

Waiting for Rebirth: Love Born Anew

Advent at Home

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“Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?” Isaiah 43:19a

This devotional is meant to provide a way to focus and reflect on the meaning of Advent – the incarnate God born among us in order to usher us all into a new way of being. Use it when you light your Advent wreath, or simply as a meditation, as we ready our hearts for God’s new beginning.

Week One – The End We Need: Our Hope for Rebirth

Today we light the first candle of the Advent wreath, which stands for hope, a light in the darkness. We await our Savior’s birth, the seed of new life amidst a troubled world. Light the way of hope for us, Lord.

Scripture:

Psalms 80:7, 16-18 – Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved. Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, the son of man you have made so strong for yourself. And so we will never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your Name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Mark 13:32-37 – But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

Prayer: Eternal God, as we await your coming among us, fill our hearts with hope and give us the courage to proclaim your good news to the world, shining our light in the darkness. You come to us as vulnerability in a hardened world, teaching us a new way to live. We pray in the name of the One for whom we wait, the light in the darkness. Amen.

This week, spend some time each day observing the world around you and meditating on God’s will for our world. Where, within your sphere of influence, can you illuminate God’s action in the world? Where can you shine your particular light, working to make our world “as it is in heaven”? God’s strength is found in vulnerability; how does that shape the way you inhabit your faith in your daily life?

Week Two – Preparing the way for God’s Peace

Today we light the first and second candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope in the darkness, and the second for peace as we prepare for the Lord’s coming. Emanuel, bring your peace to an embattled world.

Scripture:

Isaiah 40:3-5 – A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Psalms 85:8, 11-13 – I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him. Truth shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.



Prayer: Faithful God, you offer us peace and bid us level our rough places, preparing a place for you among us. Send us out to level uneven ground, closing the gaps between the rich and the poor, between those with seats at the table, and those excluded. Turn our hearts toward you and make us peacemakers and justice workers in your name. Amen.

This week, reflect each day on the conditions needed for peace to prevail in our world. What mountains need to be made low and what valleys lifted to prepare the way for Christ's peace? How are you called to the work of preparation and of peacemaking in your day-to-day life?

Week Three – The Good News: Rejoicing in God's Salvation

Today we light the first, second, and third candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope in the darkness, the second to prepare the way for God's peace, and the third in the joy of God's salvation. God, we rejoice in your promise.

Scripture:

Isaiah 61:1, 10-11 – The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my whole being shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Luke 1:46-53 – And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty."

Prayer: God of all, you delight in the thriving of all your children and send your Son to bring good news to the poor and oppressed, the brokenhearted, the prisoners, the captives, and those who mourn. In serving your people, we find our salvation; send us with joyful hearts to give to all those who suffer reason to rejoice. Amen.

This week, reflect each day on joy as essential to human thriving, and thus what God wishes for each of us. What stands in its way? What endings and beginnings are required for joy to flourish? Where can you bring joy to the joyless? Where can you be God's good news to those who are outcast, oppressed, or suffering?

Week Four – Walking in Love: God's Promise is Near

Today we light the first, second, third, and fourth candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope in the darkness, the second to prepare the way for God's peace, the third in the joy of God's salvation, and the fourth for the love that lights our way. Makes us disciples of the love that Jesus lived and send us to spread it near and far.

Scripture:

Psalms 89:1-2 – I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

John 1:1-5, 14, 16 – In the beginning was the Word and the word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. 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. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Prayer: Loving God, your love for us is so great that you became one of us, fulfilling your promise and bringing us into the fullness of life with you. Give us courage and strength not only to proclaim your love but to embody it, walking in the ways that your Son, Jesus – love incarnate – taught us. You charge us with enacting your promise of love to the world; guide our feet and direct our hearts, that all your children might feel your relentless love. Amen.

Reflect this week on God's love in the world. Where do you feel its presence most strongly? Where do you feel its absence – and how might you be its source in those dark spots? When darkness threatens to overtake the light, how does God's love live in you to illuminate hearts and minds and connect us to one another?

Merry Christmas!