



COME

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL
BY REV. STEVE ROTH

ADVENT DEVOTIONS

The season of Advent is observed during the four Sundays before Christmas. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *Ad venire*, which means “to come to.” Although this season is not found in the Bible, its meaning is found throughout Scripture. Prepare the way for the Lord – He is coming!

COME is used as an action verb in a variety of ways in Scripture. It is used to show us how God comes to us, and how we come to God. It is used to encourage someone to move toward something or someone; other times it is used as a charge or invitation that requires an active and sometimes immediate response. In and of ourselves we have no power to even come to God – or even believe in Him. But because of God’s grace, He offers us invitations to respond to His grace by faith.

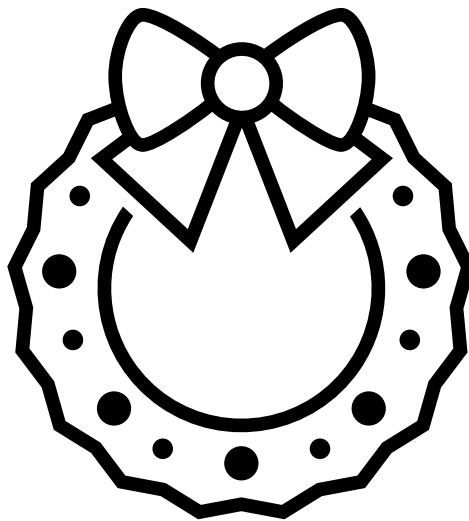
During this Advent Season, we want to remind ourselves of what it means “to come to.” The devotions found during the first and third week all correspond with Scriptures that tell us how God has come to us. The devotions found in weeks two and four tells us how we are to come to Him. Someone once said, “When grace knocks on your door, let faith answer.”

At the start of each week I have included a Hymn of the Week (that corresponds to the theme). Following the hymn you will find information on the Advent Candle, Advent thoughts, and an Advent Activity. All of this can assist the reader in preparing for Christmas.

Christ has come! Christ is here! Christ is coming again!

May the Lord bless your Christmas.

Steve Roth



First Week of Advent - GOD COMES TO US



Hymn of the Week: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.

(Refrain)

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law In cloud, and majesty and awe.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan's tyranny,
From depths of hell Thy people save And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Key of David, come And open wide our heavenly home,
Make safe the way that leads on high And close the path to misery.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high And order things, far and nigh,
To us the path of knowledge show And cause us in her ways to go.

Each stanza of this great hymn focuses on a different name for Christ found in the Bible. Each name helps us know Jesus Christ a little more. The text originated in the 12th Century and was translated into our familiar hymn by John Mason Neale in the 1800's.

Advent Candle - Hope

Advent Thoughts

"We talk of the Second Coming, half the world has never heard of the first." - Oswald Smith

"The very purpose of Christ's coming into the world was that he might offer up his life as a sacrifice for the sins of men. He came to die. This is the heart of Christmas." - Billy Graham

"Let's approach Christmas with an expectant hush, rather than a last-minute rush." – Anonymous

Advent Activity – Buy or make a Christmas ornament for yourself that will remind you of HOPE in years to come.

1st Sunday in Advent - November 27, 2022 - GOD COMES TO US

"All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 MSG

According to The Message, God's comfort means to come alongside us. When we go through hard times, it is comforting to know He comes alongside us to comfort us.

He is the God of all healing counsel!

Once we have experienced His comfort at work in our own life, God will often bring us alongside someone else going through similar trials. He wants us to be there for others just as He was there for us. Sometimes we do not even have to speak.

I'm so thankful to have a Savior who still comes alongside me. On many occasions He has brought me comfort by His mere presence. Be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10).

He comforts us so that we can become comforters.

Lord, thank You for coming alongside me when I go through hard times. Show me someone that I can come alongside during this Advent season.

Monday, November 28 - GOD COMES TO US

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

I still find it amazing that even though Jesus was 100% God, "he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2:7). He never stopped being God but chose to take on human flesh and become a servant. He set an example for us: "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." (Matthew 20:27).

