

EPIPHANY

Isaiah 60:1-6 | Psalm 72

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. From oppression and violence he redeems us. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit: that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus – whose glory fills the whole earth – we thank you for coming to us and drawing us to yourself. Help us become the kind of people who, when gathered together in your name, display the wisdom of God to the beings in the heavenly realms!

AN ADVENT YES

Did Mary understand her “yes” to the Almighty?

Could she have imagined weeping at the feet of her crucified son?

Did she realise her willingness to welcome Emmanuel into her womb would cost her dearly and change her life?

Could Mary have known that she would wait again for the Spirit of God to fill her – at Pentecost?

Heavenly Father, while we don't know all it will mean, we offer ourselves – as Mary did – willing to be filled by your surprising presence.

*Jesus, incarnate one, grow in us.
God-with-us, enlarge us with your life.*

*Almighty God, overshadow us with your presence.
We watch and wait for you. We wonder what our yes to you will require of us.*

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – this advent, we expect and look for your coming presence. Change us from the inside out, so that our default response to you becomes:

*Here I am, your servant.
Come and do your will.*



Advent

READINGS



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FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Jeremiah 33:14-16 | Psalm 25:1-9
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36

The weeping prophet, Jeremiah, announces the fulfilment of God's promise to a people in exile: a branch will spring up who will bring justice and righteousness to the land. The Psalmist shows us how to pray and sing our hopeful expectancy in the Lord, "for you I wait all day long." We ask the Lord to: strengthen our own hearts, restore whatever faith is lacking in us, and keep us alert at all times – because the kingdom of God and our redemption is drawing near!

Lord, help us to wait and watch for you with the same kind of hope and expectant longing as the children of Israel.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Malachi 3:1-4 | Luke 1:67-79
Philippians 1:3-11 | Luke 3:1-6
Psalm 80

In the Old and New Testaments, God sends messengers to his people to prepare the way. Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied about the mighty saviour for whom his little boy would prepare the way. John proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins – and foretold that all flesh would see the salvation of God.

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to prepare and always be ready to welcome you. We repent and receive your forgiveness for our sins. We want to see your salvation!

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Zephaniah 3:14-20 | Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7 | Luke 3:7-18

Sing! Rejoice! Do not fear, daughter Zion – for the Lord your God is in your midst. He will remove disaster. He will renew you in his love. He will deal with your oppressors. The Lord will restore your fortunes. As we turn and return in repentance, God will do the same for us – this is truly good news.

We praise you, Heavenly Father, warrior who is mighty to save us. We sing and shout aloud for the Holy One of Israel is in our midst.

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Micah 5:2-5a | Luke 1:39-56
Hebrews 10:5-10
Revelation 22:6-21

She who is in labour will bring forth the one of peace. And this child will stand and feed his flock and they shall live secure. We can sing Mary's song with her – knowing that the Mighty One has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy. The God of the spirits and prophets promised, "I am coming soon". We join with everyone who hears and call out, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my saviour. Lord – you have done great things for us. You have done great things.

CHRISTMAS

Isaiah 9:2-7 | Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14 | Luke 2:1-20

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light – and his name is Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. The grace of God has appeared and brought salvation to us all. We join our songs of praise with the multitude of heavenly hosts, singing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven!"

Jesus, we thank you for coming to us as a baby – dependent, vulnerable, and human. We gather with the saints across time and throughout the world to kneel and adore at the feet of our newborn King!

