

ADVENT

WORDS for *reflecting* or *meditating on* as you journey through Advent.

'Maranatha' ~ 'Our Lord, come' (1 Corinthians 16. 22)



29th November: 1st Sunday of ADVENT

Almighty God,

As your kingdom dawns,

turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness

that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Monday 30th November

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver-pale.
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound –
Journey to what? To whom? To where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is *journeying* to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'
(John Betjeman : *Advent 1955*)

Tuesday 1st December

During Advent we become one with those who waited in darkness for the revealing of God's light - and who dared to *hope* that God's salvation could come in the birth of a child...

Waiting is essential to the spiritual life.

But waiting as a Christian is not empty waiting.

It is a waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for!

Christians wait in Advent for the birth of Jesus.

We wait after Easter for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And we wait after the Ascension of Jesus for his *coming* again in glory – that *Second Coming* – which is a particular focus for us in Advent. (Henri Nouwen : *in Joyful Hope*)

Wednesday 2nd December

We are in fact always waiting! It is a waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps.

Our waiting for God should be active, alert – yes, joyful – waiting.

As we wait we remember him for whom we are waiting, and as we remember him we create a community ready to welcome him when he *comes*. (HN *ibid*)

Thursday 3rd December

One thing Advent tells me is that people of faith know it will get darker before it gets light. That is what our calendar teaches us, beginning when it does. Week by week we will light new candles, but even as we light them the darkness will increase.

We also know that the sun will come back, just like we know that God will be born in a barn in Bethlehem.

These are sure facts of our lives, but so is waiting in the dark. Anyone who have ever hungered for morning knows that. It will *come*, but it will not be rushed.

You can prop the clock right by your face on your pillow. You can count to sixty five-hundred times and it will not change a thing. Night creatures will still rustle in the leaves outside your window. Your heart will still beat like a drum in your ears. Morning will *come*, but it will not be rushed.

Our job is to wait without losing *hope*...

(Barbara Brown Taylor: *Gospel Medicine*)

Friday 4th December

Christ is *coming*

With a gentle touch, with an angry word, with a clean conscience, with burning love – to make all things new...

Within us, without us, behind us, before us, in every place, for this time, for all time – to make all things new...

Saturday 5th December

Every Advent the scriptures take us through the desperate longing and eagerness of God's people, awaiting God's *coming* among them to heal and save. The readings for Advent and Christmas progress from this longing to a vision of the fulfilment of God's promises: the Peaceable Kingdom, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the marriage of God and humanity, the renewal of creation. (Gretchen Wolff Pritchard)



6th December: 2nd Sunday of ADVENT

Almighty God,
Purify our hearts and minds,
that when you Son Jesus Christ *comes*
again as judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and God.

Monday 7th December

The prophet cries out:

'In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!

Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!

Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.' (Isaiah 40 3-4)

Like the beginning of work on a new highway, construction in our personal lives means work. The Christmas present buying may, for example, need levelling! Just as we cannot drive a car where there is no highway, so God cannot *come* to us unless we prepare the road.

Tuesday 8th December

As we look for Christ's *coming* among us, open our eyes to behold your presence.

The wilderness and the dry land shall rejoice, the desert shall blossom and burst into song.

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then shall the lame leap like a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. (Isaiah
35 v1,5,6)

Wednesday 9th December

Who will cry out with comfort for the hurting?
Who will call out the purveyors of pain?
Topple the towering monuments to division
and use the rubble as the foundation
for God's new motorway
straight into the hurting heart of the city,
into the heart of the problem,
into your heart and mine.

Bend and break the proud and the powerful,
Raise up those who are bent and burdened,
Lift up their eyes from all they have known
The painful past and present impotence
So that they can see that God is *coming*
Bringing real peace, tangible hope
and justice that cannot be bought.
Cry out...
(After Janet Lees: Virtual Methodist)

Thursday 10th December

As we remember the *coming* of the Christ child let us be aware that he may not
come now in the form of a baby, but as a stranger, a beggar, a member of our
family in distress, as an enemy, a soldier, an oppressor.
But these may be hiding the face of Christ.
We have to hold our doors open. (Quaker Prayer, Ramallah 1992)

Friday 11th December

Life on earth is an inevitable mix of joy and pain. Indeed, life is full of
disappointments and frustrations. Sometimes the pain of personal failure, the

loss of loved ones, the fear following a traumatic event or the thought of facing the future feels almost intolerable.

It is then that the message of Advent, with the *hope* that it brings in its wake, is most comforting, even healing.

Saturday 12th December

Lord Jesus, thank you that so often you choose to *come* to us through the love of family and friends.

Signs of this love surround us in our homes. The plant on the windowsill, the books on the shelf, the photograph of a shared memory, the card received when life was tough.

We thank you Lord. (Caroline Bashford)



13th December: 3rd Sunday of ADVENT

God for whom we watch and wait,

you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son :

give us courage to speak the truth,

to hunger for justice,

and to suffer for the cause of right

with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Monday 14th December

Advent is like a wake-up call. It calls us to wake up to the *hope* that defines our faith.

To wake up to the *hope* that the promised reign of light and life and love is *coming*. To wake up to the *hope* that keeps us participating in God's new creation in spite of so much working against us. To wake up to the *hope* that the glad tidings of Christ's birth and the Good News of God's love may be realised in our lives and in our world.

(William Van Gelder)

Tuesday 15th December

Advent taps our memory of other times when we have waited – waited for meaning, for a dream to be realised, for grief to lessen. Or for abuse to end... Those waitings take their toll, but when they are joined to Advent waiting the edges of the wounds begin to heal. They are gathered into the renewed remembering of God's desire to love, to *come* down and finally to love us in

person. All of the waitings are fused, and the relief of God's longing to love us seeps into our pained impatience.