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He washed His disciple's feet. When He was finished, He said to them, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master" (John 13:15).

If Jesus, who is Lord, came to us in order to serve, who are we to think differently.

Some of the greatest leaders that touched my life were great servants. They did not come to be served, but to serve.

This Advent look for ways that you can be a more effective servant.

Lord, thank you for coming to me as a servant. I am humbled by Your example. During this Advent season may I adopt the same attitude that You had.

Tuesday, November 29 - GOD COMES TO US

“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 fulfillment of these words is seen in Matthew 1:22-23. Jesus is Immanuel, which means “God with us.” I love singing those words “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” There was no way we could come to God, so He, in His mercy, came to us. He came to be with us forever.

He is with us when we go through our trials, battles, and loneliness. Jesus even promises His presence to the smallest assembly of believers when He says, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20).

Matthew opened his Gospel with the promise that God is with us and concludes his Gospel in the same way. The last recorded words of Jesus in Matthew are “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).

The next time you feel as though God is not with you, just call upon Immanuel. He will reassure you every time – you have His Word on it.

Lord, the next time that I am feeling lonely, may the Holy Spirit remind me that You are with me – completely.

Wednesday, November 30 - GOD COMES TO US

“Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.” Psalm 143:1

Psalm 143 is a cry for help. David doesn’t just ask for mercy; he cries for it. He needs his God to come to him and bring relief in his suffering. He was pleading for God’s deliverance – much like the desperate people felt as they waited for the coming of the Messiah. They were crying out to their God to come to their relief. At just the right time, Jesus was born into this broken world. Jesus is our relief!

There are times when our cry to God is more than a polite request during the season of Advent. It’s a desperate cry for mercy when we need relief. Just as a troubled child depends on their father, we can cry out to our Heavenly Father and say, “Daddy, come quickly to my relief!”

Desperate moments do not diminish after we come to believe in Jesus. If anything, they may even increase. But here’s the difference – my cries are motivated by hope. He hears my prayer and listens to my cries not based on my faithfulness and righteousness, but entirely on His.

Where do you need relief?

Lord Jesus, come to my relief. Hear my prayer and listen to my cry for mercy.

Thursday, December 1 – GOD COMES TO US

“Maranatha.” I Corinthians 16:22 KJV

Paul closes his letter to the Corinthians with the word, Maranatha. This is an Aramaic word that had become a common greeting of oppressed and suffering believers in the early Church. Maranatha means “Come, O Lord” and was often used to encourage one another. I picture Christians walking up to a brother or sister in the faith who was going through some difficult times and whispering this word in their ear – *Be encouraged my friend, Our Lord is coming.*

I think it would be helpful to add Maranatha to our vocabulary. It’s a word that reminds us to keep our eyes on the eternal things of the Spirit. Not everyone would understand what this word means, but people of the Spirit would. To someone who has just lost a loved one, to those who are discouraged and afraid, to those who are suffering from spiritual warfare... MARANATHA! Hold on.

Jesus is coming again. And when He does, all the evil, suffering, crying and pain will be done away with. Oh, what a glorious day that will be. Keep on trusting in the promises of our God. He is coming again. Maranatha!

Come, O Lord. Help us to persevere in the midst of our oppression and suffering. We look forward to Your return. Until then, may we cry out in faith. Maranatha.

Friday, December 2 - GOD COMES TO US

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Revelation 3:20

I love the painting by Warner Sallman which shows Jesus knocking on the door. Besides being a beautiful piece of art, it also sends a powerful message. Jesus is knocking because there is no doorknob on the outside of the door. The people on the inside must open the door so that He will come in and have intimate fellowship with them. Jesus will not force His way into anyone’s heart. He longs to come to everyone, but we must first open the door by faith.

To “eat with that person” is symbolic of the intimate fellowship He wants to have with us. He wants to share His life with us.

