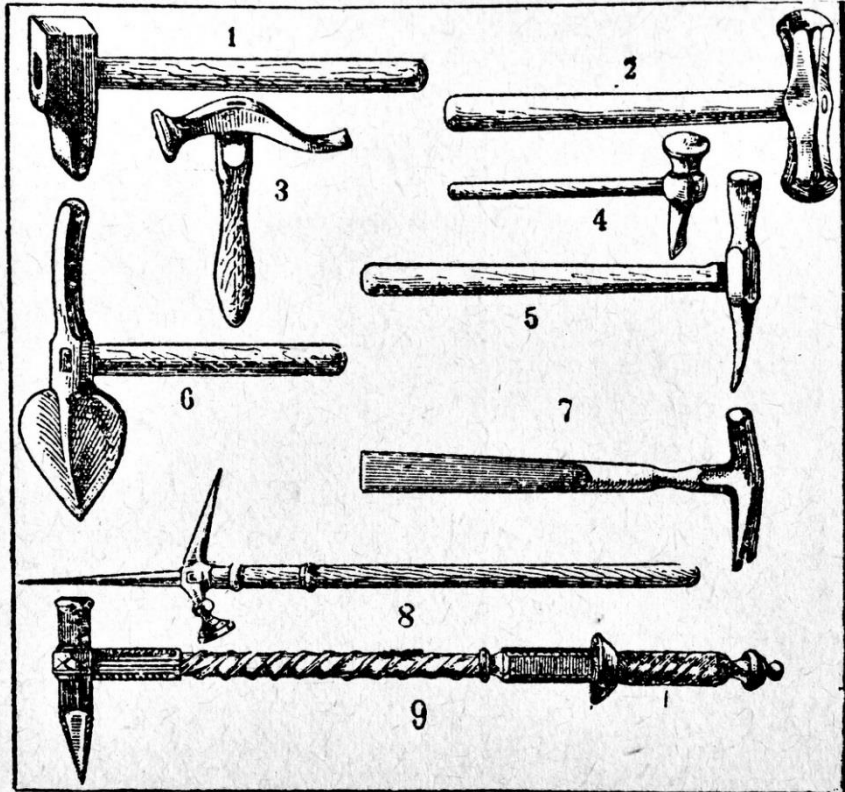


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*Advent 2016*

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## **Week 1: Scripture**

### **Isaiah 2:4-5**

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

### **Psalm 122:6-9**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.

Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.”

For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, “Peace be within you.”

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

## **The Blacksmith**

Imagine the sound of a hammer reshaping the steel of a sword, transforming it into a plowshare, that blade at the base of a plow which digs into the soil, preparing it for planting. An instrument of pain becomes one of peace.

The sword divides us with acts of injustice that leave others injured, excluded or dead.  
The sword injures us with words that fuel fires of hateful disdain for one of God's children.  
The sword destroys community when ego is more important than understanding.

And yet slowly, and steadily the Blacksmith goes to work.

Ping! A kind word of appreciation rather than a snarky response.

Ping! An effort to understand rather than to judge.

Ping! An apology rather than a justification.

Ping! A hand that lifts someone up without a reciprocation expected.

Ping! Actions that oppose violence, injustice and bigotry.

Ping! Another prayer that leads to a changed heart.

Prayers for peace have existed as long as violent acts and words have been a part of humanity. This season of Advent though, we wait on the One who showed the world how to be peaceful. In our world many are desperately crying out for peace. It is promised, but it may take time to arrive. Each effort of yours and mine to turn an instrument of pain into one of peace may not seem like the answer, but in time change occurs. Are we patiently, yet actively preparing a place for the Christ?

## **Monday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Confession**

Holy God, as we begin this Advent season, we confess at times we allowed ourselves to be instruments of pain instead of peace, instruments of hate instead of love, and instruments of silence instead of justice. We have not opened up ourselves to be changed and molded by your grace. Instead of being actively patient for you, we operate out of our own haste.

We invite you to heal us and forgive us. Hear our confession, offered to you in hope. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful.

Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

## **Tuesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayers of People**

Creator God, this morning we pray you help us see others the way you see them and help us love them the way you love them – as your beautiful children made in your image. We pray you will open our eyes to those experiencing pain, suffering from acts of injustice, struggling with mental and physical illnesses, and who desperately need to know what it means to be loved with a Christ-like love. As we find our peace in the coming Christ, we pray you will help us extend peace to those around us, knowing we may be the very people you are choosing to do the work of love in this world on this very day. In the life-giving name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful. Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

## Wednesday Prayers

### Morning Prayer of Thanksgiving

Creator God, it is you who designed this world and fastened it just so. Even after finishing your work and declaring it good, you continue to mold and shape it through us your children so it better radiates your love, compassion, and mercy. God, we are grateful for your commitment to never leave us where we are, but to molding us, refining us, so that we may be able to better reflect the peace you desire for this world to know. It is in the sending of your son Jesus, that we know this peace, for it is in the light of Christ, that darkness of this world is no more. Amen.

### Evening Prayer

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful. Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

## **Thursday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Action**

Father, ignite in me a desire to show your peace here on Earth. When the tendency of my flesh is to argue, help me appreciate. When I want to justify my actions, give me a spirit of humility to ask for forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to be the ultimate example of peace... would you help me walk in that peace, and in doing so bring people to know you more. In Jesus name, Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful. Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.



## Friday Prayers

### **Morning Prayer of Praise**

Praise to you oh Lord as you;

    fuse my tongue to speak peace,

    shape my hands to serve,

    cast my eyes to see as you,

    meld my heart with yours. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful.

Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

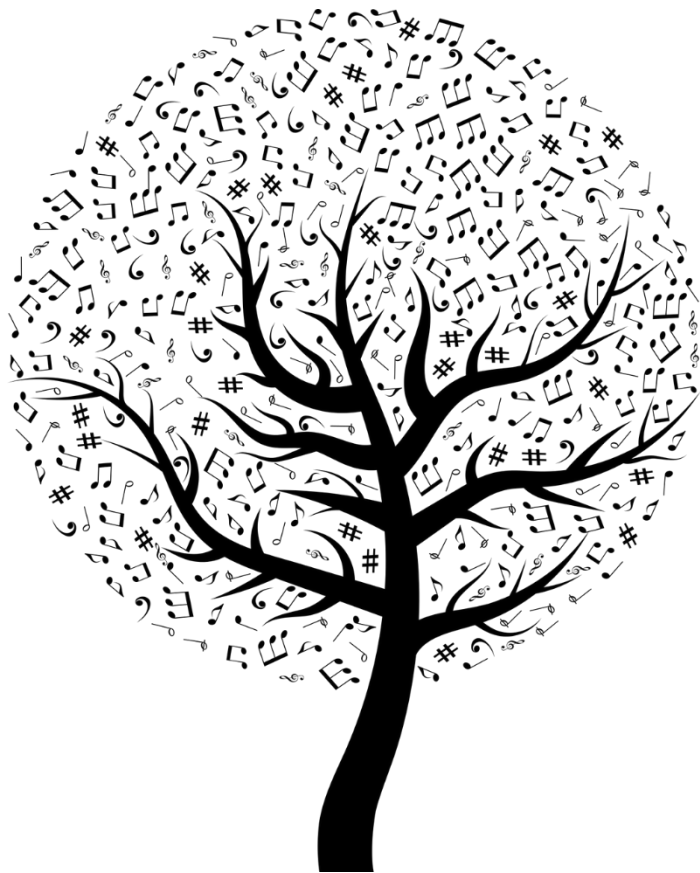
## **Saturday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of God's Attributes**

Jesus Christ, Son of God, you revealed to our strife-filled world who God is really like. From you we learn that God is the source of all peace that surpasses our understanding. Make us ambassadors of your wholeness and goodness. May we, too, be instruments of divine peace. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, remind us today of places where we have seen, felt or heard your peace. God, hear our thankfulness for these moments of peace. Forgive us for when we have been less than peaceful. Create in us eyes to see when we can be the peace that your love offers to our family, our neighbors and the world. In the name of the One who gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.



## Week 2: Scripture

### Matthew 3:7-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

## **Sing a Song of Hope**

Nothing makes me happier than when the local radio stations start playing Christmas music. When an entire station is dedicated to Christmas music I know the holiday season has begun. These familiar songs, both secular and sacred, bring back memories of childhood Christmases. These are songs you sing with your family after dinner or with your children on the way to school. They are hope-filled and they remind us of what is to come.

