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## THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

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*Daily Devotion at Zion + Nov. 22, 2020 AD + **End of Church Year***

### **This Week: Devotion in Advent**

“Behold, I am coming soon!” (Revelation 22:12)

That promise Holy Scripture like water filling the ocean. As the Lord promised Moses, “I will come down . . . in the sight of all the people,” and “In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you“ (Exodus 19:11, 20:24). The psalms declare that “all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes” (Ps. 96:12-13), and the prophets sound a note of judgment: “Who can endure the day of His coming?” (Malachi 3:2) When Jesus says, “I am coming soon!” He is simply identifying Himself with that millennia-old expectation of God’s grand arrival (see also John 14:18).

Like Scripture, Advent radiates with the light of that promise.

As a season, Advent leads us more deeply into the life created and sustained by the hope of Christ’s arrival, both at the end of the world and within this present time. Christian hope sees Him wherever He’s promised to put Himself, fully expecting His forgiveness, life, and salvation. It sees this world for the passing creature it is, and yet loves it all the more and looks forward to its liberation from decay (Romans 8:21). Preparing to celebrate the holy birth by which He arrived on earth a few thousand years ago helps prepare us to live that hopeful life, adjusting our eyes to see what is yet unseen.

### **About the Cover Art**

*An angel shows up on the doorstep of a middle class home in the 1950s. Who is the plain girl, dressed in blue with saddle shoes, reading a book and looking at the angel blankly? She’s the Virgin Mary, of course! This painting by John Collier (2000 A.D.) was commissioned by a church in Texas to give a contemporary interpretation of the archangel Gabriel’s visit to our Lord’s mother. A slight breeze against Mary’s skirt suggests the angel just whooshed into view (or it’s the Spirit overshadowing her!), and she stands by a door to remind us that she is our Lord’s entry into the world. The white lilies, a traditional symbol for Mary, hint at her identity.*

**A Prayer from the Early Church:  
“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”**

“Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20). That prayer appears in Scripture, giving us one of the earliest examples of Christians praying to the unseen Savior in the conviction that He can hear them—in the conviction, that is, that He is risen, and He is both Lord and God. Do we still pray that prayer today?

An early church manual, The *Didache* (or “Teaching of the Twelve, around 100 A.D if not earlier), has a similar prayer at Holy Communion: “Let grace come, and let this world pass away” (chapter 12). To pray for Jesus to come, or for His kingdom to come (Lord’s Prayer) is to pray, to some degree, that the world end its present life and the new creation to arrive.

So take up that little prayer this Advent: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” It’s a prayer He delights to hear and soon will answer.

**Daily Readings for the Week of November 29 (Advent 1)**

<b>S</b> Isaiah 1:1-9 2 Peter 3:1-10 Matthew 25:1-13	1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 Luke 20:27-40
<b>M</b> Isaiah 1:10-20 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Luke 20:1-8	<b>F</b> Isaiah 3:1—4:1 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 Luke 20:41—21:4
<b>T</b> Isaiah 1:21-31 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Luke 20:9-18	<b>Sa</b> Isaiah 4:2-6 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Luke 21:5-19
<b>W</b> Isaiah 2:1-4 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 Luke 20:19-26	<i><b>These readings correspond to pages 3-32 in Vol. I of <u>For All the Saints</u>. To acquire <u>For All the Saints</u> or other devotionals, please contact the church office.</b></i>
<b>Th</b> Isaiah 2:5-22	

## **The Disciplines of Hope: Keeping a True Advent**

When we see Olympic athletes running a race, that race represents just one little moment in an all-consuming lifestyle for the runner. So it goes for the Church in the season of Advent: we are always living in great expectation of the Lord's arrival, one long advent. The four weeks before Christmas become just one exercise in that greater way of life.

Here are some ways that devotion during Advent might help you keep "advent watch" throughout your life. Each one represents an **immersion in the Word of God**, for it is by that Word that the lamp of faith keeps burning in our hearts:

- 1) **Light.** Advent devotions often features lighting a four-candled Advent wreath (one candle for each of the Sundays in Advent) or other candles. It recalls John 1:5 ("The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it). It visually pictures how the Christian lives a life that contrasts sharply with the way of the world.
- 2) **Fasting.** Hold off the feasts for the Christmas season, and try fasting (eating more simply) on Wednesdays, Fridays, and/or Saturdays. Letting our bodies experience hunger helps discipline us for lives of patience and self-denial.
- 3) **Blue-Violet.** The churches of the Western world use this color for Advent, recalling the bruising of Christ as He suffered for us and the traditional color of Mary, His mother. Both connections teach us to be more thankful for Christ's life and sufferings in the flesh and to seek Him in His body and blood as well as His final appearing in history.
- 4) **The Gospel of Luke 1:1-80 and Matthew 1:1-25.** These passages of Scripture cover what happened *before* Christ's birth. Knowing how God worked through simple folk to do great things prepares us to be the vessels of His handiwork, as well.