

Advent: An Introduction



A time of waiting, anticipating, preparation, and most of all **HOPE**.

Life has certainly been challenging, and what we all need is HOPE. Where better to receive it than from our Lord? So, we anticipate and wait for his coming, both as a baby and his return again; we wait and prepare for him in our hearts. Most of all, we believe in the HOPE that will not fail us, our certainty that we are God's child, and that he will never ever leave us or forsake us. God's steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting.

For our Advent Hymn Study, we will look at what Advent is, the prayer of each week, and the hymns that mark this hopeful, beautiful season for us. May you have a blessed and hopeful Advent this year.

In Christ,
Pastor Judy

ABOUT ADVENT

Advent is a season of the liturgical year observed in most denominations as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. Advent is the beginning of our liturgical year.

The term Advent is adopted from the Latin *adventus* meaning "**coming; arrival**", translated in Greek as *parousia* meaning "**second coming of Christ.**" Thus, the season of Advent in the Christian calendar anticipates the "coming of Christ" from three different perspectives: the physical nativity in Bethlehem, the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer, and the eschatological Second Coming.

Practices associated with Advent include keeping an Advent calendar, lighting an Advent wreath, praying an Advent daily devotional, erecting a Christmas tree or a Chrismon tree, as well

as other ways of preparing for Christmas, such as setting up Christmas decorations, a custom that is sometimes done liturgically through a hanging of the greens ceremony.

It is not known when the period of preparation for Christmas that is now called Advent began – it was certainly in existence from about the year 480.

The ELW and Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) lists blue as the preferred color for Advent. Blue is the color of hope, and Advent is a hopeful season of preparation that anticipates both Bethlehem and the consummation of history in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

During the four Sundays of Advent, most churches focus on a particular theme from the life of Christ, such as hope, love, joy, and peace. The purpose of each theme is to spend time reflecting on the true meaning of the season: the life of Jesus Christ. The goal should be to come before God with a sincere heart and to worship Jesus Christ.

Week 1: Hope (or promise) We usually have readings about the return of **Christ**

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned...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. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

Week 2: Preparation (or waiting or prophecy) We usually have readings about **John the Baptist**

Isaiah 40:3-5: "A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

Week 3: Joy (or peace) This week's readings vary from year to year

Matthew 2:10-11, "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

Week 4: Love We usually have readings about **Mary**

John 3:16-19, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not

believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

Hymn: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

One of my favorites Advent hymns is **O come, O come Emmanuel**, and it is a wonderful start to Advent with its rich scriptural references. It is an ancient hymn and we know it goes back to the fifth century at least. Below is a brief history and then we will look at some of the key **phrases** each a reference to Christ and **various scriptures** that the hymn draws upon.

History of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

The Advent hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is a versification of the Christmas antiphons commonly called the O's [or O Antiphons]. The word *antiphon* comes from a Greek word meaning "opposite voice" and generally refers to one group responding to another during a song or chant. Interestingly, the structure of the Psalms lends itself to an antiphonal method of singing and suggests that ancient Israelites sang this way.

The "O Antiphons" refer to the seven antiphons that begin with the word "O" and are recited during the "Octave," the eight days before Christmas. There is one antiphon for each day from December 17-23, with December 24, Christmas Eve, being reserved for the Christmas vigil. There is evidence to suggest that the O Antiphons existed as early as the **5th century**.

The Latin form of the "O Antiphons" is found in the Roman Breviary (a liturgical book of prayers, hymns, Psalms, and readings). Below are the Latin headings with an English translation. Each antiphon highlights a title of the Messiah as prophesied in the book of Isaiah (written over 600 years before the birth of Christ):

- O Sapientia*: O Wisdom
- O Adonai*: O Lord
- O Radix Jesse*: O Flower of Jesse
- O Clavis David*: O Key of David
- O Oriens*: O Radiant Dawn
- O Rex Gentium*: O King of all the Nations
- O Emmanuel*: O Emmanuel (God with Us)

Interestingly, if we take the first Latin letter of each antiphon, ignoring the "O", and work our way back from the last to the first, it spells out "ERO CRAS." In Latin, this means "I shall be [with you] tomorrow." This "hidden" meaning is revealed a little more each day as we draw closer to the birth of Jesus!

Dr. John Mason Neale, the first to translate the song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" from Latin to English (1851), believed that around the 12th century an unknown author took five of these Antiphons and wove them into a hymn.

In regards to the **tune** “Veni Emmanuel,” some scholars believe that its origin comes from the Gregorian chant of the eighth century. However, the oldest known record of the tune, according to *The New Oxford Book of Carols*, comes from a “French source, a fifteenth-century Franciscan processional.” This source contains verses that were generally sung during the procession to a burial place after a funeral.

Study on “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

***Note:**The verses are in a different order than our hymnal, and the words to the hymn are in **bold**. In *italics* you will find the scriptures that the hymn is drawing upon.

Verse 1:

O come, O come, Emmanuel, (Emmanuel means God with us)

Prophecy about Jesus in Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and **she will call His name Immanuel.***

An angel told Joseph in Matthew 1:23 *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear A Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”*

Leviticus 26:11-12 *Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.*

**And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.**

Speaking of Israel in Isaiah 35:10 *And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and **sorrow and sighing will flee away.***

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Luke 2:10-12 *But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, **I bring you good news of great joy** which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

Verse 2:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free (Jesse, the father of King David read 1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Prophesying about Jesus, in Isaiah 11:1-2 *Then **a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.** The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Thine own from Satan's tyranny;

Acts 10:38 *You know of **Jesus of Nazareth**, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how **He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil**, for God was with Him.*

**From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.**

I Corinthians 15:54-57 *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "**Death is swallowed up in victory.** O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to **God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Hebrews 2:14-15 *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil**, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Verse 3:

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer (dawn, the beginning light: John 1:1-5)

*Zacharias prophesying about John the Baptist leading the way for Jesus, in Luke 1:76-79 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which **the Sunrise from on high will visit us**, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

*Balaam prophesied in Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; **A star shall come forth from Jacob**, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth."*

Revelation 22:16 *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, **the bright morning star.**"*

**Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Isaiah 9:2 *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; **Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 4:

O come, Thou Key of David, come (The messiah is to be descendant of King David and the Key is a symbol of authority and power)

*Speaking of Jesus in Revelation 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: **He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:**"*

And open wide our heavenly home.

Make safe the way that leads on high

And close the path to misery.

*John 14:6 **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.***

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel

Verse 5:

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high,

*1 Corinthians 1:30 **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,***

Who ordered all things far and nigh;

*Jeremiah 51:15 **It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding He stretched out the heavens.***

**To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.**

*Proverbs 3:5-6 **Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Verse 6:

Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind (King of nations in our hymnal)

*Haggai 2:7 (KJV) **And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.***

All peoples in one heart and mind;

Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease,

Fill all the world with heaven's peace.

*Ephesians 2:14-16 For He Himself is our peace, **who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall**, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself **He might make the two into one new man**, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

*Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and **on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.**"*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

LISTEN TO THE HYMN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikEtkfRSUsU>

PRAYER

Lord of Hope, prepare us to wait, to anticipate, and to prepare for your coming. Come among us and bring the hope and peace that only you alone can provide. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.