



THE SONGS OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS



WORKBOOK



ACTIVITY PACK



ART & MUSIC



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Many devotionals you might be familiar with begin with a suggested text to read from the Bible and then a page of reflection from the author. I have at least 3 of these kinds of Advent books on my shelf and love them. But this is different from that kind of study. The format of this workbook is based on the ancient tradition of fixed-hours of prayer. It is, at its heart, an invitation to a rhythm of prayer and scripture reading.

This rhythm of life is practiced by many, including biblical characters like Daniel and Peter, and is mentioned in the Psalms (Daniel 6:10; Acts 10:9; Psalm 119:164). Throughout the history of Christianity people have engaged in this practice in a wide variety of ways. While it is in no way a command of scripture, people of faith have often shaped the rhythm of their lives around fixed times to pause, pray, and read scripture.

This study has multiple components, and I invite you to try as many of them out as you can and then to pick what works for you. There are lots of options, but you do not need to engage with all of them. If you are reading this, you already have a copy of the workbook. For more information, visit proclaimministries.com/advent.

A RHYTHM OF LIFE

I would guess that the daily rhythm of my life is not exactly the same as yours, so while I am convinced that the daily habits of life with God are essential, the specific practices can be ones that are right for you in your season of life. There have been times in my own spiritual journey when a practice that was life-giving at one time became impossible or unhelpful at another. For example, I personally love lots of quiet time to read, but when I had small children, finding quiet time to read became incredibly challenging. Listening to the Bible on audio and traditional prayers of the church became a gift for me in a time of upheaval. When I could not pick what to read, the church read to me. When I was too tired to know how to pray, the church prayed for me.

This tradition has often been practiced by clergy - pastors, nuns, monks - all people whose job it is to read, teach, pray, and lead the church. But it does not belong to the professionals. Jesus has always been in the habit of meeting ordinary people in the midst of their ordinary lives and calling them to follow him. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who took a walk and shared a meal with the risen Jesus, may you experience the transformative power of God in

READ

This study is centered around the 4 traditional themes of advent: hope, peace, joy, and love. The main section of each week is focused on reading scripture. The reading for each day includes a Psalm and a section from the Old Testament and New Testament. I have tried to keep the sections manageable - which for me means 15 minutes of audio / 5 pages of text. There is 1 'reading' per week. I hope that this gives you enough time to meditate on the text and engage with it in more than one way (audio/written, alone/together, meditate/study, etc).

REFLECT

The sidebar of each reading includes traditional prayers that reflect on the theme and suggestions for worship music and art pieces to ponder. Direct links to art and music are available at proclaimministries.com/advent

As I worked on this study, I have enjoyed incorporating art as a part of my regular rhythm of worship. Song writers, painters, and poets often lead the way in inviting us to reflect on the word and work of God in active and embodied ways.

RESPOND

Each week concludes with an exercise that invites you to reflect on key learnings and consider what it looks like for you to respond in faith & faithfulness. This section will help you summarize your reading for the week and can be used to facilitate discussion. It is included, not because it is the only way to respond but as a reminder to respond intentionally to what you have read.

Remember that a response can include 'application' but is more than that. For example, I learned this year how to write a collect, which is a traditional prayer with a specific rhythm that reflects on a text of scripture (see appendix of this workbook). Prayer is one way to respond. Some other ideas include worship, repentance, and obedience.



GETTING STARTED

If you already have a regular habit of prayer and Bible reading, I encourage you to only adopt as much of this as serves you. If you do not have a regular habit of reading and prayer, I invite you to try out the ideas below and adapt them to work with your own everyday life. I suspect that if you try to do everything, it will be overwhelming (I will definitely not be using everything included every day). One of the goals here is to slow down and live with intention as we wait for Christmas, not to add one more thing to the 'to-do' list. A few examples of ways to participate include:

Audio Only:

- ◆ Listen to the audio recording at least twice
- ◆ Subscribe to the playlist for the week or build your own
- ◆ Discuss the reading with a friend

Text Only:

- ◆ Read and annotate the handout, read again in your own Bible
- ◆ Look at a piece of art or read the lyrics of one of the songs.
- ◆ Journal or complete the reflection exercise

5-day

1. Listen to audio
2. Look at art
3. Read PDF
4. Listen to music
5. Complete the reflection exercises

Family Friendly:

