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 24 at 12 p.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m., 10:30 p.m.

December 25 at 10 a.m.

CHRISTMASTIDE

December 25–January 5, 2026

EPIPHANY

January 6–February 17, 2026

LENT

February 18–March 28, 2026

HOLY WEEK

March 29–April 4, 2026

EASTERTIDE

April 5–May 23, 2026

PENTECOST INTO ORDINARY TIME

May 24–November 28, 2026

ADVENT I

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 6, 2025

The Collect

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both 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 for ever. Amen.

“The Basic Assumptions of Advent”

by The Rev. Jordan Griesbeck

Written by Thomas Cranmer for the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, the first collect of Advent (see above) became so well-known and well-loved that the 1662 BCP appointed it to be read every day during Advent. And with good reason. For this collect captures not only the purpose and mood of Advent, but also succinctly summarizes Advent’s basic assumptions.

First, this collect (and Advent) assumes Christ’s first and second comings. Ours is a visited planet. Our Lord Jesus Christ “came to visit us in great humility” and “he shall come again.” Like Advent, this Collect recognizes that we live in the “time between the times” and that Christ’s two earthly visits frame our own earthly lives with perspective, shape, and meaning.

Second, this collect (and Advent) assumes a cosmic struggle between darkness and light. As much as Westerners imagine ourselves to be “free agents,” Cranmer assumes the opposite: nothing and no one is ever “neutral.” Not just our world but our very bodies are battlegrounds between

sin/death/Satan, on the one hand, and God on the other. But this reality is not a cause for fear; in fact, it infuses our life with real purpose and *telos*.

Third, this collect (and Advent) assumes human weakness and lack of agency. There is a reason God must visit our planet not once but twice. In order to cast off darkness and put on the armor of light, God will have to “give us grace.” Darkness loves darkness; therefore, the Light will have to call us to Itself. If we are to “rise” with Christ on the last day, Christ will have to rise and take us with him.

These are the assumptions of Advent: we need someone to come on our behalf; he has come and will come again. We are engaged in a cosmic struggle; our lives are fraught but purposeful. We, too, are enlisted in the “army of light” as God works to push back real and present darkness—but we can and will do so only with God’s help. I invite you to allow one (or all three) of these assumptions to inform your prayers and devotions this week. ✠



Lighting of Advent Candle 1 (Hope)

Q. Why do we light this Advent candle?

A. To remember this truth: Jesus is the Light of the world, and we who follow him do not walk in darkness but have the light of life. In him the nations will put their **hope** (from Jn 8:12; Matt. 12:21).

As the first candle of Advent is lit, the following is said:

Leader Our King and our Savior, draw near.
All O come let us adore him.

Hymn: Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus (Hymn 66)

Weekly Bible Readings (Year 2)

Sunday

Psalms 146, 147 // 111, 112, 113
 Amos 1:1-5, 13-2:8
 1 Thess. 5:1-11
 Luke 21:5-19

Monday

Psalms 1, 2, 3 // 4, 7
 Amos 2:6-16
 2 Pet. 1:1-11
 Matt. 21:1-11

Tuesday

Psalms 5, 6 // 10, 11
 Amos 3:1-11
 2 Pet. 1:12-21
 Matt. 21:12-22

Wednesday

Psalms 119:1-24 // 12, 13, 14
 Amos 3:12-4:5
 2 Pet. 3:1-10
 Matt. 21:23-32

Thursday

Psalms 18:1-20 // 18:21-50
 Amos 4:6-13
 2 Pet. 3:11-18
 Matt. 21:33-46

Friday

Psalms 16, 17 // 22
 Amos 5:1-17
 Jude 1-16
 Matt. 22:1-14

Saturday

Ps. 20, 21:1-7 // 110:1-5, 116, 117
 Amos 5:18-27
 Jude 17-25
 Matt. 22:15-22

ADVENT II

WEEK OF DECEMBER 7–13, 2025

The Collect

MERCIFUL God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

“Listening to a Voice Different than My Own”

by The Rt. Rev. Greg Brewer

ALL OF US, to some extent or another, surround ourselves with people who (mostly) agree with us. Even if we see ourselves as more “broad-minded” than any particular tribe, we can still assemble a tribe of our own that is made up of people who, like us, are learning to “agree to disagree.”

When John the Baptist came into the public view in Jerusalem, he was in nobody’s tribe, except the prophets of previous generations. As a prophet, speaking the word of the Lord was more important to him than “fitting in,” so that all of his passions, virtues, and vices were subsumed under his one overarching commitment to be a prophet: a mouthpiece for the Lord. But if we were to meet John the Baptist, we would call him a “fanatic” and someone to be avoided. No wonder he lived by himself in the wilderness outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

Because we tend to surround ourselves with people like us, there would be little to no room for someone like John the Baptist. We consciously and unconsciously set the boundaries for who we invite into our circle and who we do not. That means there is little room in our

attention span for words from God that are unfamiliar, at odds with our cultural assumptions, much less words from God that oppose that which we hold dear.