In Luke 24:13ff. we read the story of two disciples inviting the Resurrected Jesus into their home. As He sat at the table with them, He broke bread and gave it to them. “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.” Just imagine if they never opened the door of their home.

Lord, You are still standing at the door of many hearts - knocking. I pray for unsaved loved ones to open the door of their heart.

Saturday, December 4 – GOD COMES TO US

“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” Isaiah 40:10-11

Our awesome God has two arms. One is mighty and powerful, and with it He rules the world. The other is tender as He shows compassion to the weak. God’s awesomeness is seen in both His arms.

If all we witnessed was His ruling arm, we would always be afraid of Him. If all we saw was His compassionate arm, our understanding of grace would be cheapened.

My God has two arms, and I have experienced both. He still makes my knees shake, but He also makes me want to run into His arms like a little kid.

If I had to describe my God to someone who doesn’t know Him, I would probably start with describing His arms.

Lord, may You wrap Your arms around me in a new fresh way. I long to see Your power on display, but I also long for You to carry me to close to Your heart. You are the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Second Week of Advent – WE COME TO GOD

Hymn of the Week: Angels From the Realms of Glory

Angels from the realms of glory, Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story Now proclaim Messiah's birth.



Refrain: Come and worship, come and worship, Worship Christ the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the field abiding, Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing; Yonder shines the infant's light.

Sages, leave your contemplations, Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations; Ye have seen His natal star.

Saints, before the altar bending, Watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending, In His temple shall appear.

Sinners, wrung with true repentance, Doomed for guilt to endless pains,
Justice now revokes the sentence, Mercy calls you; break your chains.

James Montgomery published the text of this hymn on Christmas Eve in 1816. The tune was composed by Henry Smart, who was a blind organist. Smart also designed and built many organs in England in his day. The verses give us the Gospel message and the Refrain encourages all of us to Come and Worship Christ.

Advent Candle – Love

Advent Thoughts

“The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord.” - Henri Nouwen

“At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern.” – Mother Teresa

“I want a Christmas that whispers ‘Jesus’.” – Ann Voskamp

Advent Activity – Send a Christmas card to someone you've never sent one before.

2nd Sunday in Advent - December 4, 2022 – WE COME TO GOD

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them." John 6:44

As we will see throughout this month, there are many Scripture passages that invite us to come to Jesus. But before we can even come to Him, we must realize that we cannot come to Him in our own strength.

We are told in Luther's Small Catechism, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." But because of God's grace, He offers invitations to come. God is drawing us to Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The shepherds came to see the baby Jesus because God was drawing them. The same is true for the Wise Men. The same is true for me. I believe in Jesus because I was drawn to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

All people are being drawn to Jesus (see John 12:32) but sadly many are rejecting His invitation to come. What about you? When grace knocks on your door, does faith get up to answer?

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming to this sinful world. I come You not in my own strength, but in weakness I embrace the One who's strong. I pray others will accept Your invitation to come this Christmas.

Monday, December 5 – WE COME TO GOD

From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" Matthew 4:17

Some people refer to a come-to-Jesus moment as an Epiphany moment that causes a major change in their lives, but Jesus really has nothing to do with their decision. So, what is a true come-to-Jesus moment? Jesus preached repentance. In fact, in the Amplified Version says "Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God's purpose for your life]"

Repentance is essential for experiencing the presence and grace of God. It involves recognizing our sinfulness and changing our mind in order to reverse direction. It's the message preached by Jesus, John the Baptist, and Peter on Pentecost.

When we repent and turn to God, our sins are wiped out, and times of refreshing come into our lives from the Lord (see Acts 3:19).

There is no better way to prepare for Christmas than making repentance a regular part of our life. The kingdom of God has come. Come to Him who is ready to forgive and wipe away our sins. Now, that is a real come-to-Jesus moment.

Lord Jesus, I repent and ask You to change my inner self and transform my thinking. May my life show the fruit of my repentance. Amen.

Tuesday, December 6 – WE COME TO GOD

“Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation].” Matthew 11:28 Amplified Version.

