
DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT



Prepare Ye!

REED LESSING

INTRODUCTION

It was December 24, 1914. British and German troops were at war, hunkered down in muddy trenches in northern France. Everything was quiet on the Western Front. Then, some carols! German soldiers began to sing “Stille Nacht.” The Brits responded with “Silent Night.” The next day, as dawn broke along the 500-mile front, unarmed German and Allied soldiers crossed no-man’s land to wish each other “Merry Christmas.”

Everything changed because of Christmas carols.

Carols capture our hearts as they take us back in time to our childhood, when we first learned to love them with our family and friends. Because they’re so familiar, Christmas carols provide a sense of security and stability.

True confession. I’m a lousy singer. I sing off-key and off-beat. When the song goes sharp, I fall flat. When the lyrics go fast, I go slow. Things improve remarkably when I sing with someone who can carry a tune. God help us, though, if I decide to sing solo.

This Advent, I invite you to sing Christmas carols—not alone, but with Jesus. He keeps us on key and in rhythm. Singing with Jesus, our joy will overflow. With the help of Israel’s hymnbook, the book of Psalms, we’ll celebrate Christ’s tender and loving promises as we travel through Advent.

I can’t think of a better way to “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!”

The Advent of Our King

PSALM 96

The LORD comes. PSALM 96:13

“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go!” We know the drill. Black Friday. Cyber Monday. Giving Tuesday. Shop until we drop. Wives, don’t get your husband a Christmas sweater—he already has seventeen of them. Husbands, you may be planning to give your wife an ironing board. This will not endear you to her heart. None of us wants people to say, “I wish I had received something better.”

That’s not the case with Jesus. He gives the most cherished Christmas gifts—full forgiveness and eternal love. Our hymn declares: “The everlasting Son; incarnate deigns to be.” The Father’s everlasting Son, Jesus, is true God. Yet through incarnation, Jesus became one of us. “O Zion’s daughter, rise; to meet your lowly King.” How lowly? A cradle and a cross.

Jesus comes to give Gospel gifts. He will come again to make all things new—even you!

*“The advent of our King, our prayers must now employ.
And we must hymns of welcome sing, in strains of holy joy.”
Amen.*

Savior of the Nations, Come

PSALM 145

The LORD hears their cry and saves them. PSALM 145:19

“Savior of the nations, come.” Composed by St. Ambrose (339–397), this hymn proclaims, “From the manger newborn light shines in glory through the night.”

We all know about the long nights of life, times when we feel dismally alone. Perhaps your family lives far away. Or maybe you’ve spoken your final good-bye to someone you deeply love. Or your teenager is off in college, busy with well, everything!

When raging loneliness is breaking your heart, Jesus hears your cry and saves you from despair and hopelessness.

How does he do it?

A manger. Some straw. A few shepherds. Mary. Joseph. He cries, naps, sleeps, burps and needs his mother. Christ is coming again, and when he does, we will forever bask in the presence of the eternal God.

*“For you are the Father’s Son
Who in flesh the victory won.” Amen.*

Once He Came in Blessing

PSALM 29

May the LORD bless his people with peace! PSALM 29:11

I'd never seen anything like it before. It was a picture of our first child—Abi Joy. But Abi was all fuzzy. Why? It was a sonogram. Sonograms give us a general idea of what a child looks like, but there are still many unknowns. What's the color of her hair? Her eyes?

God's blessings in the Old Testament are like that. Take, for instance, these words: "May the LORD bless his people with peace." What does that look like? It's a sonogram of sorts.

Our hymn—composed in 1544, by several believers living in Bohemia (the modern-day Czech Republic)—announces in its first stanza that divine blessings become crystal clear in Jesus. "Once he came in blessing, all our sins redressing." That's it! *Redress* means to provide the remedy. The remedy for all sin, the sin done by us and the sin done to us. It's in Christ's holy blood. What a blessing!

*"Come, then, O Lord Jesus, from our sins release us."
Amen.*

Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

PSALM 97

Clouds and thick darkness are all around him. PSALM 97:2

The future is more important than the past. Our past? It's not pretty. It's full of frustrations and failures. It's loaded with pain and deep disappointment. Our past is marked by selfishness and sin, pride, posing and pretending. Our future, though, is infinitely more important than our past.

That's what Charles Wesley (1707–1788) declares in his stunning hymn that celebrates Christ returning with the clouds. “With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture gaze we on those glorious scars.”

What a future! What a hope! To see the scars emblazed upon Christ's glorified body! Then we will enjoy perfect relationships, perfect harmony, perfect bliss, perfect joy and perfect delight.

Why live in the past? Why dwell on the past? Why get stuck in the past? The Savior—whose baptism, transfiguration and ascension were all accompanied with clouds—is coming again for you, with the clouds!

*“Yea, amen, let all adore thee,
High on thine eternal throne.” Amen.*

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

PSALM 130

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

PSALM 130:5

Home! It evokes feelings of love and laughter, security and serenity, warmth and welcome. Home means mom and dad, fun and games, good food and deep sleep. “Home, home on the range.” “When Johnnie comes marching home.” A little girl from Kansas says it best, “There’s no place like home!”

Some of us are far away from home; all of us are far away from our heavenly Father. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15, we demand our fair share of the inheritance and set off for distant lands. We now live with empty relationships and inflated egos.

What can we do now? Wait. We can wait for the LORD. We can also sing. “Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free.” Christ is our sin-bearer and death-defeater. He frees us from guilt and shame, sin and blame. When Christ returns, he will take us to our heavenly home where we will abide with him forever.

*“From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in thee.” Amen.*



“Prepare ye the way of the Lord,” the prophet Isaiah announces to us this Advent. These devotions by Reed Lessing for this sacred season show us ways to prepare for our coming King. Each devotion focuses on the history and meaning of a beloved hymn or carol sung in the Church in the weeks leading up to Christmas. The poetic and profound messages found in these tunes of old help us to recognize how we can best prepare for the Christ Child in our hearts today.

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#) by Barnes & Noble