

Advent Series: Names of the Messiah (from Isaiah 9:6)

This series follows the passages in Isaiah for year A of the Revised Common Lectionary

Advent 1: Wonderful Counselor

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke to the people: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us the way of God and that we might walk in God’s paths.” Advent is a season of light in darkness, a season of hope in hopeless times. We seek God’s wisdom and understanding for our daily lives, but also to transform the world. “For God shall judge between the nations, and 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. Come, let us walk in the light of our God!”

As we light the first candle, as we wait expectantly for the reign of God to come, we seek God’s wisdom in our lives, that we may participate in God’s transformative work in this world and in God’s reign to come.

Light the first Advent candle

“O Come Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and night, To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in Her ways to go.” O God of Wisdom, Wonderful Counselor, shine Your light in us, that we may be a light unto the world. Amen.

Advent 2: Mighty God

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke to the people: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Advent in the Northern hemisphere means winter, hibernation, stillness. But there is life preparing to return to the world.

As we light the second candle, we prepare for Christ to enter our world and our lives in a new way. We recall the prophet’s words of old, words of hope for a king in their time. One who was given the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might, but also the knowledge and fear, or awe, of our mighty God, who brings life out of death, a shoot from a tree in midwinter.

Light the second Advent candle

“By Thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone; by Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.” O Eternal Spirit, Mighty God, may we know Your love forever, and may we proclaim to the world that You are breaking open our hearts and lives in a new way. Amen.

Advent 3: Everlasting Father/Everlasting One

Long ago, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah: “Say to those of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God ... God will come and save you.’” To a people who had been taken into exile, who had lost everything, who had buried their parents and grandparents in a land far away from their home, Isaiah spoke to them, to tell them God had not forgotten them, but God was preparing a way home for them. Advent is a season of hope when there is no hope, of watching and waiting for signs of God’s own turning to our hearts, turning to our world in a new way.

As we light the third candle, we rejoice, and remember all the times throughout our faith history that God has revealed themselves in a new way. How God delivered the people from slavery and from the wilderness. How God brought the exiles home. How God entered our world and our lives in a new way—as one of us.

Light the third Advent candle

“O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see the lie; Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by. Yet in thy dark street shineth, the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” O Everlasting Light, Everlasting God of steadfast love, reveal to us that You are at work in our lives and in our world in a new way. May we rejoice in the promise You have given us, hope for all eternity. Amen.

Advent 4: Prince of Peace

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke words of hope to the leaders of Israel, “Therefore, the Lord, your God, will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse evil and choose good.” Isaiah saw hope in the promise of a newborn king for his time, a king that would do the right thing, choosing good. Hundreds of years later, in the time of Jesus, while under the occupation of Rome, the people saw hope again in the promise of an unexpected baby, for Emmanuel means, “God is with us.” Advent reminds us that God is always present with us, even when we cannot perceive God, even when it feels the world is falling apart and the nations leaders are failing us.

As we light the fourth candle, we know the deep abiding presence of the spirit of God in us, the peace that comes from God alone, and we place our trust in the Prince of Peace, born in our hearts again this Christmas.

Light the fourth Advent candle

“For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old; when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold. When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.” O Prince of Peace, be born in us again, may Your peace prevail in our lives, and in our world, always. Amen.