But God is wiser and stronger than our self-serving limitations. God loves us too much to leave us living with ways of thinking that run contrary to his Word. God is committed to conforming us to the image of his Son. Consequently, God can and will bring our way prophetic calls to repentance that leap over our self-imposed walls of protection and touch our hearts. Sometimes God speaks to us in a passing comment in a conversation that hits home. Sometimes it can be a point made in a sermon or a remark made at a Bible study. Sometimes we can be reading the Bible and a verse leaps off the page, and we know that verse is for us!

The prophetic word embodied in John the Baptist is still with us in Christ, and God is still speaking.

How might God’s Word be confronting you this season? ✠



Lighting of Advent Candle 2 (Peace)

Q. Why do we light this Advent Candle?

A. To remember this truth: Jesus is our Lord who lightens our lamp in the darkness. For Jesus himself is our **peace**, the one who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility (from Psalm 18:28; Ephesians 2:14).

As the first and second candles of Advent are lit:

Leader Our King and our Savior, draw near.

All O come let us adore him.

Hymn: Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming (Hymn 81)

Weekly Bible Readings (Year 2)

Sunday

Psalms 148, 149, 150 // 114, 115

Amos 6:1-14

2 Thess. 1:5-12

Luke 1:57-68

Monday

Psalms 25 // 9, 15

Amos 7:1-9

Rev. 1:1-8

Matt. 22:23-33

Tuesday

Psalms 26, 28 // 36, 39

Amos 7:10-17

Rev. 1:9-16

Matt. 22:34-46

Wednesday

Psalms 38 // 119:25-48

Amos 8:1-14

Rev. 1:17-2:7

Matt. 23:1-12

Thursday

Psalm 37:1-18 // 37:19-42

Amos 9:1-10

Rev. 2:8-17

Matt. 23:13-26

Friday

Psalms 31 // 35

Haggai 1:1-15

Rev. 2:18-29

Matt. 23:27-39

Saturday

Psalms 30, 32 // 42, 43

Haggai 2:1-9

Rev. 3:1-6

Matt. 24:1-14

ADVENT III

WEEK OF DECEMBER 14–20, 2025

The Collect

STIR up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

“Opening the Door of Freedom”

by The Rev. Cody Turner

While he was imprisoned by the Nazi regime, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote these words: “A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes—and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside—is not a bad picture of Advent.” These words perfectly capture the spirit of this week’s Collect, because we find in it the same view of the human condition, the same remedy for our condition, and the same view of God.

First, a truly Christian view of Sin understands it not just as a bad action that we do, but as a capital-P Power that acts upon us. It corrupts our wills and affections, and it distorts us and causes us to reflect its image rather than the image of God that we were created in. It’s the equivalent to Bonhoeffer’s cell or the Collect’s force that “sorely hinders” us, and left to our own devices, we are completely captive to its dominion. This is the reality of the human condition.

Second, with this view of Sin in mind, the remedy is clear. The last thing we need is for someone or something to come along and make our “good” lives better. No, what we need is a

deliverer—someone who can invade the kingdom of Sin and ransack its dominion. What we need is for someone to open the prison door from the outside and make us free.

Third, the Collect nudges our gaze upward to remind us that God is that Deliverer that we long for. “Stir up thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us”—come into our sinful patterns, our brokenness, the ways in which we continue to sit in the darkness of our prison cell, even though the door has already been opened to freedom.

This is why Jesus came the first time—to go into the enemy’s territory, to open the door, and to free us from Sin’s dominion. And when he comes again in power and great glory, we will see that freedom fully and finally realized.

In what ways do you need the power of God stirred up in you? In what areas do you still seek his deliverance? As you reflect, pray this Collect daily, and give yourself over to greater trust in God’s delivering work. ✠



Lighting of Advent Candle 3 (Joy)

Q. Why do we light this Advent candle?

A. To remember this truth: Jesus is the Word through whom all things were made. In him is life and his life is the light of all people. If we receive his light, our **joy** is made complete (from John 1:1-3; John 15:11).

As the first, second, and third candles of Advent are lit:

Leader Our King and our Savior, draw near.

All O come let us adore him.