John the Baptist sings one such song. "Prepare the way, the Lord is coming!" is a hope-filled refrain that has echoed through the centuries as we get ready to greet the Christ Child. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!" is the chorus to his unlikely hymn, yet, his brash tenor voice doesn't make me want to tap my foot or to sing along. No one is lining up to sing John's song in the Christmas Pageant this year! This wild man, dressed like Elijah and shouting like Amos sings a song that has a difficult tune to follow because John's song requires the person singing to change.

Change can be hope-filled, especially if your hope is in the coming of Jesus Christ. John knows that in Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is so near, that it requires us to change, to repent and to live differently. What needs to change in your life this year? What do you need to turn away from in order to prepare your heart to welcome Christ? Will you be bold enough to sing John's song?

## **Monday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Confession**

*Lord, today I confess that I have been hesitant to prepare for your arrival. I have avoided you in hopes that you would not see my sin, but here I stand ready to confess that I need you. I want to be like John, but I don't always succeed. Forgive me when I am afraid to share my faith and tell others about your Son. Amen.*

### **Evening Prayer**

*Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.*

## **Tuesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayers of People**

Today I pray for those who find themselves too “busy” to pray. I know all too well how easy it is to go through a day without uttering a single word in prayer. Thus, I offer prayer on the behalf of those who will not find time to pray. Help those who need rest the most find their rest in you. Help those who never stop to notice, stop and notice the people around them today for when they do they will find you in their midst. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

## **Wednesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Today I give thanks for your presence in this world. In this world we will have trouble, but you have overcome the world! As we wait for the arrival the Christ Child help us to remember that in times of darkness you are our light. Thank you for being present with us even when we don't recognize that you are near. Thank you for sending your son Jesus, to be with us in this world. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.



## Thursday Prayers

### **Morning Prayer of Action**

Use me to further your kingdom today.

Help me to speak.

Help me to be silent.

Help me to listen.

Help me to love.

Help me to be kind.

Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

## **Friday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Praise**

Today you have given us life and breath. In the stillness of the morning you remind us of who we are. We are your children, inheritors of your kingdom and loved by you. Thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son to this world to teach us how to live. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen..

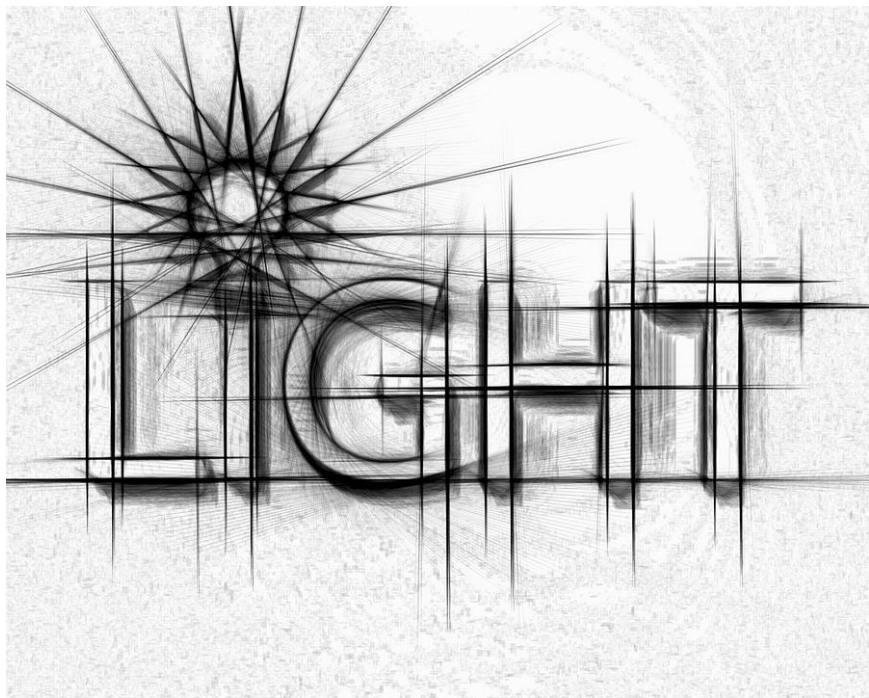
## **Saturday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of God's Attributes**

You are our sustainer and friend, redeemer and advocate. You are almighty, the one true God of Israel! You are creator of heaven and earth. You are sovereign in all things yet, close enough that we can feel the prompting of your Spirit. Move us to repentance today so that we might prepare our hearts for your arrival. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Help me to sing like John. Prepare my heart and my voice to proclaim your arrival, to seek repentance and be more like you. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.