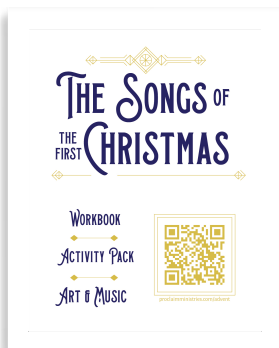
- ◆ Light a candle & memorize Rom 15:13
- ◆ Listen to the audio while coloring or creating art
- ◆ Collaborate on the cross-word puzzle

RESOURCES

There are 3 main ways to access this content: the interactive workbook, which can be printed or downloaded; the website/app with audio, downloads, and linked content; and the printable activity pack. Everything is available free for download and print at proclaimministries.com/advent.

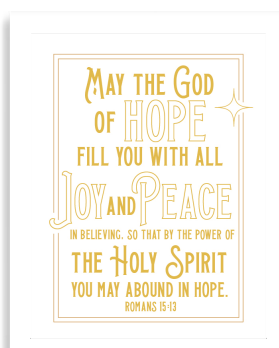
Interactive Workbook:

Free for print and download with prayer and scripture, suggested music and art, and questions for personal response or group discussion.



Activity Pack:

This printable pack includes a memory verse poster, coloring pages, puzzles and more for the whole family.



Website:

An audio recording of all the reading is available on the website and app. The app also has links to art and playlists on YouTube, Apple Music and Spotify.



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ELIZABETH'S SONG

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth
shall show forth your praise.

O God,
make speed to save us.
O Lord,
make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son:
and to the Spirit

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be:
world without end.
Amen.



Merciful God,
who sent your messengers
the prophets to preach repentance
and prepare the way
for our salvation:

Give us grace
to heed their warnings
and forsake our sins,
that we may greet with joy
the coming of Jesus Christ
our Redeemer;
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.



[LISTEN TO AUDIO @ proclaimministries.com/advent](https://proclaimministries.com/advent)

PSALM 25:1-5

O Lord, I come before you in prayer.

2 My God, I trust in you.
Please do not let me be humiliated;
do not let my enemies triumphantly rejoice over me.

3 Certainly none who rely on you will be humiliated.
Those who deal in treachery will be thwarted and humiliated.

4 Make me understand your ways, O Lord.
Teach me your paths.

5 Guide me into your truth and teach me.
For you are the God who delivers me;
on you I rely all day long.

...

GENESIS 12 & 18

12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram,

"Go out from your country, your relatives,
and your father's household to the land that I will show you.

2 Then I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you, and I will make your name great,
so that you will exemplify divine blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,
but the one who treats you lightly I must curse,

CONFESSION

Most merciful God,
we confess
that we have sinned against you
in thought,
word,
and deed,

by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you
with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors
as ourselves.

We are truly sorry
and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son
Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us
and forgive us;

that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name.

Amen.



Grant your faithful people,
merciful Lord,
pardon and peace;

that we may be cleansed
from all our sins,
and serve you with a quiet mind;

through Jesus Christ
our Lord.

Amen.

so that all the families of the earth
may receive blessing through you."

4 So Abram left, just as the Lord had told him to do, and Lot went with him. (Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.)

...

17:1 When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. 2 Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants."

...

18:1 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest time of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing across from him. When he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. ... 9 Then they asked him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" He replied, "There, in the tent." 10 One of them said, "I will surely return to you when the season comes round again, and your wife Sarah will have a son!" (Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, not far behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were old and advancing in years; Sarah had long since passed menopause.) 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, "After I am worn out will I have pleasure, especially when my husband is old too?" 13 The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child when I am old?' 14 Is anything impossible for the Lord? I will return to you when the season comes round again and Sarah will have a son." 15 Then Sarah lied, saying, "I did not laugh," because she was afraid. But the Lord said, "No! You did laugh."

ISAIAH 54:1-10

1 "Shout for joy, O barren one who has not given birth! Give a joyful shout and cry out, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one are more numerous than the children of the married woman," says the Lord.

...

4 Don't be afraid, for you will not be put to shame.
Don't be intimidated, for you will not be humiliated.

THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

God of hope,
you raised up John the baptizer
as a herald who calls us to
conversion.

As we joyfully await the glorious
coming of Christ,
we pray to you for the needs of the
church and the world.



