

Liturgy of the Advent Season



Random Reflection

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Written and Illustrated
by
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Random Reflection
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Introduction to Liturgy of the Advent Season

Advent is the liturgical season anticipating the coming of the Lord. While I did not grow up practicing the Liturgy of Advent, there was a similar posture to my family's traditions. As an adult, I have discovered that advent is a calming presence in what can often feel like a hectic season.

Yet, I see it every day in the eyes of parents at the school drop-off, texts from friends, and the sighs from random strangers standing in the checkout line at the grocery store.

Life feels too much, too much to do, and not enough time or money to do it all. Too much on our calendars, and more asking to take up space. Too much to decide and not enough margin in our schedule to determine the next right thing.

How does one celebrate a season of hope when many of our problems feel hopeless?

How does one hold peace with so much of our world at war?

How does one live a joy-filled life when there feels little to celebrate?

How does one show love when they themselves feel so unloveable?

"One of the principle gestures of Advent Liturgy is simplification."

Blake Billings, Ph.D.

Perhaps we simply practice what we know, regardless of how we feel, and embrace the steadiness of the familiar rhythms in this season.

Perhaps we simplify our expectations and schedules to make space for holding what is true in our lives and what we know to be true of God.

To help us hold space for the Liturgy of Advent in the hectic schedules of our everyday lives, I have written a reflection for each Sunday during Advent. A simple reflection and prayer to help us pay attention to how we find hope, peace, love, and joy in our ordinary days.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present in this season of anticipation. May we overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.

Random Reflection

Advent Week One: Liturgy of Hope

Mary, a young girl, was likely in the throws of planning her wedding, anticipating her future. Then, her life was interrupted; having a baby out of wedlock could easily have left her feeling hopeless.

Yet, when faced with the unexpected, Mary did not appear to lose hope. Instead, she responded to the angel, *"Let it be; I am the handmaid of the Lord."*

At the time of Jesus' birth, the shepherds were labeled sinners; they were not well-regarded people. Being a shepherd may have felt like a hopeless occupation.

The shepherds may have lacked hope in their world, yet they received a VIP invitation to find hope in Jesus.

**"Faith invites us to live wonderstruck -
a journey marked by holy courage
and irresistible hope."**

Margaret Feinberg

We make plans and hope for a certain kind of future. Then our lives are interrupted, and the unexpected makes what we hoped for feel impossible. We lose hope.

Or, the life we have lived has been hard. We feel stuck and have long ago lost hope for anything better. We see no hope.

What if, like Mary, we decided to hold onto hope regardless of circumstances?

Or when we've already lost hope, we choose to accept the invitation of advent to find hope in the story of Jesus?

**Advent is an invitation to remember that there is always hope,
even when the world feels hopeless.**

Questions for Reflection:

What do you hope for in this season?

Where have you found yourself losing hope?

Where have you found hope in the story of Christmas?

Liturgy of Hope

Prayer:

As we pause and reflect on this advent season, God give us the courage to pray with hopeful expectations.

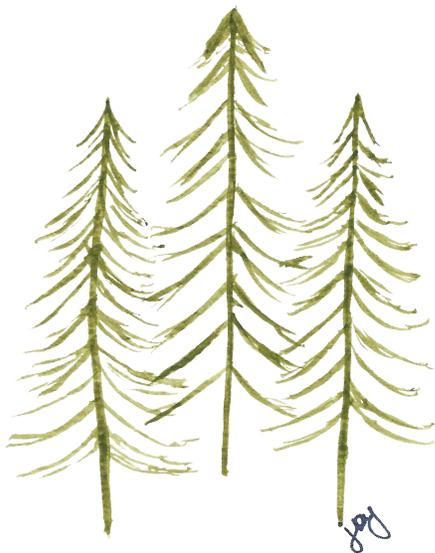
Help us to hold in our hearts the gift of Jesus' birth and the hope of his anticipated return. In this broken and war-torn world, may we not lose hope. Nor, let us become complacent in our hope. But, give us the strength to actively engage in bringing your hope to others.

Give us listening ears,
Noticing eyes,
Compassionate hearts,
Open hands,
So that we might see hope and carry hope through our ordinary days.
May we find our hope in you and share that hope with others.

Amen

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present in this season of anticipation. May we overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.

Random Reflections on Hope



**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6**

Advent Week Two: Liturgy of Peace

Our English word for peace holds meaning for more than one type of peace. Peace can refer to inner peace, tranquility, or outer peace, a state in which there is no war. The Hebrew word for peace, Shalom, refers to the appearance of calm and tranquility. In Greek, the word for peace, Eirenen, means unity and accord.

“Love is the purest form of a soul at peace.”

Matthew Donnelly

No matter what definition of peace we consider, the world feels far from peaceful and inner peace; that sense of calm in the face of stressors is impossible to grasp.

Yet, when we read the story of Jesus coming in the book of Isaiah, we are reminded that Jesus is “the Prince of Peace.” Jesus would come to bring us peace and would be a peacemaker.

Advent reminds us that we can have peace, even when the world is at war.

Questions for Reflection:

Think of your daily routine; what spaces do you find lack peace?

What is one characteristic of a peacemaker that you are living out well?

Where might you improve how you live as a peacemaker? In your homes? Your community?

Liturgy of Peace

Prayer:

As we pause in prayer this Advent Season, God, calm our hearts and give us your peace.