Wednesday 16th December

"There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle..."

I have always remembered those words, not so much for their poetry or imagery as for the truth they contain. In moments of discouragement, defeat or even despair, there are always certain things to cling to. Little things, usually: remembered laughter, the face of a sleeping child, a tree in the wind – in fact, any reminder of something deeply felt or dearly loved. (Arthur Gordon)

Thursday 17th December

Advent is also a platform on which we stand to get a good view of piled-up layers of beginnings and endings.

The most obvious is the birth, but Advent reminds us that there will be another beginning somewhere in the future when Christ will *come* to judge the living and the dead.

It is not easy to think of a hopeful beginning and of the end of a world at the same time – whether it is the end of the whole world or the world of one beloved life. Beside the layers of Christ's beginnings and endings, we are invited to stack the layers of our own beginnings and endings.

It is hard to look at them all and let God into them, but here is an Advent fact : you cannot find the fullness of Christmas until you wander through the thoughts of last things (especially your own) and feel the pain and taste the fear, and then hold them out to the healing power of God's love. (Margaret Gatter Payne: *Christian Century*)

Friday 18th December

Advent addresses our bewilderment that there have to be any endings at all. It pulls the ending into the beginning and forces us to look at the whole picture so that we can be comforted (MGP).

It is vitally important to remember that the good news is that our salvation depends, finally, not on our own goodness but on the goodness of the judge, who is not some stranger behind a glass wall but a saviour – a saver of life – who has pledged us his presence, his help, his love.

Saturday 19th December

The truth is that God's *coming* in judgement is inseparable from God's *coming* in grace.

Christians are encouraged to look forward to Christ's final *coming* not with terror but with eager anticipation.

One thing you can say for sure about judgement is that it will have far less to do with who we are than who God is. And if we can face the prospect of it with our eyes wide open, it is not because we are confident in our own goodness but because we are confident in God's goodness.

Jesus is the judge, yes, but his chambers are the chambers of his compassionate heart. No judgement takes place outside of there; all judgement takes place inside there, by the same Lord who offers us peace, pardon, and transformation every day of our lives.

We can refuse him of course. We can fail to believe him. We can fear him, we can run away from him. Or we can say yes, here I am, see me the way I really am, tell me the whole truth about myself, refine me, transform me.

I give up trying to figure out how good or bad I am. I give up trying to be God. You be the judge. You be God. You have better credentials anyway. (BBT *ibid*)



20th December: 4th Sunday of ADVENT

Eternal God,

as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,

so we wait for his *coming* in glory;

bring us through the birth pangs of this present age

to see, with her, our great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Monday 21st December

The one who is *coming* is not an enemy but a friend. He may come in the light, but he may also come in the evening, or at midnight, or at three in the morning. Darkness does not stop him, and it does not have to stop us either. Our job is not to lie in bed with the pillows over our heads or to shove all the heavy furniture in front of the door for fear of the darkness outside.

Our job is to watch for the one who *comes* to us with healing in his wings and to open the door for him before he raises his hand to knock.

Who knows when that will be? No one, that is who.

Watch therefore. Take heed, watch.

For what he says to us he says to all: Watch. (BBT *ibid*)

Tuesday 22nd December

‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God’.

Comfort? Where is comfort in the thought of a day that sneaks up on you like a thief in the night and tears your world apart?

How can there be anything but cold terror at the idea?

The judgement theme of Advent that reminds us of the Second Coming of Christ is often sidestepped because it is no fun to think about end times and last things; it ruins the innocence and hopeful peace of Christmas. About all we can ever manage is to listen to John the Baptist’s ranting in the wilderness to prepare a way for the Lord, and to elaborate on Mary’s story of her time of waiting. But observing all the wisdom of Advent, not just the parts that are easy or pleasing, brings a deeper understanding of the birth to come – of a Christmas powerful enough to address death and disappointment. (Margaret Gatter Payne)

Wednesday 23rd December

Mary is fiercely glad that God has asked her to bear a son and to name him Jesus. But although she is rightly proud of her own role, she also knows that this is not just about her. The Bible shows that it is about God *coming* to establish a new world order, and to be close to the poor and powerless. Part of Mary’s memory is suddenly seeing what God was doing and being filled with a joy that made her sing aloud. (Jane Williams, adapted: *Approaching Christmas*)

Thursday 24th December: Christmas Eve

~ Here I go again, carefully unpacking the figures of the crib,
tenderly wiping dust from Mary’s eyes and Joseph’s beard,
all the while practising my contemplative skills.

~ Here I am, duster in hand,
seeking to emulate the shepherds’ enthusiasm and openness,
the wise men’s courage and generosity.

~ Mary’s mysticism, Joseph’s humility,
the Christ Child’s vulnerability.

~ Who am I kidding?

It is the absent figure that haunts me.

I stand shoulder to shoulder
in grim, callous, irritable solidarity

with that wretched innkeeper.

No room, no time, no way.

~ Nobody has ever dared carve him in wood and include him in the Christmas crib,

Have they?

(Sylvia Sands : *Advent Absentee*)

'Maranatha' ~ 'Our Lord, come'

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Note: Sunday Collects from Common Worship *Services and Prayers for the Church of England*

Sources, where not credited are unknown.

Italics edited.

Compiled 2020 JS / [plumsmith18@gmail.com](mailto:plumsmith18@gmail.com)



Renewing **HOPE**  
Pray • Serve • Grow