Pause here to note & pray for:

*- personal concerns - prayer for family - friends
and neighbors - church leaders - community &
government - thanksgiving & praise*

You will forget about the shame you experienced in your youth;
you will no longer remember the disgrace of your abandonment.

5 For your husband is the one who made you—
the Lord of Heaven's Armies is his name.

He is your Protector, the Holy One of Israel.

He is called "God of the entire earth."

...

10 Even if the mountains are removed
and the hills displaced,

my devotion will not be removed from you,
nor will my covenant of friendship be displaced,"
says the Lord, the one who has compassion on you.

MALACHI 3:1 & 4:4-6

3:1 "I am about to send my messenger, who will clear the way
before me. Indeed, the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to
his temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you long for,
is certainly coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

...

4:4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, to whom at Horeb I
gave rules and regulations for all Israel to obey. 5 Look, I will send
you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord
arrives. 6 He will encourage fathers and their children to return to
me, so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment."

LUKE 1:1-25

1 Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things
that have been fulfilled among us, 2 like the accounts passed on to
us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from
the beginning. 3 So it seemed good to me as well, because I have
followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly
account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may
know for certain the things you were taught.

5 During the reign of Herod king of Judea, there lived a priest
named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah,
and he had a wife named Elizabeth, who was a descendant of
Aaron. 6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, following all
the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. 7 But

Concluding with:



Hear our humble prayer
that we may serve you
in holiness and faith
and give voice
to your presence among us
until the day
of the coming of your Son,
Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns
for ever and ever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



COLLECT (CLOSING PRAYER)

God of hope,
you call us home from the exile of
selfish oppression
to the freedom of justice,
the balm of healing,
and the joy of sharing.

Make us strong
to join you in your holy work,
as friends of strangers and victims,
companions of those
whom others shun,
and as the happiness of those
whose hearts are broken.

We make our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

—
May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.

Amen

they did not have a child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both very old.

8 Now while Zechariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the Holy Place of the Lord and burn incense. 10 Now the whole crowd of people were praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. 11 An angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, appeared to him. 12 And Zechariah, visibly shaken when he saw the angel, was seized with fear. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son; you will name him John. 14 Joy and gladness will come to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. 16 He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go as forerunner before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him."

18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is old as well." 19 The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will be silent, unable to speak, until the day these things take place."

21 Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they began to wonder why he was delayed in the Holy Place. 22 When he came out, he was not able to speak to them. They realized that he had seen a vision in the Holy Place, because he was making signs to them and remained unable to speak. 23 When his time of service was over, he went to his home.

24 After some time his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. She said, 25 "This is what the Lord has done for me at the time when he has been gracious to me, to take away my disgrace among people."

LISTEN

Hungry For The Light

- Jacob Early, 2023

Good News

- Graham Jones, 2021

REFLECT



Visitation

-El Greco, ca 1610

[-commentary on art](#)



Visitation

-Jacopo da Pontormo, 1516

[-commentary on art](#)

HEBREWS 11

1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see. 2 For by it the people of old received God's commendation

...

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land as though it were a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren and he was too old, he received the ability to procreate, because he regarded the one who had given the promise to be trustworthy. 12 So in fact children were fathered by one man—and this one as good as dead—like the number of stars in the sky and like the innumerable grains of sand on the seashore. 13 These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth.

...

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets. 33 Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, put foreign armies to flight, 35 and women received back their dead raised to life. But others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain resurrection to a better life. 36 And others experienced mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, sawed apart, murdered with the sword; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; they were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (the world was not worthy of them); they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and openings in the earth. 39 And these all were commended for their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised. 40 For God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made perfect together with us.



READ

What ways did you choose to read the text this week?

☐ read the pdf ☐ listen to audio ☐ read aloud

Summarize the reading. Where do you see the theme of hope in the text?

REFLECT

How did you choose to reflect this week?

☐ Art ☐ Music ☐ Journal/Discussion

What stood out to you from the reading and reflection this week? What did you notice about God, yourself, or the world?

What are you curious about? What questions, ideas, or texts would you like to explore more?

RESPOND

How will you respond to the text?

☐ Pray ☐ Worship ☐ Repent ☐ Act

What would it look like for you to respond this week?

MARY'S SONG



[LISTEN TO AUDIO @ proclaimministries.com/advent](https://proclaimministries.com/advent)

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth
shall show forth your praise.