### **Week 3: Scripture**

#### **Psalm 146: 1; 5-10**

Praise the LORD! Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

## Hearing the Hallelujah

It starts and ends with a hallelujah. Well, if you read Psalm 146 in the Hebrew it does! The English translation says, “Praise the Lord!” As followers of Christ, we are called to live lives of praise. Unfortunately, life has a way of interrupting our joyful song. Tragedy strikes. We experience suffering and loss. There’s violence and more violence. Division, discord, and hate permeate every corner of the world. With all of that, it’s hard to herald a hallelujah. All of scripture proclaims the good news that God has not turned away from us. If there is any doubt about God’s active work in the world, the psalmist reminds us of who God is and what God has done.

If we place our hope in God the question is not whether or not God will work but if we trust God to use us to continue weaving his powerful story of love. We are called to bear witness. We must bear witness to God’s saving work in the birth of Jesus, God’s son. We must bear witness to how God saved us and how God is working to eliminate hurt, oppression, sickness, and violence in this world.

What about us? Will the story God weaves throughout history live in us? How will we live between the hallelujahs—in the comfort of complacency or in places where the hungry, lost, and disenfranchised need to hear a hallelujah and the story of God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ.

## **Monday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Confession**

Oh God, I don't always see where the Kingdom needs me to act in the world. I don't always hear the hallelujah. Still other times I hear the song faintly, but determine that it is not for me.

Forgive these sins of omission. Forgive me when I choose not to act or not to hear. Forgive me when I fail to bear witness to the Christ child and how you are working to eliminate the evils of this world. Please keep inviting me to join you in the work of sharing the hallelujah.

Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Give of sight, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.

## **Tuesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayers of People**

*As we wait, we bow humbly with expectation that we will be lifted up.*

*Redeem us from the failure of our flesh and our societies.*

*Reveal your ways to us Lord, that we might bless the world like you have blessed us.*

*Light our path, as we prepare the way for love and justice to be spread in all places. Amen.*

### **Evening Prayer**

*Giver of sight, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.*



## **Wednesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Thank you for giving us yet another beautiful day of life, providing for our needs and comforting us. Watch over those who are hurting at this time, and continue to provide resources, people and opportunities to those in need. Thank you for your unconditional and undeserved love through your grace and mercy. Lord, forgive us of our shortcomings and help us to live more like you. Give us eyes and hearts to love as Jesus would and help us to break down barriers to spread more peace and love in this broken world. Fill us with joy and sustain us with your presence. In Jesus precious and holy name, we ask and pray. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Giver of sight, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.

## **Thursday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Action**

God, thank you for the hallelujahs and even the moments in between. May I always have my heart and eyes open to all the ways you are at work in the world to save and restore us. Show me how I can use all of my story to bear witness to your story of love, mercy, and grace. Help me act on what you reveal to me and share with the hungry, lost, and disenfranchised deeds and stories of your love. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Give me sight, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.

## Friday Prayers

### **Morning Prayer of Praise**

The hallelujah is loud, clear and worthy of praise. I hear the cry in the midst of celebration and tragedy. I answer the call to be your hands, feet and voice in this world. My praises resound from the fullness of a life touched by your “hallelujah” to the world, the Christ child. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Give me eyes, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.

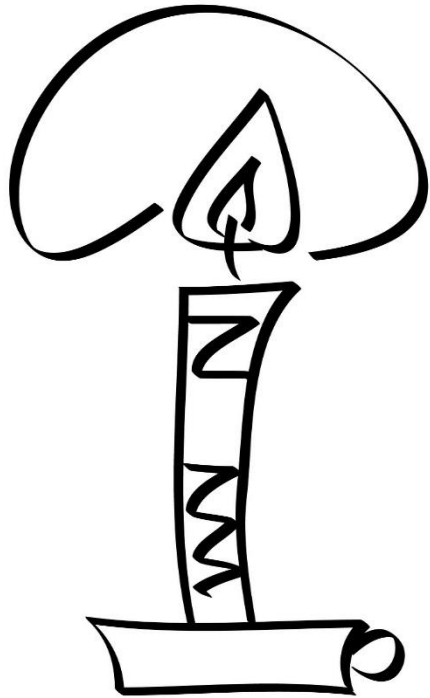
## **Saturday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of God's Attributes**

Creator God, we anticipate and celebrate the birth of Christ this Advent season. Bless us with resiliency and patience as we bear witness to your presence amongst us. May we be humbled by your grace as we enter this holy season. For you, O God, grant us a love beyond compare. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

Giver of sight, give me eyes to see those who need to hear your hallelujah. Help me to live a life that sings hallelujah making your good news receivable to them. Grant me the heart to know when they are singing a hallelujah that I need to receive as well. Amen.



