

The Coming

A Short Devotion for the Advent Season

Brought to you by your KIVU family. May you have a blessed Christmas season!



Advent literally means "the coming". It's about us preparing for an arrival. It's about us being excited for a promised presence, an anticipated company. It's about Jesus coming to earth and moving in with us. GOD with us. Immanuel.

As the holiday season nears, we prepare to welcome in family that will stay with us. We prepare to travel to hospitable destinations where we will 'move in' for the holiday. This practice of hospitality is similar in what GOD did for us through Jesus. He moved in with us. He entered our broken world to bring it back to what it was before in the garden of Eden. But Jesus was not welcomed to earth with hospitality but with hostility and no special room was prepared for him. "He came unto his own yet his own received him not." He was born in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn.

This advent devotion prepares the heart to be hospitable to "the Coming" we will celebrate in full on Christmas morning. GOD sent the greatest gift of all—His presence in human form. Let us now prepare together to invite him into our homes and hearts where we may celebrate that He has indeed moved in with us and continues to change us forever. May He continue to make our heart and this earth more of His home.

Pregnant with Hope: Week of November 27

27

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

The promise was from long ago. It had been foretold from the days of the prophets. It was something for which the human race longed. It was a void in our humanity. God with us is what was promised. The very Creator of all the earth and the Master who fashioned us in the womb had been ostracized from His creation. We were missing something. We could not find what we were looking for.

We often believe that we can live life with out God. But God With Us determined that it should be otherwise. He knows that His creation cannot function properly apart from his Creator. The home of our hearts is not to be left vacant. Without God, we are incomplete. As Blaise Pascal observed, ""There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus"

Lord, today as every day, I am in need of your company.

28

How many prophecies point to Jesus? Let's not call them prophecies, let's call them promises. How many promises did God make and keep through the advent of Jesus? Numbers **from** 48 to 300 have been used to describe the number of promises that Jesus fulfilled. **Can** you recall one or two significant promises in your life? ... made to you or by you? Making promises is easy. Keeping promises is tough. We respond to promises one of two ways: trust or doubt. Did God keep His promises to send a Savior? Yes!

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." Corrie Ten Boom

Lord, we are tempted to be skeptical and cynical, please give us the grace to trust You. Thank You for always keeping Your promises. Amen

29

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2

It is from the lowly places that God chooses to make his arrival. From the unlikeliest of characters that God shows Himself. A small rural town would play host to the arrival of human kind's greatest hope. How often do we miss the value God hides in small and hidden things? It is there where he loves to reside. He chose his royal birth to be in a small, humble town. Would he find your heart to be just the same?

30 *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."* Jeremiah 23:5

The world is full of things that need to be made right. Injustice abounds. Doors are locked and walls are built up around us to protect ourselves from getting hurt. The world tries to steal from us. But hope is found in the coming of One who will take what is wrong and make it right. Justice will make its home in the land. This coming King will tear down the walls around us so that we can be fully human and fully His. What wrongs in this world do you long to be made right? What walls have you built up in your own life for your own safety?

1 *"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth...The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'"* Luke 1:26, 28

What did He see in Mary? A young, innocent teenager pledged to be married to another young man. She was highly favored but for what reason? Why was Mary chosen to be visited by an angel? A messenger came from God with words that heal the heart. "You may think that you have gone unnoticed, but God is with you."

Mary was not forgotten. God was writing a story that would include those in the shadows. It would include those who were forgotten. Mary found surprise in God finding favor with her. But that surprise was not reserved for Mary alone. He came to tell us all that we have not gone unnoticed.

"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

2 *"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"* Luke 1:34

What a frighteningly vulnerable thing to ask of such a young girl? Especially of a virgin. "You will carry my child. And the conception will not be what is natural to you." Mary was surprised by such an announcement. How shocking are His ways!

He appears to each of us in much the same manner. His announcements surprise us. He asks frighteningly vulnerable things of us. He desires to grow himself inside of us. In so doing, we discover that we are, indeed, made in His image.

3

"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"
Luke 1:35

And so it was that God began his arrival to earth. In the form of a man. In the womb of a virgin teenager. Did Mary really know whom she was carrying? The Holy One, the Son of God was within her. Do we really know who we are carrying inside of us today? The Holy Spirit, the Comforter indwells all who believe on His name.

Making Preparations: Week of December 4

4

"Prepare the way for the LORD." Isaiah said it (40:3); John the Baptist said it (Luke 3:4).