O God,
make speed to save us.
O Lord,
make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son:
and to the Spirit

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be:
world without end.
Amen.



Heavenly Father,
fill our hearts with the joy that
comes from knowing your love.

May we rejoice
in the good news of salvation
and share that joy with others
during this season of Advent.

Amen.

PSALM 8

1 O Lord, our Lord,
how magnificent is your reputation throughout the earth!
You reveal your majesty in the heavens above!

2 From the mouths of children and nursing babies
you have ordained praise on account of your adversaries,
so that you might put an end to the vindictive enemy.

3 When I look up at the heavens,
which your fingers made,
and see the moon and the stars,
which you set in place,

4 Of what importance is the human race,
that you should notice them?

Of what importance is mankind,
that you should pay attention to them,

5 and make them a little less than the heavenly beings?

You grant mankind honor and majesty;
6 you appoint them to rule over your creation;
you have placed everything under their authority,

7 including all the sheep and cattle,
as well as the wild animals,

8 the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea and everything that
moves through the currents of the seas.

9 O Lord, our Lord, how magnificent is your reputation
throughout the earth!

CONFESSION

O Father,
we are gathered before you,
the Maker of Heaven and Earth,
whose chosen dwelling place
is with the broken and contrite,
to confess
that we have sinned in thought
and word and deed;
we have not loved you
with all our heart and soul,
we have not loved you
with all our mind and strength;
we have not even loved our
neighbor as ourselves.

Purge us from selfishness,
the fear of man,
and the love of praise.

In your mercy,
deepen our sorrow
for the wrong we have done
and for the good
we have left undone,
so that we may hate our sin
with a holy hatred.

But, please Father,
do not leave us in sorrow.

With you, O Lord,
there is forgiveness.
In your mercy,
restore the joy of our salvation;
so that we may love you with a holy
love.

Amen.



Almighty God,
who does freely pardon
all who repent and turn to Him,
now fulfill in every contrite heart
the promise of redeeming grace;
forgiving all our sins,
and cleansing us from
an evil conscience;
through the perfect sacrifice of
Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

2 SAMUEL 7:8-17

8 "So now, say this to my servant David: 'This is what the Lord of hosts says: I took you from the pasture and from your work as a shepherd to make you leader of my people Israel. 7:9 I was with you wherever you went, and I defeated all your enemies before you. Now I will make you as famous as the great men of the earth.

...The Lord declares to you that he himself will build a dynastic house for you. 12 When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent. 14 I will become his father and he will become my son. When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings. 15 But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.' "

17 Nathan told David all these words that were revealed to him.

ISAIAH 7:13-14

13 So Isaiah replied, "Pay attention, family of David. Do you consider it too insignificant to try the patience of men? Is that why you are also trying the patience of my God? 14 For this reason the sovereign master himself will give you a confirming sign. Look, this young woman is about to conceive and will give birth to a son. You, young woman, will name him Immanuel.

ZEPHANIAH 3:14-17

14 Shout for joy, Daughter Zion! Shout out, Israel!
Be happy and boast with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!
15 The Lord has removed the judgment against you; he has
turned back your enemy.
Israel's king, the Lord, is in your midst!
You no longer need to fear disaster.
16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Don't be afraid,
Zion! Your hands must not be paralyzed from panic!

THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

Brothers and sisters,

as we joyfully await
the glorious coming of the Christ,

let us pray for the needs
of the church, our community,
and the world.



Pause here to note and pray for:
- personal concerns - prayer for family - friends
and neighbors - church leaders - community &
government - thanksgiving & praise

Concluding with:



God of joy and exultation,
you strengthen what is weak;
you enrich the poor
and give hope
to those who live in fear.

Look upon our needs this day.

Make us grateful
for the good news of salvation
and keep us faithful in your service
until the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives for ever and ever.

Amen.

17 The Lord your God is in your midst; he is a warrior who can deliver. He takes great delight in you; he renews you by his love; he shouts for joy over you."

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

9 Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your king is coming to you: he is legitimate and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey— on a young donkey, the foal of a female donkey. 10 I will remove the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be removed. Then he will announce peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

LUKE 1:26-56

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. 30 So the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! 31 Listen: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" 35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.

36 "And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month! 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 So Mary said, "Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



COLLECT (CLOSING PRAYER)

Lord Jesus, Master
of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our
preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear
your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to
your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy
of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in
darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"
- Henri J.M. Nouwen

May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.