Help us to remember that we have access to inner peace in you, and we have also been invited to serve as peacemakers in this world.

In this broken and hurting world, let us not only seek peace for ourselves but be advocates for peace everywhere.

Give us listening ears,
Noticing eyes,
Compassionate hearts,
Open hands,
So that we might find peace and carry that peace to others in our ordinary days.

May we know the peace that comes from you, and share that peace with the world.

Amen

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present in this season of anticipation. May we overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.

Random Reflections on Peace



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.

John 14:27

Random Reflection

Advent Week Three: Liturgy of Joy

Thanksgiving or gratitude are words commonly used throughout Autumn, especially in November. And then easily discarded, our focus moving toward hope, peace, and joy in a new season.

Yet, gratitude is a concept best woven into our daily rhythms beyond one season. Thanksgiving is a word that might actually lead us on a path toward joy.

Ann Voskamp reminds us that Eucharisteo, a Greek word, is a word that means thanksgiving but also includes the derivative Chara, the Greek word for joy. Might we consider the possibility that “the feeling of joy begins with the action of thanksgiving?”

“The art of deep seeing makes gratitude possible. And it is the art of gratitude that makes joy possible. Isn’t joy the art of God?”

Ann Voskamp.

Joy, a more substantial and less common feeling than just happiness, is found regardless of circumstances. Real joy is often found in the unexpected when we stop striving and instead embrace the gifts as they come.

Look at our world, consider the challenges of daily life, and joy can feel difficult to find. *Yet, what if we started small? What if we focused on finding joy in the small ordinary things and, in doing so, found an invitation into a life that feels large? A joyful life.*

Advent reminds us that a regular rhythm of practicing gratitude invites us to live a joyful life, regardless of circumstances.

Questions for Reflection:

Have you felt the tension of living with grief and desiring joy this season?

How can practicing gratitude help you discover real joy?

Considering others, how might an outward focus help provide a sense of joy and also share that joy with others?

Liturgy of Joy

Prayer

Father, In this world, there are many troubles, yet we ask that you let our hearts not carry the weight of this world.

Let us look to the birds in the sky and the lilies in the fields with gratitude, remembering how you care for everything and everyone.

Help us to weave a practice of gratitude into our ordinary days, and in doing so, find the unexpected gifts you give.

Give us listening ears,
Noticing eyes,
Compassionate hearts,
Open hands,
So that we might find joy and carry that joy to others in our ordinary days.

May we know the joy that comes from you, a joy complete, and share that joy with the world.

Amen

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present in this season of anticipation. May we overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.

Random Reflections on Joy



But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Luke 2:10 - 12

Random Reflection

Advent Week Four: Liturgy of Love

We have a sign that sits next to our nativity, "true love was born in a stable." It's difficult to imagine any greater love than God sending his only son to live with us on this earth.

The definition of love is an intense feeling of deep affection. Yet if we only see love as a feeling, love is unpredictable. Feelings based on emotions easily come and go, and love becomes unreliable—true love commits beyond feeling. And the best example we have of true love was born in a stable.

**"Let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them
and show it by our actions."**

Author of 1 John

That baby Jesus, born in a stable, grew up to live a life of love, having compassion for all people, especially those that others considered unloveable. During His time on earth, Jesus lived out love, showed us what it looked like to love others, and invited us to follow his example.

The words "I Love You" are quickly spoken but far more challenging to live. Thankfully, we have been given an example of the greatest love.

**Advent reminds us that we are so very loved and invited to love one another
from that place of being loved.**

Questions for Reflection:

Have you accepted how much God loves you?

What is an attribute of love that is challenging to live out in the ordinary every day?

How might you express love to those in your home and community this season?

Liturgy of Love

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us the greatest gift of love.

May we accept the love you have given to us and become known for your love lived out in our ordinary days.

Help us learn from Jesus' example during his time on earth as we seek to live a life of love.

Give us listening ears,
Noticing eyes,
Compassionate hearts,
Open hands,
So that we might know your love and carry that love to others in our ordinary days.

May we know the true love that comes from you and share that love with the world.

Amen

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present in this season of anticipation. May we overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.

Random Reflections on Love



**Dear friends, let us love one another, for
love comes from God. Everyone who loves
has been born of God and knows God.**

1 John 4:7

Random Reflection

Christmas Day: The Greatest Love Story

The Christmas story is the most extraordinary love story: A gift of hope, a reminder that real joy is not found in our circumstances, and peace can exist even amid unrest.

**"Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. Maybe
Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more."**

The Grinch by Dr. Seuss

The presents unwrapped, the stories told, the belly's full, yet the trees still a glow.

What better time to pause and reflect, embracing the meaning of today?

Perhaps while singing Joy to the World, you've desperately longed for joy not felt. Or while Silent Night played in the background, your head spun with thoughts and worries, anything but silent. The good news is that we don't have to stay in that space. We can sit by our fires or under trees bright and remember the story of Christmas Night.

We can remember that true love was born in a stable. And true love still carries us through.

As we reflect and process the events of today, may we also remember:

- The most extraordinary love story was written for each of us.
- Joy is often found in the unexpected when we find gratitude for the gifts, no matter how small.
- The prince of peace came to give us inner peace and show us how to live as peacemakers.
- There is always hope, even when we can't see it. We can choose to live it.

**May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we live fully present today. May we
overflow with love, knowing we are so very loved.**

