

“O house of Jacob, come, let us **walk in the light** of the Lord!”  
--Isaiah 2:5

For a long time, I have **loved** the Scripture readings during the season of Advent because they focus on what I thought of as the end of the world. The drama! The urgency! Suddenly the stakes are incredibly high, and faith in God is of great consequence. (Maybe this is similar to the exciting jolt that some people get from watching horror films, I don't know.)

It's very possible to sleepwalk through life without noticing where God is present in the world, here and now. I see it as a blessing when God gets the attention of humans to shake us out of our ruts and point us toward the abundant life that God created for all humans to live. And in this world where attention has its own economy, it takes some effort to notice God's presence: to slow down, to make space for contemplation, and to discover that God has always been present.

With so many wars and natural disasters going on, anxiety about money and food scarcity, the stark message of apocalypse and God's judgment may lead us down a path of despair. Even if our world (or worldview) is crumbling around us, do we not still proclaim God's goodness, God's power over evil? Just as Martin Luther identified that each human is *both* a sinner *and* a saint, can't the world be *both* falling apart *and* renewing at the same time?

Can't we, as people of faith in God, *both* repent *and* rejoice at the same time?

Let evil crumble and fall apart! And let God bring transformation that leads to new life! Let our individual fears and anxieties fall away, and let God renew a right spirit within us.

Listen for the words of **hope** written throughout the Scripture readings this Advent season—in the words of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, in the psalms of praise to God, in the furious song of Mary's Magnificat, and in the triumph of life described in the Christmas story. Listen for where God protects the people who are most vulnerable.

And don't be afraid to practice **joy** as resistance to evil. The Holy Spirit has been beating back evil ever since time began and continues igniting the hearts of the faithful to participate, inviting us into the **peace** that passes all understanding.

Did you notice the bold print/underlined words in this article?! Those are the themes for each week of Advent, as we light an additional candle on our Advent wreath each week: **HOPE**, **PEACE**, **JOY**, and **LOVE**. May the candle's light lead

you ever closer to the light of Christ, and may God's light shine in you this season and always.

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