Amen

39 In those days Mary got up and went hurriedly into the hill country, to a town of Judah, 40 and entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 She exclaimed with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child in your womb! 43 And who am I that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me? 44 For the instant the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

46 And Mary said,

"My soul exalts the Lord,

47 and my spirit has begun to rejoice in God my Savior,
48 because he has looked upon the humble state of his servant.

For from now on all generations will call me blessed,
49 because he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;

50 from generation to generation
he is merciful to those who fear him.

51 He has demonstrated power with his arm;
he has scattered those whose pride wells up
from the sheer arrogance of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up those of lowly position;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,

55 as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

56 So Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-31

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

4 I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. 5 For you were made rich in every

LISTEN

Firm Foundation (He Won't)

- Cody Carnes 2021

Joyful Joyful

- Jvck James, 2022

(Original music: Ludwig van Beethoven
1824 & lyrics by Henry van Dyke, 1907)

REFLECT



Magnificat

-James Tissot, 1894



Mary and Elizabeth

-Lauren Wright Pittman, 2018

way in him, in all your speech and in every kind of knowledge—
6 just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed among
you— 7 so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you wait for the
revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to
the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus
Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship
with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

...

18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are
perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will
thwart the cleverness of the intelligent." 20 Where is the wise man?
Where is the expert in the Mosaic law? Where is the debater of this
age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish? 21 For
since in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know
God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the
foolishness of preaching. 22 For Jews demand miraculous signs
and Greeks ask for wisdom, 23 but we preach about a crucified
Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.
24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the
power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of
God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is
stronger than human strength.

26 Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters.
Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful,
not many were born to a privileged position. 27 But God chose
what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose
what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. 28 God chose
what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing,
to set aside what is regarded as something, 29 so that no one can
boast in his presence. 30 He is the reason you have a relationship
with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and
righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is
written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."



READ

What ways did you choose to read the text this week?

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Summarize the reading. Where do you see the theme of hope in the text?

REFLECT

How did you choose to reflect this week?

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What stood out to you from the reading and reflection this week? What did you notice about God, yourself, or the world?

What are you curious about? What questions, ideas, or texts would you like to explore more?

RESPOND

How will you respond to the text?

☐ Pray ☐ Worship ☐ Repent ☐ Act

What would it look like for you to respond this week?

ZECHARIAH'S SONG

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth
shall show forth your praise

O God, make speed to save us
O Lord
Make haste to help us

Glory be to the father,
and to the son,
and to the holy spirit

As it was in the beginning
Is now and ever shall be
World without end

Amen.



Heavenly Father,
fill our hearts with the joy
that comes from knowing your love.

May we rejoice
in the good news of salvation
and share that joy with others
during this season of Advent.

Amen.



[LISTEN TO AUDIO @ proclaimministries.com/advent](https://proclaimministries.com/advent)

PSALM 130

1 From the deep water I cry out to you, O Lord.

2 O Lord, listen to me!
Pay attention to my plea for mercy!

3 If you, O Lord, were to keep track of sins,
O Lord, who could stand before you?

4 But you are willing to forgive, so that you might be honored.

5 I rely on the Lord, I rely on him with my whole being;
I wait for his assuring word.

6 I yearn for the Lord, more than watchmen do for the morning,
yes, more than watchmen do for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord, for the Lord exhibits loyal love,
and is more than willing to deliver.

8 He will deliver Israel from all the consequences of their sins.

EXODUS 34:1-8

The Lord said to Moses, "Cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you smashed. 2 Be prepared in the morning, and go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and station yourself for me there on the top of the mountain.

...

CONFESSION

Father in heaven,
we thank you for the freedom
you have given us
through the life, death
and resurrection of your Son.

But we confess today that we often
live like slaves.

Instead of
living like you delight in us,
we avoid you in shame and guilt.

Instead of
receiving your favor as a gift,
we try to earn it with our efforts.

Instead of
accepting your freedom,
we prefer our chains.

Instead of
pursuing your purposes, we cling
to our short-sighted agendas.

Forgive us. Embrace us.
Cleanse us. Heal us.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.



Gracious God,
our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide,
and too deep to undo.

Forgive what our lips
tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.

Set us free
from a past that we cannot change;
open to us a future
in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace
to grow more and more
in your likeness and image,
through Jesus Christ,
the light of the world.
Amen.

