

ADVENT

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Day 22 | Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 20 Believing what is told

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur." — Luke 1:13–20

Consider – When God sends a message to you, through a person, His Spirit or His Word, He always expect that we would hear and receive. He reveals His heart for our good and His glory – to bring us even closer to Him. What is He saying to you? What has He told you? Have you believed or resisted? Why?

Pray – Tell the Ever-listening God that you surrender the dreams you hold in your heart, dreams that are new and dreams that have been way overdue in coming true. Ask that He grant you a sense of peace as you wait to see how He will answer. Tell Him that you believe even before you have heard. In Jesus' name.

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Day 23 | Monday, Dec. 21 Catching a new vision

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. — Revelation 21:9–21

Consider – Have you thought of how beautiful things are here on earth? Have you thought about how this is just a shadow of the reality to come? What do you imagine heaven being like? Look at the passage above, what amazes you?

Pray – Thank God. Tell Him that you see part of His beauty now, but that you want to see more. Tell Him why you are longing for heaven. Ask Him how He wants you to think of the future and the present in light of the reality of heaven. Thank Him for the hope you have because of Jesus.

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Day 24 | Tuesday, Dec. 22

Safe and secure

Alas for those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord! Yet he too is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will rise against the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and the one helped will fall, and they will all perish together. For thus the Lord said to me, as a lion or a young lion growls over its prey, and —when a band of shepherds is called out against it—is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill. Like birds hovering overhead, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it. Turn back to him whom you have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel. For on that day all of you shall throw away your idols of silver and idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you. “Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of mortals; and a sword, not of humans, shall devour him; he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor. His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,” says the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem. — Isaiah 31:1–9

Consider – In what ways do you need God to fight for you today, to defend you and to protect you? Where do you see danger? What are you afraid of? Have you told God that you believe He is stronger and bigger than anything you are facing today?

Pray – Thank God. Tell Him that you want His peace that passes all understanding enter into your life this Advent season, based on His power and love. Ask that He would show you again how strong He is and how strong His love for you is.

The graphic features the word "ADVENT" in a large, stylized, red and white font with a decorative, leaf-like pattern inside the letters. Below it, the Roman numeral "MMXX" is written in a smaller, white, serif font. The background is a dark, starry space with soft, out-of-focus light spots (bokeh effect).

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Day 25 | Wednesday, Dec. 23

Singing a new song

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre. He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner; but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. — Psalm 147:1-11

Consider – We know that without faith it is impossible to please God. He is honored when our hope is in him. He loves it when we rest in His steadfast love. He loves you with a great love – so much so that He cannot love you any more. His greatest desire is that you would fully embrace His Son, Jesus.

Pray – Confess the Gracious and loving God. Tell Him that as Christmas Eve approaches, you are anticipating His presence – you are resting in His promises and grace even now. Ask that He would begin to stir your heart. Even if your circumstances aren't ideal, ask that He would lift your eyes to Him. Ask Him to help you find a new song to sing: a song of praise to Him. In Jesus' name.

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Day 26 | Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24

The light of grace

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" — Luke 2:1-14

Pause – In stillness let the beauty of these words rest on you. In silence imagine this moment. Your Savior is born. He is here for you. Allow your heart to well in gratitude and praise.

Pray – Thank God for the Light of the World, His Son, Jesus. Pray your adoration and rejoicing. Tell Him why you are grateful. Raise your hands in praise as you pray. Allow yourself to respond to Him for all He is, all He has done, all He has promised you, and all He will deliver to you through Jesus.

God, giver of my daily bread, may I not fear scarcity, nor may I seek abundance. Help me instead to see that with you I have just enough, and just enough is enough to share with others.