How do we prepare for the LORD? How could Mary and Joseph have been prepared for what God asked of **them**? This was not what they had planned or expected.

Perhaps planning is not the **same** as preparing. Planning is about trying to figure out ways to work and manipulate things to ensure a certain outcome. But Proverbs reminds us that "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is **the LORD's** purpose that prevails." Proverbs 19:21. Preparation is more about getting ready for whatever lies ahead, knowing that God is working out His purposes. Mary and Joseph probably felt quite unprepared for their part in the Christmas story but God saw in them three precious virtues: willingness, humility and trust. Willingness overcomes selfish stubbornness; humility overcomes pride; trust overcomes fear and hurt.

Lord, please help us to prepare for You by growing in our willingness, our humility and our trust. We need Your good involvement in our lives in order to fulfill our parts in Your purposes for this Christmas and beyond. Thank You for Your good involvement today. Amen

5

"For nothing is impossible with God." Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left. Luke 1:37-38

Zechariah questioned the angel who told him he would have a son. Abraham laughed when he was told he would have a son born to him at one hundred years old. Sarah chuckled when she heard she would bare a son in her old age. But Mary accepted that she would be with child even as a virgin!

How often do we chuckle at what is seemingly impossible. It is a common response. But how was Mary able to have such an uncommon response? How firm was her belief that God can very well do whatever he wants. Am I willing to accept whatever he wants? Am I willing to believe in what would seem impossible?

Remember Gabriel's comfort and counsel to Mary, "...for nothing is impossible with God."

Lord, help us to respond to you as Mary did. "May it be to me as you have said."

6

"Joseph, her fiance, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly." Matthew 1:19

He was looking for a quiet way out. A soft exit would cause the least harm for both him and Mary. Whether he could believe Mary's story of conception or not, the issue was that she was pregnant. And she was not yet married. It was culturally taboo. Mary was given a scarlet letter.

Why would God write a story of our King's arrival and allow it to appear as though it were steeped in sin and unfaithfulness? Surely the public shame and ridicule would be too much to bear for both him and Mary. What other options did Joseph have but to slip off quietly?

Things are not always as they appear to be. The unconventional manners of our great GOD have a history of using what is foolish to shame what is wise. There is no social disgrace or moral failure that is beyond his reach. There is no pious manner or high position that can't be brought down low. You don't need to clean house to come to him. He works well with what looks a mess.

Lord, thank you for coming into my home even with all the mess around me.

7

"Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-21

Can you imagine the shock to find that indeed your fiance is pregnant with a child that would change the world? A child conceived by the Holy Spirit! Perhaps it was initially met with great relief by Joseph. Mary was indeed faithful and her words were true. But what emotions would be invoked by a father who knew his son would save the world?! What child is this?

What Child is this, who, laid to rest

*On Mary's lap, is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring Him land,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

8

"...you are to name him Jesus..." Matthew 1:21

The story of your name is a great piece of you. Whether carefully thought through by your parents, inspired by something silly, or a name that has long been in the family, it is your identity. Jesus' identity was clear from the start. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua which means *the Lord saves*. A common name but not a common mission. He would save his people from their sins. Rescue was on the way.

Lord, you are my rescue. In your name alone I trust.

9

A child changes everything...

People are fond of saying that when you have kids... everything changes.

When Eve held Cain, her life changed.

When Sarah held Isaac, her life changed.

When Hannah held Samuel, her life changed.

When Mary held Jesus, her life changed.

But Jesus is the child whose birth changes everything for everyone.

See if you can listen to a song called "This Little Child" by **Scott** Wesely Brown.

*Lord, please grant us the grace to believe deeply, deeper than any doubt or fear, and **see** how you came to change everything. Amen*

10

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree..." Luke 2:1

They were a nation not their own. Governed by foreigners. Their identity and culture were threatened by the forces above them. They longed to be liberated. They were a people unsettled. Tension surrounded them from outside and inside the Jewish community. The pressure of conforming to the Greco-Roman culture surrounded them. The pressure to preserve their rich heritage and cling to the promises of their Creator God consumed them. Unrest and hostility was in the air.

The decree called for a census. A census that would enable the Romans to further tax the people of their empire. So Joseph took Mary and traveled 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to pay taxes to an emperor who claimed to be god. It was a glaring reminder that they were a conquered people. They were not free to worship the one and true God and serve him alone. The Christmas story cries out for a liberator to come and free a conquered people.

Lord, you came to let me go. You came to set me free. Help me to let go. Help me to live free.

