

Friday, December 23rd, Day 27 – Matt Hilton

(Welcome)

Hello, and welcome to Vespers for the Advent season. My name is Matt Hilton, and today is the 27th day of Advent, Friday, December 23rd. Today also marks our last Vespers devotional together. Tomorrow is Christmas Eve, and we will be sharing a virtual service celebrating the last day of Advent, anticipating Christ's birth on Christmas Day.

(Centering)

As we begin our time of reflection and devotion, let's take a moment to center ourselves.

Make sure other distractions are quieted for the next few minutes.

If possible, bring your body to complete rest.

As you become aware of the stillness around you, focus on your breathing as we inhale and exhale slowly together.

Breathe in, exhale.

Breathe in, exhale.

Breathe in, exhale.

(Responsive Prayer)

As we continue in prayer together, speak the words of this responsive prayer.

LEADER – God of love

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your steadfastness

LEADER – Christ of hope

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your promises

LEADER – Spirit of peace

RESPONSE – May this season remind us of your comfort

LEADER – As it was from the beginning,

RESPONSE – So now, may the joy of this season burn in our hearts

TOGETHER – Amen

(Lectio Divina)

For the next few moments, let's dwell in God's Word.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 9.

I will read the passage through 3 times - each time with a different way for you to experience the scripture.

(1st Reading)

Hear the Word of God

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

(After 1st Reading Prompt)

As we read through the 2nd time, take notice of what word or phrase stands out to you and hold onto it. If you would like to write your reflections down or tell someone else your findings, feel free to pause the video after this 2nd reading.

Passage Repeated

(After 2nd Reading Prompt)

If a word or phrase caught your attention, what, if anything, do you sense God saying to you about the PEACE that Advent brings? Listen for that invitation during this final reading. If you would like to write your reflections down or tell someone else your findings, feel free to pause the video after this 3rd reading.

Passage repeated

(After 3rd Reading Prompt)

As we conclude this time of reading together, let me offer these questions as a challenge to be aware of as you go about your Advent season:

How are justice, authority, and righteousness connected to peace?

How does reality of the Advent bring PEACE in your own life?

(Benediction)

Thank you for spending time with us today. As you continue this week, may the PEACE of the Advent resound in every part of your life. If you will, speak these words with me as we conclude:

ALL – Lord of hosts,
 Who breathed the words of creation and
 spoke the Word of the Incarnation
Ignite our imaginations
Fill us with awe and wonder
Prepare the way for the Messiah, within and without
For unto us, a Child is born
Unto us, Emmanuel is given
Bring us Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace
As we receive, once again, Your greatest gift to the world
Amen, and amen

(Conclusion)

Please join us tomorrow, Christmas Eve, for a virtual candlelight service.
May God go with you through this season of PEACE.
Blessings, dearly beloved.