It is easier to find rest for our bodies than it is to find rest for our souls. A good night’s sleep or a relaxing vacation can give your body the refreshment it needs. Refreshment for our soul is a different story. Some people think that by observing various religious rituals within the church peace and renewal will be brought to their innermost being. While some of these rituals can be helpful and even enjoyable, the only way to discover real rest is by coming to Jesus.

He said, “Come to Me!” That means coming to Him by faith and trusting in Him as a loving and caring Savior. Refreshment is not found through religion but through relationship.

Many of the Advent traditions we observe in the Church are very enjoyable, but we can’t truly enjoy their full meaning until we come to Jesus. During the month of December, it is easy to become weary and burdened. *There’s so much to do.* Jesus said “Come to Me.”

Jesus, I come to You seeking rest that only You can give because I am weary and burdened. Give me rest and refreshment in my soul.

Wednesday, December 7 – WE COME TO GOD

“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.” Psalm 95:1

Worship is not always quiet and reflective. Sometimes it involves shouting, clapping, or just singing our heart out. God is worthy of all our praise and worship.

It is good when believers come together and sing for joy to the Lord. I enjoy singing along with a hymn while driving down the road. But there is something special when we belt out a well know hymn during the Advent season. It is a time of preparation, but it is also a time of joy.

God is the Rock of our salvation. It is a description used often of our Lord throughout the book of Psalms, and that image was fulfilled in the Person of Christ. Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. He is that strong foundation that we build our faith upon. Those who build their lives upon Him shall never be disappointed. The Holy Spirit reassures us that we are secure in Him.

Come, let us sing for joy to our Lord and Savior. Let us invite others to come with us.

Lord Jesus, fill our hearts with joy during this Advent season. Help us to sing our hearts out as we worship You in spirit and in truth.

Thursday, December 8 – WE COME TO GOD

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.'" Genesis 45:4

Joseph was now second in charge of the entire nation of Egypt. Years earlier his brothers had sold him into slavery, which led to years of bondage. But God was so sovereign that He used the evil intention of others to bring about His plan.

In chapter forty-five Joseph reveals himself to his brothers but they were terrorized by his presence. The sins of their past made them feel guilty. But Joseph encouraged them by saying "come close to me." The forgiveness of their brother had already been established in his heart, but there was a need for them to come closer to him so that they might experience it.

This sounds so much like Jesus. He suffered, was treated unfairly, and was falsely accused because of mankind's sinfulness. It was our sins that sent Him to the cross, but God used the evil intentions of others so that many might be saved.

When Jesus reveals Himself to us, it can often be overwhelming. But He still says to us today, Come close to Me. He longs to forgive us and reassure us of His love. Don't be afraid of Him.

Lord, teach me how to come close to You this Advent season. Allow me to experience Your forgiveness in new and fresh ways.

Friday, December 9 – WE COME TO GOD

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. John 1:46

After Philip had started following Jesus, he went and found a friend named Nathanael. Philip informed him that he had found the Messiah, a man named Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael wasn't convinced, so Philip gave him an invitation that would change his life, COME AND SEE.

Those three words are a powerful evangelistic tool to be used more often in the Church. We don't have to convince others that Jesus is the Christ – that's the Holy Spirit's job. When was the last time you said those same words to some of your unbelieving friends?

Did you know that many unchurched people would be willing to come to church at least once if someone would just invite them. If you belong to a Gospel centered congregation, you have the responsibility to say to others, why don't you come and see for yourself. Some people who have never attended church might just say yes.

But remember this, it can be scary for someone to walk into a church where they have never been before. Tell them that you would gladly attend with them. "Come and See" – powerful words that could change someone else's life.

Lord Jesus, show me one person this month that I can say "Come and see."

Saturday, December 10 – WE COME TO GOD

“We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” Matthew 2:2

These were the words spoken by the Magi to King Herod. They were following the star which would lead them to the Messiah. Why had they come? They had come to worship Him.