5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Lord by name. 6 The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, 7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation."

8 Moses quickly bowed to the ground and worshiped 9 and said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." ...

ISAIAH 40:3-5

3 A voice cries out,
"In the wilderness clear a way for the Lord;
build a level road through the rift valley for our God.

4 Every valley must be elevated,
and every mountain and hill leveled.
The rough terrain will become a level plain,
the rugged landscape a wide valley.

5 The splendor of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it at the same time.
For the Lord has decreed it."

...

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

31 "Indeed, a time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them," says the Lord. 33 "But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the Lord. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my

THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

Brothers and sisters,
as we joyfully await the glorious
coming of the Christ,
let us pray for the needs
of the church, our community,
and the world.



Pause here to note and pray for:
- personal concerns - prayer for family - friends
and neighbors - church leaders - community &
government - thanksgiving & praise

Concluding with:



God of promise,
you have given us
a sign of your love
through the gift of Jesus Christ,
our Savior,
who was promised from ages past.

We believe as Joseph did
the message of your presence
whispered by an angel,
and offer our prayers for your world,
confident of your care and mercy
for all creation.

Amen.

people. 34 "People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the Lord. "For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done."

LUKE 1:57-80

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother replied, "No! He must be named John." 61 They said to her, "But none of your relatives bears this name." 62 So they made signs to the baby's father, inquiring what he wanted to name his son. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they were all amazed. 64 Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue released, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 All their neighbors were filled with fear, and throughout the entire hill country of Judea all these things were talked about. 66 All who heard these things kept them in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the Lord's hand was indeed with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
because he has come to help and has redeemed his people.

69 For he has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets
from long ago,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us.

72 He has done this to show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant—

73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham.

This oath grants

74 that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



COLLECT (CLOSING PRAYER)

God of all ages,
in the birth of Christ
your boundless love for your people
shattered the power of darkness.

Be born in us
with that same love and light,
that our song may blend
with all the choirs of heaven and earth
to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.



May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.
Amen

may serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and righteousness before him for as long as we live.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High.
For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give his people knowledge of salvation through the
forgiveness of their sins.

78 Because of our God's tender mercy
the dawn will break upon us from on high
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

80 And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and
he was in the wilderness until the day he was revealed to Israel.

JOHN 3:16-21 & 14:1-27

3:16 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. **18** The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. **19** Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed. **21** But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.

14:1 "Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. **3** And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too. **4** And you know the way where I am going."

LISTEN

Your Love

-Blessing Offer, Todd Clark, 2022

Agnus Dei

-Poor Clair Sisters Arundel, 2020

This Is The Gospel

- Joel Barnes, Tiffany Hudson, 2023



REFLECT



Birth of John the Baptist

-Artemisia Gentileschi, 1635



John The Baptist Preaching

-Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1490

-[commentary on artwork](#)

5 Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him."

...

15 "If you love me, you will obey my commandments. 16 Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you.

18 "I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you. 19 In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too. 20 You will know at that time that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. 21 The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him."

...

27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage...

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. 16 I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he will grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, 17 that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, 18 you will be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, 21 to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.



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RESPOND

How will you respond to the text?

☐ Pray ☐ Worship ☐ Repent ☐ Act

What would it look like for you to respond this week?

THE ANGELS' SONG

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open our lips;
And our mouth
shall show forth your praise.

O God,
make speed to save us.
O Lord,
make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son:
and to the Spirit

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be:
world without end.
Amen.



Prince of Peace,
in a world filled with turmoil,
grant us the wholeness
that only your presence can bring.

Help us to be instruments
of reconciliation
and harmony
in our relationships
and communities.

Amen.



[LISTEN TO AUDIO @ proclaimministries.com/advent](https://proclaimministries.com/advent)

PSALM 72

1 O God, grant the king the ability to make just decisions.
Grant the king's son the ability to make fair decisions.
2 Then he will judge your people fairly,
and your oppressed ones equitably.
3 The mountains will bring news of peace to the people,
and the hills will announce justice.

...

11 All kings will bow down to him;
all nations will serve him.
12 For he will rescue the needy when they cry out for help,
and the oppressed who have no defender.

...

17 May his fame endure.
May his dynasty last as long as the sun remains in the sky.
May they use his name when they formulate their blessings.
May all nations consider him to be favored by God.

