



HOPE Reigns

GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL
REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT
YEAR C 2024

1 DECEMBER First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16 | Ps 24:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:2 | Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

LONGING, THE HEART OF ADVENT

Small group host: As we begin today's small group reflection and discussion of the First Sunday of Advent, let us take a moment to invite God into our small community. We take a deep breath and pause to be still.

OPENING PRAYER

We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Heavenly Father, open the eyes and ears of our hearts to recognise your presence and voice in our daily lives as we journey this season of Advent together. In this time of sharing, may we see each other with eyes of compassion and listen to one another with ears of understanding. Help us to live according to our identity as beloved children of God. Amen.

GOSPEL

Small group member reads the Gospel.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations

confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Pause for 3 minutes for a time of individual reflection.

SUNDAY REFLECTION

Small group member reads the Sunday reflection.

I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 33:15)

The season of Advent is a privileged time. Over the coming days, we will sit with many of the Old Testament prophets, including John the Baptist and Mary as we long for the coming of the Messiah. I can

remember as a boy at boarding school in Charters Towers, actually smelling the rain coming after many long, hot, dry days. Even though I am not a farmer, I found myself longing for that smell, then the build-up of clouds and then, at long last, the beautiful sound of rain on the tin roof.

Longing is what is at the heart of Advent. Today, Jeremiah refers to “fulfilling the promise I made to the house of Israel” and the coming of one who shall “execute justice and righteousness in the land!” Advent, is therefore, personal. It is about preparing our hearts to welcome the longed for one. This longing is not foreign to us. For nine months, women long for the day of birthing. We long for a wedding day or, for us Religious, a Profession Day.

Luke’s almost poetic description of the sun, moon, and stars and the powers of the heavens are shaken. But Advent is not looking for and longing for some extraordinary cataclysmic event. The writer Paul D’Arcy says, “God comes to us disguised as our lives!” So, over these Advent weeks, let’s not busy ourselves looking for gold, frankincense, and myrrh but ready our hearts through prayer so that our eyes and hearts change. Then, when we gather to celebrate Emmanuel, God with us, at Christmas, we will see that same Emmanuel all around and within us.

Pause for 3 minutes for a time of individual reflection.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

What in today’s scripture spoke most to your heart?

Recall a personal experience of ‘longing’ that led you to a deeper appreciation of your heart’s desire.

How will you seek to discover ‘God coming to us, disguised as our lives’ during these Advent days?

Take a moment to reflect on what you have heard and seen today. How might God be speaking to you through your small group experience?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of our Longing, give us eyes to see and hearts to desire your presence and action in our lives, as we rejoice in the gift of your Son. Amen.

2 DECEMBER Monday of 1st week of Advent

Isaiah 2:1-5 | Ps 121:1-2, 4-5, 6-9 | Matthew 8:5-11

EMMANUEL IN THE PEOPLE AND EVENTS OF OUR LIVES

Take a moment to quieten your mind and heart and ask the Holy Spirit to join you in this time of prayer.

Only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. (*Matthew 8:8*)

In this first week of Advent, the prophet Isaiah lays out for us a blueprint for this sacred journey. Over the coming weeks, if we truly embrace the spirit of Advent, we will journey to the house of the God of Jacob “that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” And where will this journey take us? We will become instruments of justice, bringing about the reign of God within our world. Yes, we shall “beat swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:3-4). Later in Advent, the coming Messiah will be referred to as the Prince of Peace.

Advent is not just a season; it’s a journey of faith, a journey towards a deeper faith. A well-lived Advent will not only lead us to Christmas morning, but it will also leave us with eyes that can see the face of God in all we meet, ears that can hear the cry of the poor and the courage for our feet to walk to where

Jesus would have walked. When Jesus encounters the Roman Centurion, he encounters both humility and faith. “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Each day of this Advent season, let us quieten our racing mind and reach out and up and allow God’s hand to take ours out into mission. It is God’s Kingdom, not ours. Each day of this Advent season, let us trust and believe and nurture our fragile faith, and listen for the whisper of love deep within that, which if heard, will reveal Emmanuel in the people and events of our lives!

FOR REFLECTION

How will you embrace the Advent journey into the house of the God of Jacob?

Are you willing to go where you have not been before?

Take some time to ‘listen for the whisper of love deep within’.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of the Journey, give us the courage to encounter you anew and follow wherever you lead. May we take your hand and walk with you today and always. Amen.



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