I’m not a Greek scholar, but I love the definitions of some the words I find in my Strong’s Concordance. The Greek word for worship in Matthew 2:2 is *proskeneo*, which means to fawn or crouch to, prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore. It also means to kiss, like a dog licking his master’s hand.

If you are a dog lover, you may have another insight to the meaning of praise and worship. When we return home, we are always greeted by an excited dog who is hopping for joy and wagging his tail with delight. To me, that’s something like praise. After we are home a while, he may come and calmly sit at our feet and lift his head to lick our hands. Worship is like a dog licking his master’s hand.

Sound a little weird? There is some truth in showing our Lord that kind of affection.

Lord, I come to worship You because You’re worthy of all my reverence. I am not afraid to display my affection for my Savior.

Third Week in Advent – GOD COMES TO US

Hymn of the Week – Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy earthly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity.
O come to my heart Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee.



Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,
Proclaiming Thy royal decree.
But of lowly birth didst Thou come to earth
And in great humility.
O come to my heart Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee.

Thou camest O Lord with the Living Word
That should set Thy people free;
But with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn
They bore Thee to Calvary.
O come to my heart Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee.

When the heavens shall ring and the angels sing
At Thy coming to victory,
Let Thy voice call me home, saying, "Yet there is room –
There is room at My side for thee."
O come to my heart Lord Jesus, There is room in my heart for Thee.

Emily Elliot was the author of this hymn. She may have been inspired by her aunt, Charlotte Elliot, who wrote the popular hymn, Just As I Am. Although Emily wrote this hymn for children to learn about the birth of Jesus, it still speaks the Gospel message to adults in today's society.

Advent Candle – Joy

Advent Thoughts

"Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life." – Corrie Ten Boom

"What man, if he were God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or to hang upon a cross?" – Martin Luther

Advent Activity – Ask the Lord how you can bring some joy to a complete stranger.

3rd Sunday in Advent - December 11, 2022 – GOD COMES TO US

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

The omnipotent and all sovereign God chose to humble Himself and become one of us. I still find that amazing.

Some people think that salvation is something we can achieve by coming up to God’s level. That is never going to happen because it means we would have to be perfect and without sin. Instead, our merciful God chose to come down to our level to give us the gift of salvation.

The Word became flesh and became a baby that was placed in the feeding trough of a dirty stable. He would live the perfect life and die in our place and rise again. Why would He do such a thing? Because He is full of grace. I don’t know about you, but I am thrilled that He got down on my level, rather than making me come up to His.

It is only because He became like us that we can become like Him.

Lord Jesus, Thank You for coming down to my level. Help me to follow Your example by taking on the role of a servant. Help me to become more like You by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Monday, December 12 – GOD COMES TO US

“Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.” Psalm 38:22

Psalm 38 is David crying out to the Lord for help. He is overwhelmed with sickness, guilt, injustice, pain, and isolation. His own sin had led to his suffering and all he could do was cry out to God, “Come quickly to help me.” I’ve prayed that prayer many times. What about you?

I just love how David can be brutally honest with the Lord. Even though he was guilty of sin, he asked his Lord to come to him with help.... and come quickly. Don’t be afraid to be honest with the Lord. He can manage our whines, complaints, and weak arguments.

Logic would think God should respond to our neediness by saying, *You got yourself into this mess. Now you get yourself out.* But our Lord and Savior is full of Grace. He shows us love – real love that we don’t deserve.

We are frail and broken creatures who don’t deserve any of the Lord’s help, but He wants us to call out to Him for help when we find ourselves in a mess – even messes created by our own sinfulness.

Do you feel overwhelmed? Are you at the end of your rope? Let me give you a good prayer to pray:

Dear Lord, come quickly to help me!

Tuesday, December 13 – GOD COMES TO US

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11

This is the announcement given by angels to the disciples as they watched their Lord and Savior ascend into heaven. What an incredible experience that had to be!

THIS SAME JESUS – Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The same Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead, who multiplied loaves and fishes, who washed His disciples’ feet, and who hung upon the cross is the same One who is coming back for us some day.