18 The Lord God, the God of Israel, deserves praise.
He alone accomplishes amazing things.
19 His glorious name deserves praise forevermore.
May his majestic splendor fill the whole earth.

ISAIAH 9:2-7 & 11:1-5

2 The people walking in darkness
see a bright light;

CONFESSION

Lord, though you should guide us,
we inform ourselves;
though you should rule us,
we control ourselves;
though you should fulfill us,
we console ourselves.

We think your truth too high,
your will too hard,
your power too remote,
your love too free.
But they are not!
And without them,
we are of all people most miserable.

Now heal our confused minds
with your word,
heal our divided wills
with your law,
heal our troubled consciences
with your love,
heal our anxious hearts
with your presence,
all for the sake of your Son,
who loved us
and gave himself for us.
Amen.



Almighty Father,
who for your great
love of your creation
did give your dearly beloved Son
to die for us;

Grant that through his Cross
our sins may be put away,
and remembered no more against
us,

and that, cleansed by his Blood,
and mindful of his sufferings,
we may take up our cross daily,
and follow him in newness of life,
until we come to his
everlasting kingdom;

through the Name of your Son
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

light shines
on those who live in a land of deep darkness.

3 You have enlarged the nation;
you give them great joy.
They rejoice in your presence
as harvesters rejoice;
as warriors celebrate when they divide up the plunder.

4 For their oppressive yoke
and the club that strikes their shoulders,
the cudgel the oppressor uses on them,
you have shattered, as in the day of Midian's defeat.

5 Indeed every boot that marches and shakes the earth
and every garment dragged through blood
is used as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born to us,
a son has been given to us.
He shoulders responsibility
and is called
Wonderful Adviser,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

7 His dominion will be vast,
and he will bring immeasurable prosperity.
He will rule on David's throne
and over David's kingdom,
establishing it and strengthening it
by promoting justice and fairness,
from this time forward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will accomplish this.

...

11:1 A shoot will grow out of Jesse's root stock,
a bud will sprout from his roots.

2 The Lord's Spirit will rest on him—
a Spirit that gives extraordinary wisdom,
a Spirit that provides the ability to execute plans,
a Spirit that produces absolute loyalty to the Lord.

THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

We seek you
mighty God
in the most unlikely places
as a child in a stable,
and in an empty tomb.

May you hear these prayers,
which come from the unlikely
corners of our lives.



Pause here to note and pray for:

*- personal concerns - prayer for family - friends
and neighbors - church leaders - community &
government - thanksgiving & praise*

3 He will take delight in obeying the Lord.
He will not judge by mere appearances,
or make decisions on the basis of hearsay.

4 He will treat the poor fairly,
and make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and order the wicked to be executed.

5 Justice will be like a belt around his waist,
integrity will be like a belt around his hips.

MICAH 5:1-5

1 As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah— from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past. 3 So the Lord will hand the people of Israel over to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth. Then the rest of the king's countrymen will return to be reunited with the people of Israel. 4 He will assume his post and shepherd the people by the Lord's strength, by the sovereign authority of the Lord his God. They will live securely, for at that time he will be honored even in the distant regions of the earth. 5 He will give us peace.

LUKE 2:1-20

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to register all the empire for taxes. 2 This was the first registration, taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 Everyone went to his own town to be registered. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David.

5 He went to be registered with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him, and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Concluding with:



Give us ears to hear, O God,
and eyes to watch,
that we may know your presence
in our midst
during this holy season
of joy and peace
as we anticipate the coming of
Jesus Christ,
the Prince of Peace.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



COLLECT (CLOSING PRAYER)

O God of Elizabeth and Mary,
you visited your servants
with news of the world's redemption
in the coming of the Savior.

Make our hearts leap with joy,
and fill our mouths
with songs of praise,
that we may announce
glad tidings of peace,
and welcome
the Christ in our midst.

—

May the God of hope fill you
with all joy & peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope.

Amen

8 Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: 11 Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth
peace among people with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they hurried off and located Mary and Joseph, and found the baby lying in a manger. 17 When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, 18 and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said.