Filled with Joy: Week of December 11

11

A good friend described his recent struggles this way "I feel like I can hear the music but I can't tap my feet." He was hurting and sad. Jesus is familiar with hurt and He offers us joy. Joy sets our **feet free** to dance, or perhaps just to **tap them** to the music.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Tap your feet today instead of rolling your eyes. Joy often seems extravagant. Can we afford to be joyous? Can we afford not to be? Go ahead... let out **some** joy today; or should I say, let in some joy today?

"You turned my wailing into dancing: You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Psalm 30:11

Lord, please clothe us with joy this season. Amen

12

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old..." Luke 1:69-70

The passage of time begins to call all promises into question. The coming of a king was a promise from of old. But it was a promise that still remained unfulfilled. The promise seemed to be met with great neglect. Too many false alarms or misrepresentations had come and gone. Zechariah's prayer was expressing a joy which was long overdue.

It is a common practice that God fulfills his promises to us in the least suspected time or manner. But His promises always stand the test of time. He has never failed to live up to his words. He has never fallen short of a promise. His timing is never too late. Consider today, God's record of failure in your own life and you will see that he is faithful always. Where may you rejoice? Where must you release?

13

"While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born." Luke 2:6

One would imagine a royal entry. A sight for all to see. An entrance with great extravagance. Something that would capture the attention of all of humankind.

O little town of Bethlehem. Away in a manger. What an odd setting for someone of such significance! Light was shining in a dark, forgotten, insignificant place. The story of 'gospel' was being given further meaning. There is no corner that can hide from his great light.

Lord, you can shine in my dark corners. Let your light shine in. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

14

The next time you experience a power failure, consider the darkness. Consider how desperate we would become if we could not make light somehow with a candle, a flashlight, a generator. Never mind the food in the fridge, never mind the favorite hot showers missed...we just want to see...we want to see now...darkness is not good.

Lord, please help us not to take light for granted. Amen

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2

*Lord, please help us not to take You for granted, but **help us to take You**, receive You for the gift You are, granted to us in our need.. .the gift of light and love and life. May generosity overflow from us and make wonderful messes around us. We give, because we have been blessed to receive gifts from You.*

15

A prayer for you to begin your morning from **Luke 1:46-55**.

Mary responded,

"Oh, how I praise the Lord.

⁴⁷ How I rejoice in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and now generation after generation
will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For he, the Mighty One, is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

- ⁵⁰ His mercy goes on from generation to generation,
to all who fear him.
- ⁵¹ His mighty arm does tremendous things!
How he scatters the proud and haughty ones!
- ⁵² He has taken princes from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.
- ⁵³ He has satisfied the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
- ⁵⁴ And how he has helped his servant Israel!
He has not forgotten his promise to be merciful.
- ⁵⁵ For he promised our ancestors—Abraham and his children—
to be merciful to them forever."

16

"...and they were terrified." Luke 2:9

One angel. The glory of the Lord wrapped around him. The shepherds were scared stiff! When God's glory meets man's lowliness, we are brought to our knees. It shakes the heart of man. How small and powerless we become!

What magnificence! What wonder! What thrill! What terror! The greatness of our Creator God was made visible to a few shepherds. The angel was accompanied by a "heavenly host" who made an announcement that broke the silenced hope of a weary world. The long awaited promise was now breaking forth in sublime splendor!

*O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the Spirit felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, the night when Christ was born;
O night, O Holy Night, O night divine!
O night, O Holy Night, O night divine!*

17

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”, a poem originating from an anonymous German author in the 16th century. He came as if a rose were blooming in mid winter.

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as those of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.*

*This Flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere;
True Man, yet very God, from sin and death He saves us,
And lightens every load.*

Found in Love: Week of December 18

18

Hope is both thrilling and foolish. It builds up in our hearts during times of darkness when life is not playing out as promised or desired. It goes against all odds. It calls for a turn of events. It holds out the belief that the story is about to be written differently. It is often carried most strongly by the weak, weary, worn out, and seemingly defeated. That is why hope is such a thrill.

"A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!"

Lord, my hope is in you. I welcome you into my weary heart and am thrilled that you have come.

19

90 miles an hour is normal for us now. . .fast-paced, super busy, go go go. The pedal gets pushed down harder this time of year. Our hair blows back straighter, our schedules get crazier, our patience wears dangerously thin and everywhere is noise.

Read Psalm 131. Quiet yourself sometime, somewhere. See if you can listen in the quietness.

A good song version of this scripture is "Come to the Quiet" by John Michael Talbot.