Isn’t it a joy to know that Jesus Christ hasn’t changed? He’s not a cheap imitation of the Savior who walked on the earth 2000 years ago. He’s the real deal! He is the same Jesus as He has been forever.

The only difference is this: The first time He came to earth was as a lowly baby. But the next time He comes, it will be as a Conquering King.

This same Jesus is coming back in the same way He ascended into heaven. That requires some thought and thanksgiving.

Lord Jesus, as we remember Your coming at Christmas, help us not forget that You are coming again. Amen.

Wednesday, December 14 – GOD COMES TO US

“Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house.” Luke 19:5

As Jesus was passing through the town of Jericho, there were crowds all around Him. I’m sure there were plenty of people who would have loved for Jesus to come to their home for dinner. But He chose to come to the house of a wealthy tax collector named Zacchaeus. People questioned why Jesus would go to stay in the house of such a “sinful” man. Jesus knew the condition of Zacchaeus’ heart and even though other people hated him, Jesus didn’t. He did not come for the righteous, but for the sinners.

Zacchaeus obviously repented when the presence of Jesus entered his house, because he was willing to pay back the people he had cheated four times as much. His outward actions were a testimony of his inward transformation. He was producing fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:8). Salvation had come to Zacchaeus.

Jesus came to him. Jesus sought him. Jesus saved him. Though crowds of people always surrounded Jesus, He always took time for individuals. He will always take time for you, and always wants to come to your house.

Lord Jesus, Thank You that you came for sinners. I welcome You into my heart and my home.

Thursday, December 15 – GOD COMES TO US

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7

For those people who think heaven will be boring, they are wrong. One day the Bride of Christ (which is the Church) will celebrate with our Bridegroom in a joyous celebration.

I still remember my wedding. Forty-six years ago, Alison and I celebrated as we were surrounded by family and friends. We didn’t have the biggest wedding, but it was filled with joy. Many people rejoiced over the ceremony as well as the reception.

I can’t imagine what heaven is going to be like, but I am confident that no one will be bored. The joy and excitement will fill everyone as we sit around the banquet table with Jesus. The preparations are being made and the invitations have been sent out. You have been invited! Jesus has clearly said, “Come to the wedding banquet.” (Matthew 22:4).

“Many are invited” (Matthew 22:14) but not everyone will choose to attend. Please RSVP. There is room at the table for many more. Bring some guests with you to the wedding of the Lamb. Start rejoicing and be glad. The wedding of the Lamb is coming!

Lord Jesus, I accept Your invitation. Help me make myself ready. Amen

Friday, December 16 – GOD COMES TO US

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.” Isaiah 11:1

Jesse was the father of King David. Isaiah was proclaiming that the Messiah would come out of the family of David. Just imagine, the Messiah would make His entrance into humanity through a tiny, little shoot. And that shoot would become the biggest and mightiest tree in the forest.

At Christmas we recognize Baby Jesus as this little shoot growing from the stump of Jesse. He came to us as a twig. The people were looking for the Messiah to show up in the form of a huge, massive tree that could be seen for miles around. They were not expecting Him to show up as a twig, but He would bear much fruit.

Isaiah would go on to say in that same chapter, “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious” (verse 10).

Pay attention to how Jesus is growing in the lives of others. He may only appear to be a twig, but just imagine what He can become in lives submitted to Him.

Lord Jesus, You are the Vine and we are the branches. Help us to bear much fruit – especially as we approach Christmas. Amen.

Saturday, December 17 – GOD COMES TO US

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” Galatians 4:4

Jesus’ birth into this world was timely. The Jews had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah for many years, and at just the right time, God became flesh. His timing is always perfect!

There are times that I think He is late, but He never is. Trusting in God’s timing is something that I still struggle with, but He always comes through – at just the right time.

An anonymous quote tells us to “Trust in God’s timing. It’s better to wait a while and have things fall into place than to rush and have things fall apart.” Amen. I like that!