## Week 4: Scripture

### Matthew 1: 18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

## The Long Night

It must have been a long night for Joseph. Tossing and turning. Repeating the conversation again and again in his mind, hoping just once it would end differently. Hearing Mary's words that she was with child. This wasn't how the story was supposed to go. Everything he had planned on, everything and everyone he thought he could count on, were not what he expected, what he wanted. And none of his options brought him any peace.

There's a loneliness in the darkness of difficult decisions and dashed hopes. Perhaps you've been there; when none of your choices are what you hoped they would be. When the lifeline of control is slipping through your fingers and words spoken or imagined exhaust your mind and keep your soul from rest. Morning can't come quickly enough.

When Joseph finally fell off to sleep, he discovered God's presence in the darkness. He heard God's voice in the silence. That's the promise of Advent. "Do not be afraid. God is with us." Advent means arrival. The light, in deed, has come into the world. It hasn't come and gone. It's here. Now. And yet again and again we let the darkness overwhelm us. We let fear overtake us. We doubt that morning will come.

This week we'll experience the longest night of the year, the winter solstice. May it be a reminder to us that even when darkness persists longer than we think we can bear, God is present in the darkness. We're not alone. The light has already arrived. Our Advent hope remains. Emmanuel. God with us.

## **Monday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Confession**

Lord, we come to you in humility, for our faith is small and our hope is weak. When the darkness of life's challenges and disappointments overshadow us, we often linger in despair and fear over what has happened and what is yet to come instead of remembering who you are.

Forgive us, oh Lord, for blinding ourselves to you, and in your faithfulness open our eyes to the glorious light of your love and providence. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.



## **Tuesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayers of People**

Merciful God, we pray for those who feel afraid and in the dark. May the love that you sent to us through your son guide us in the light that we shine. Purify us, and give us hope and joy to spread to all those this Advent season. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.

## **Wednesday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Father, we are thankful for your faithfulness in all of life's challenges. When we feel the most abandoned and confused, you are there to remind us of your great love and care for us. We are grateful when you speak hope into our troubles, and assurance into our chaos. You are our Father, and we will lean on you in faith for you have always proven faithful. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.

## **Thursday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of Action**

Lord, give us strength and understanding to respond appropriately to the arrival of our Savior, to give thanks and praise. Help us to be mindful of the miracle of his birth. Help us to find peace during difficult times as we recall what the name Emmanuel means, God is with us. If you are with us, none can be against us. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.

## Friday Prayers

### **Morning Prayer of Praise**

We thank you, God, for the light you have sent us. Emmanuel, God with us, you give us peace, comfort, and have sent your light into the world to burn brightly through us. Gracious God, we praise your name for the gift of our salvation through your son, Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.

## **Saturday Prayers**

### **Morning Prayer of God's Attributes**

Lord, we are grateful for your sovereignty in times of darkness and lack of understanding. We are grateful for your perfect plans when we feel as though we are at the end of our rope. We give thanks to you for your ways and thoughts are higher than our ways. During this time of Advent, we are especially thankful for our savior's arrival into the world and the promise that your timing has always been and will always be, perfect. Amen.

### **Evening Prayer**

God, the close of Advent signals the coming of the Christ child. We know how the story ends. We know that the people walking in darkness see a great light. And yet many days we still fear the shadows. Light your candle of Advent hope in us this day, Lord. Burn brightly in us and through us.

As evening approaches, Lord, help me to see you in the darkness. Help me to hear you in the silence. Help me to rest in your presence. Amen.

## **Christmas Day**

### **John 1: 14**

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

### **Christmas Day Prayer**

*The wait is over. Your love, peace, hope and joy dwell among us. Brought to us in a child, demonstrating to us the way to be your presence in the world. Joy to the world! Amen.*



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