20

Philippians 2:7

"He made himself nothing."

But it meant everything to all of humankind.

"Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself..."

But it was cause for boundless rejoicing and thrilling hope for us!

Christmas celebrates the greatest gift given to humankind by a Giver who stoops to the lowliest of forms. Trading all that is God in his nature to take on the skin and suffering of a human.

He became nothing

and would give everything

so we could be something.

The story of Christmas meets the heart of every human emotion. You can rejoice with the angels and shepherds who were thrilled at the coming of our King or you can empathize with the humble, broken human form that God chose to indwell wherewith he would give himself to all the pains of this human world in so much as death.

The story and celebration meets us all exactly where we are at today. That is the beauty of this observance. Jesus was laid in that manger. He was God who became nothing. He was a man who would change everything

21

If disappointment were a color, sometimes I feel like my house is painted that color, my clothes and hair are that color, my truck is that color— you get the idea.

Lord, I don't want every aspect of my life to be colored by disappointment. I want my life to be colored by gratitude and hope. . .by expectant faith. . .by knowledge of and trust in You.. Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

I listened to an interview of a man who described the birth of his first child like discovering a new color in the rainbow. Jesus' birth brought a new and lasting color into the world. . . do you see **that** color?

Our hopes and expectations and prayers are assaulted by disappointment and discouragement. . . punched, kicked, mocked, muddied. What will we pay attention to? The bullies or the promises? The liars or the LORD?

Jesus knows what we wrestle with. He has walked the scary roads, the sad roads, the punishing roads, the lonely roads, as well as the happy roads. He said we should remember that "in this world you will have trouble but take heart for I have overcome the world." Bob Marley sang it with a slightly different set of lyrics... "don't worry 'bout a thing, cause every little thing is gonna be alright." It's true. Everything is going to be right, made right, set right, all right, because He promised; and what we celebrate in this season is the fact that the promises are not empty or unfulfilled, they are completely and thoroughly fulfilled in Jesus; not a distant, religious figure from history past, but a close and living Person who is all we dare hope for and more. We have dared to hope. We have prepared to help. We have prayed to Him. Trust Him and rejoice this Christmas.

22 The lyrics of 'O Holy Night' are from a French poem titled 'Midnight, Christians' by [Placide Cappeau](#) in the 19th century. He had been asked by a parish priest to write a Christmas poem.

*Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
With all our hearts we praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we,
His power and glory ever more proclaim!
His power and glory ever more proclaim!*

"How many observe 'Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts!" Ben Franklin
"Remember this December, that love weighs **more than** gold!" Josephine Bacon

God understood that the greatest gift he could give us was his presence. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son to move into our neighborhood. How little time we spend getting to know our neighbor! Just a knock on the door and a conversation can begin. Just an evening conversation on the street corner and we know him a little better. Just a casual discussion over the fence and we are closer together. Just a sharing of our food and we can become like family.

Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, I thank you for moving into my neighborhood. I thank you for knocking on my door. I thank you for sharing a meal with me. I thank you for sharing your life with me. I thank you that I now find life in you.

23 May this peace prayer of Saint Francis be your meditation this day as you welcome family and friends, neighbors or strangers, with love into your heart.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;*

*where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen*

24

Below is an excerpt from *In the Bleak Midwinter*, written by English poet Christina Rossetti in 1872.

*What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart*

As the gift giving begins on the eve of his coming, may our hearts be directed to the greatest gift giving of all. He gave himself for us. We give ourselves for him. We express this momentous act of love in what we place under the tree for each other. What we are truly saying to each other is that we give our hearts.

On Christmas Morning

25

BORN... of a woman, a virgin torn
...blessed comfort for those who mourn
...bold to fulfill all that was sworn
...a he-child, a free child, a lion unshorn
...a seed, a root, of salvation, a horn
...a boy, a man on whose shoulders the government is worn
...acquainted with grief but fount of joy, peaceful healer but object of scorn
...a light, a love rejected, beaten, emptied and crowned with thorns
...in blood he arrived in Bethlehem, in blood he died, he defied lies well-worn
...his last, hurting breath a prayer; and by it lifted the lovelorn, gifted the stillborn
...finishing the mystery of forgiveness, beginning the mystery of the twiceborn
...and so He forever makes new each morn
...and so we endeavor to let His Spirit adorn...

our hearts this day, re-born.

Lord, may we not only visit the story of Christmas once in a while, but carry the story with us so that Your birth, Your story, may transform our understanding and our undertakings in our every days between the Decembers of our lives. Thanks be to You. Amen.