As we approach Christmas it is good to remind yourself that God is never late. He is working and has a plan for you and your family. If things seem to be falling apart, it might be a good idea to set aside a few hours and just wait on Jesus.

Ask Him to have things fall into place.

Lord Jesus, I trust in Your timing. Teach me how to wait on You over the next week. Amen.

Fourth Week of Advent – WE COME TO GOD

Hymn of the Week – O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful, and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels:

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angel, sing in exultation,
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

This hymn originates from an early Latin publication, but the text is attributed to John Francis Wade. The melody and tune are also thought to come from Wade. This Catholic hymn was heard sung in the Portuguese chapel in London in 1785 and soon after became known around the world.

Advent Candle – Peace

Advent Thoughts

“Christmas means that, through the grace of God and the incarnation, peace with God is available; and if you make peace with God, then you can go out and make peace with everybody else. And the more people who embrace the gospel and do that, the better off the world is. Christmas, therefore, means the increase of peace—both with God and between people—across the face of the world.” – Tim Keller

“The manger at Christmas means that, if you live like Jesus, there won’t be room for you in a lot of inns.”
– Tim Keller

Advent Activity – Make peace where you are able.



4th Sunday in Advent - December 18 – WE COME TO GOD

"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." John 6:37

I love the hymn, "Just As I Am," written by Charlotte Elliott. She had come to a turning point in her life when she wanted to become a Christian but didn't know how. Charlotte realized how unworthy she was and thought that she had to clean her life up before coming to Christ. Encouraged by a visiting clergyman, she was told to "come just as you are." Jesus was ready to receive her "just the way she was." Years after this transforming moment, she remembered those five wonderful words and wrote this wonderful hymn.

Jesus will receive us just the way we are: poor, wretched, blind, fearful, sinful and broken. We don't have to clean up our lives to come to Him; He cleans up our lives after we come to Him.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come! I come!

Sounds like a wonderful Advent hymn to me! Pray for someone you know to come to Jesus this Christmas.

Lord Jesus, You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Thank You for never driving me away.

Monday, December 19 – WE COME TO GOD

"But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you." Psalm 88:13

Have you ever heard this prayer before? *Dear Lord, so far today I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed. And from then on, I'm going to need a lot more help.*

Humorous? Yes, but it also carries some truth. We need to start our day with prayer. That is why is good to come before the Lord every morning – before we start our day. It doesn't have to be a lengthy time, but it is good to start your day with Jesus.

It's good to bring our needs before Him in prayer but we also need balance into our prayer life. I love using the acronym A-C-T-S to define a balanced prayer life: Adoration – Tell the Lord how much you love Him. Confession – Confess your sins. Thanksgiving – Thank Him for what He has done. Supplication – Tell Him your needs.

You may not be a morning person, but God is. Bring your prayers before the Lord IN THE MORNING. Also in the afternoon and at night.

Lord Jesus, I bring my prayer before You in the morning. Amen.

Tuesday, December 20 – WE COME TO GOD

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, but you refuse to come to me to have life.” John 5:39-40.

Jesus was addressing the Jewish scholars who studied the Word of God with diligence. They had the idea that their salvation was based on their knowledge of Scripture. What they failed to realize was the Written Word points to the Living Word, who is Jesus Christ.

Studying the Word is a good thing to do, but the power of the Word comes when we believe and do what it says. We are not saved by our knowledge of the Written Word, but through a relationship with the Living Word.

Jesus would tell this same crowd, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.” (John 5:46). Listen to what Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

We are not saved by our knowledge of the Written Word. We are saved through a relationship with the Living Word. We must come to Him to have life.

Lord Jesus, As I diligently study Your Word this Christmas, bring new life into my relationship with You. Amen.

Wednesday, December 21 - WE COME TO GOD

“Come.” Matthew 14:29

Peter was in a boat with the other disciples on a stormy sea at night and noticed that someone who looked like Jesus was walking on the water. Peter wanted to be sure, so he asked Jesus, “If it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water.” Jesus responded just by saying the word “Come.”