Hymn: There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying (Hymn 75)

Weekly Bible Readings (Year 2)

Sunday

Psalms 63:1-8(9-11), 98 // 103

Amos 9:11-15

2 Thess. 2:1-3; 13-17

John 5:30-47

Monday

Psalms 41, 52 // 44

Zech. 1:7-17

Rev. 3:7-13

Matt. 24:15-31

Tuesday

Psalms 45 // 47, 48

Zech. 2:1-13

Rev. 3:14-22

Matt. 24:32-44

Wednesday

Psalms 119:49-72 // 49, [53]

Zech. 3:1-10

Rev. 4:1-8

Matt. 24:45-51

Thursday

Psalms 50 // [59, 60] or 33

Zech. 4:1-14

Rev. 4:9-5:5

Matt. 25:1-13

Friday

Psalms 40, 54 // 51

Zech. 7:8-8:8

Rev. 5:6-14

Matt. 25:14-30

Saturday

Psalms 55 // 138, 139:1-17(18-23)

Zech. 8:9-17

Rev. 6:1-17

Matt. 25:31-46

ADVENT IV

WEEK OF DECEMBER 21–24, 2025

The Collect

PURIFY our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

“Listening & Living in Faith”

by The Rev. Cn. Oliver Lee

In ancient Jewish culture, a marriage began not with a wedding but with a promise, a betrothal so binding that only death or divorce could dissolve it. When Mary was found to be with child, Joseph stood at a crossroads between honor and humiliation. The law gave him every right to walk away. Society urged him to protect his name. Yet the Holy Spirit whispered a different path.

Taking Mary as his wife could have meant shame and mockery. But Joseph chose obedience over reputation. He chose faith over fear. In doing so, he revealed a truth that echoes through the ages: God’s way is rarely the easiest, but it is always the best. Joseph’s righteousness wasn’t loud, it was lived. Each time God spoke, Joseph obeyed quietly, promptly, and faithfully. His holiness wasn’t proven in grand gestures but in simple trust. That is the heartbeat of faith: not in how powerfully we pray, but in how faithfully we act.

When we walk daily with God in prayer, we learn the sound of his voice amid the world’s noise. Through persistent prayer, our hearts are tuned like instruments to divine frequency. And when God calls, we hear.

The Spirit of God is not thunder alone, he is wind, gentle and invisible, moving through us like breath through our lungs. When we are consistent

in prayer, we learn the rhythm of his breathing. In silence, he speaks. In stillness, he shapes. In surrender, he sanctifies.

You might think, “God never calls me.” Oh yes, he does—every single day. Do you have parents? God calls you to honor them. A spouse? God calls you to love them. Children? God calls you to guide and encourage them. Neighbors? God calls you to show kindness. Do you see those in need? God calls you to help them.

Listen. Wait. Then, obey.

Joseph’s life proves that unseen obedience can shift the course of history. He didn’t preach sermons or command armies. He simply did what God asked, and through that humble faith, the Savior entered the world.

So as we prepare for the coming of Christ, we must ask ourselves: Am I willing to obey God, even when it costs me? Am I living as Jesus would live? Am I walking the path he has set before me? You may not see the whole road ahead. You may not understand the plan. But faith is stepping forward anyway, trusting that God will guide your next step.

“Faith is obedience, nothing else—literally nothing else at all.” — Emil Brunner ✠



Lighting of Advent Candle 4 (Love)

Q. Why do we light this Advent candle?

A. We welcome God's light into our lives and we welcome the full revelation of God's unfailing **love** for us and for all of creation. For Jesus is the Word of God, the lamp to our feet and light to our path (from Psalm 119:105).

As the first, second, third, and fourth candles of Advent are lit:

Leader Our King and our Savior, draw near.

All O come let us adore him.

Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Hymn 56)

The Collect for Christmas Eve

O GOD, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Weekly Bible Readings (Year 2)

Sunday

Psalms 24, 29 // 8, 84

Gen. 3:8–15

Rev. 12:1–10

John 3:16–21

Monday

Psalms 61, 62 // 112, 115

Zeph. 3:14–20

Titus 1:1–16

Luke 1:1–25

Tuesday

Psalms 66, 67 // 116, 117

1 Samuel 2:1b–10

Titus 2:1–10

Luke 1:26–38

Wednesday, December 24

Psalms 72

2 Samuel 7:1–17

Titus 2:11–3:8a

Luke 1:39–48a(48b–56)

Christmas Eve

Psalm 89:1–29

Isa. 59:15b–21

Phil. 2:5–11



CHRISTMAS DAY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2025

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Q. Why do we light the Christ candle?

A. With joy we remember Christ's coming and with joy we look forward to his coming again when night will be no more and lamp and sun will no longer be needed because he will be our light forever and ever (based on Revelation 22:5).

As the four candles of Advent and the Christ candle are lit:

Leader Alleluia! Unto us a child is born.
All O come let us adore him. Alleluia!

Hymns:

Oh, Come All Ye Faithful (83)
Hark the herald angels sing (87)
Go Tell It On The Mountain (99)
Joy To The World (100)

Readings:

Ps. 2, 85 // 110:1–5(6–7), 132
Micah 4:1–5; 5:2–4
1 John 4:7–16
John 3:31–36

Nativity of our Lord: Christmas Day

O GOD, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