19 But Mary treasured up all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean. 20 So the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-20

9 For this reason we also, from the day we heard about you, have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects—bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. 13 He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

LISTEN

Silent Night

-Crystal Nicole & 116, 2018

Heavenly Hosts

-Joel & Luke Smallbone, 2020

He Shall Reign Forevermore

-Matt Maher & Chris Tomlin, 2018

REFLECT



Shepherds

-John Agust Swanson, 1985



Adoration Of The Shepherds

-Juan Bautista Maíno, ca 1620

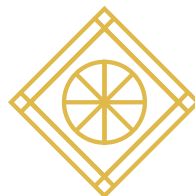
-essay by Niel MacGregor

15 He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation,
16 for all things in heaven and on earth were created in him
—all things, whether visible or invisible,
whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—
all things were created through him and for him.
17 He himself is before all things
and all things are held together in him.
18 He is the head of the body, the church,
as well as the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that he himself may become first in all things.
19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son
20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself
by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him,
whether things on earth or things in heaven.

ROMANS 5:1-11

1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory. 3 Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance, character, and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.



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☐ Pray ☐ Worship ☐ Repent ☐ Act

What would it look like for you to respond this week?

HOW TO WRITE A COLLECT

If you choose to listen to the audio version of our daily readings, you will notice that each day ends with a prayer. This prayer is traditionally called a 'collect.' In all my reading, I still can't figure out where this name came from, but a collect seems to be like the haiku of prayers. Do you remember being taught to write a haiku in elementary school? It is such a simple form that anyone can do it - there is no pressure to be profound. And yet, I am often surprised by the beauty and freedom that comes from following such a simple pattern.

Many of us learned our patterns of prayer from listening to adults pray in church. But we often struggle with the line between petition and performance when praying aloud. Reading the psalms is our first indication that prayer does not need to be pretty or pious; it is best when it is honest. So, I invite you to try writing a collect, not as art to perform but as a response to your reading and reflection.

A collect is often prayed in a worship gathering after people have read scripture and spent time in silence or aloud praying for individual concerns. The collect then wraps up the gathering and the time of worship. If you did a quick search, you could find collects for different everyday concerns and based on individual scriptures. There is no set length, rhythm, or rhyme to a collect, but there are a few common elements.

I was first led to see this pattern by Pádraig Ó Tuama in his book "Daily Prayer with the Corymeela Community." He points out these 5 common elements of a collect.

ELEMENTS

- 1 Address God
 - 2 Rehearse part of the story of God
 - 3 Name my desire - just one desire
 - 4 Offer my reason for desiring this
 - 5 Echo the name/story of God
- Amen (or word of praise)

EXAMPLE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you stretched out your arms of love on
the hard wood of the Cross that everyone
might come within the reach of your
saving embrace:
So clothe us in your Spirit
that we, reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you to
the knowledge and love of you;
for the honor of your Name.
Amen.

PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

I grew up convinced that pre-written prayers were boring and less genuine than spontaneous prayers. But as anyone sitting around a thanksgiving table waiting for an uncle to pray knows, sometimes spontaneity and length are not a good indicator of how meaningful a prayer is.

Interestingly, I held this opinion confidently while also having never really read many of the prayers offered by our brothers and sisters throughout history. When I did encounter them in college, I was humbled to realize that my own prayers, while genuine, were limited by my own lack of experience. It turned out that the things I 'spontaneously' prayed about were far more repetitive than any book of common prayer.

If you are new to praying a pre-written prayer, I invite you to start with praying the Lord's Prayer. Being bored with it is like being bored with the ocean - I suspect that our boredom is user error. In my experience, if I am bored, it is often because I don't know enough to be curious. So I am including here some extra resources that have been instrumental in my own journey of re-discovering and growing my capacity for curiosity and engagement with this prayer that Jesus taught his own disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray.

LEARN:

The Bible Project: [Why Did Jesus Give Us Prayer](#)
Travis Osborne - [When You Pray](#) sermon series

LISTEN:

Jonathan Roomie - [Lord's Prayer](#) (Aramaic)
Christopher Tin - [Baba Yetu](#) (Swahili)
Angel City Chorale & Jimmer Bolden, [Baba Yetu](#) (Swahili)
Friar Alessandro, [Pater Noster](#) (Latin)
Dayroyo Boulus, [Abun d'Bashmayo](#) (Suryoyo)
Pe Echad I [פה אחד](#) (Hebrew)
Matt Maher, [The Lord's Prayer -It's Yours](#)
Kings Return, [The Lord's Prayer](#)
Andrea Bochelli, [The Lord's Prayer](#) (lyric video)