With that, Peter stepped out of the boat and started walking on the water toward his Savior. Now we know what happened: Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink, but Jesus reached out to save him. Then they walked on the water to get back into the boat.

Friends there will be times in your life when Jesus is going to call you to get out of the boat and do the impossible: Walk on water. Can that be scary? Yes. Will we make mistakes? Absolutely. Will Jesus be there to save? All the time.

Once you have experienced walking on water, the willingness to get out of the comfort of our own boats become easier. Never easy, but easier.

Just keep your eyes on Jesus.

Lord Jesus, I want my Christmas to be different this year. Give me the faith to step out of my boat when you say “Come.” Amen.

Thursday, December 22 – WE COME TO GOD

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

We all need childlike faith in God. The following are some authentic prayer requests from kids:

- Dear Lord, I hope everyone's life is going to have a surprise in it and no one has to live in the shelter anymore.
- God, I pray for my mom because she has to pay the bills.
- Lord, I pray for my family going through a difficult time.
- God, I pray for my grandma that she may live to see a great grandchild.
- Dear God, can You please let me do a good job on the state test. In Jesus' Name. Amen. From Your loved one.
- God, You are a good man, because You love people, black and white.
- Lord Jesus, can You please make sure my friend has a wonderful birthday and that I can go to the restaurant.

Children are very often teachable, forgiving, trusting, innocent, affectionate, and still able to dream. Have you lost your childlike qualities? Ask the Lord to help you come before Him as a child this Christmas.

Lord Jesus, help me to have childlike faith in You. Restore the wonder of what it means to be in Your presence this Christmas. Amen.

Friday, December 23 – WE COME TO GOD

"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Psalm 95:6

When you walk into Grace Lutheran Church one of the first things you will see is some wonderful banners on the wall that illustrate our Spiritual Growth Pathway. We Bow down, Lean in, Reach out, and Look up. Each of these reminds us of a specific calling we have as Christ followers. Personally, I think it's only appropriate that our spiritual growth begins with the humble act of bowing down to the Lord.

Psalm 95 instructs us to come and bow down in worship. In fact, the Hebrew word for worship is "kara" which means "to bend the knee, to prostrate, to bow down, to bring down low."

Our society tells us to exalt yourself if you want to grow, mature, and prosper. But in the kingdom of God, it works differently. Jesus said in Matthew 23:12, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." When God exalts you, it is always a blessing.

This Christmas I encourage you to come and bow down before the Lord. Just as the shepherds and Magi bowed before the Baby Jesus, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Lord Jesus, may the posture of my knees express the posture of my heart. Amen.

Saturday, December 24 – GOD COMES TO US

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11

"Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" That was a question asked by Charlie Brown. His friend, Linus, was quick to answer, "Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you." Linus then walked on the stage and proceeded to recite Luke's account of the birth of Christ. When he got to the "fear not" verses listed above, something very special happened: He dropped his blanket!

Now for those who know Linus, he never let go of his blanket. That was his security. But for that moment, as he proclaimed the birth of Christ, he discovered a new sense of security, hope and peace.

Although Linus picked up his blanket again as he walked off the stage, he taught me something: When I find my security in Christ, fear begins to leave and I begin to drop my false securities - those things I trust in more than Him.

Fear Not, my friends! I bring you good tidings of great joy. You can drop your blankets. Jesus is the only One who brings us lasting hope and security.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JESUS!

Christmas Day - December 25 – GOD COMES TO US

"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

Bethlehem was a small and insignificant town in Judah located about five miles southwest of Jerusalem. There was nothing that would make this town stand out except its link to some tragedy and sadness. Nonetheless, the prophet Micah tells us that the Messiah would come out of this little, insignificant town.

God specializes in using weak instrument to display His glory. Your history may be filled with tragedy and sadness, and you may feel small and insignificant, but when Christ is born in you, God brings hope into your future.

Read the fourth verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem":

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;

Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;

O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel.

Lord Jesus, I ask that you come to me in a fresh new way this Christmas. Abide with me in a special way today that I might know and adore Your Presence.