

Time For Christmas: Isaiah
Scripture Reading Isaiah 9:1-7
Week of Joy through Celebration

As you enter into prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.

Be Still.

Introduction & Hymn of Advent.

God, we kneel before you with humility. Your incredible glory, which we only catch flashes of, astounds us and changes us. We enter this time of prayer with no agency of our own, not one thing that holds a candle to your holiness and magnificence. Give us peace as we pray, and grant us focus to hear your voice in this space.

Augustine of Hippo lived in the 4th and 5th century, and is considered a saint in Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox Traditions. Martin Luther, the head of the Protestant Reformation, also held Augustine in very high regards as a father of the church. He is widely considered to be the second most influential Christian, after Paul of Tarsus. The following meditation is excerpted from Saint Augustine's Confessions:

Imagine if all the tumult of the body were to quiet down, along with all our busy thoughts about earth, sea, and air;

if the very world should stop, and the mind cease thinking about itself, go beyond itself, and be quite still;

if all the fantasies that appear in dreams and imagination should cease, and there be no speech, no sign:

Imagine if all things that are perishable grew still – for if we listen they are saying, We did not make ourselves; he made us who abides forever – imagine, then, that they should say this and fall silent, listening to the very voice of him who made them and not to that of his creation;

so that we should hear not his word through the tongues of men, nor the voice of angels, nor the clouds' thunder, nor any symbol, but the very Self which in these things we love, and go beyond ourselves to attain a flash of that eternal wisdom which abides above all things:

And imagine if that moment were to go on and on, leaving behind all other sights and sounds but this one vision which ravishes and absorbs and fixes the beholder in joy; so that the rest of eternal life were like that moment of illumination which leaves us breathless:

Would this not be what is bidden in scripture, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?

(Augustine of Hippo, Confessions Bk. 9, Ch. 10)

Pause and Pray.

Jesus, I am here because I want to experience You. As I meditate on this passage, draw to mind those things that You would have me become more aware of. Stir my thoughts by the Holy Spirit. Center my heart and mind on Yourself. Use your Word to draw my heart to You. Amen.

The reading for today is from Isaiah, chapter 9 verses 1 through 7.

9 ^[a]Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

REFLECT.

Comments on the scripture and prompts to meditate and/or pray, with 10 second pauses.

We wait at the ready to come into our full inheritance of this prophecy, as we fully claim our place as the children of God.

Even now, the promises of our Lord are being kept! Remind us, O God, of the ways that you are shattering the heavy yokes we bear. (PAUSE)

We doubt your prophecies when we are frightened, O God. Shake us from our disbelief! Show us the places where we are stubborn listeners. (PAUSE)

We have such a great inheritance ahead of us! O God, grant us simple visions of what ultimate joy awaits us... (PAUSE)

PAUSE, PRAY AND ASK.

Prompts to meditate and/or pray, with 10 second pauses after each prompt.

God, we wish to celebrate the joyous moments of our lives with You! Let us drink deeply of Your satisfaction in Your own work! (PAUSE)

God, our hearts and minds are promiscuous, and wish to run from affair to affair. Grant us clarity in the holy spirit—our relationship with You is our only whole and holy relationship! (PAUSE)

God, we long to join You on the battlefield! Let us lie excitedly in wait, ready for your signal to rescue our own brothers and sisters! (PAUSE)

YIELD.

We return now to the text:

9 ^[a]Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

³You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you

as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.
⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.
⁶ 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.
⁷ 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.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

Dear Lord,

Our joy can mean little to us—but let it mean more! We live and breathe not for our own good, but for that of your kingdom! Remind us that the world is not upheld by our own moods, our own systems. We receive incredible rest in finding that our joy comes from without us! Your glory shines brightly, blinding all else from our eyes! We rejoice in your name, O God! We rejoice in your brilliant, awesome name! We rejoice in your name, O God! We rejoice in your brilliant, awesome name! Amen.

I've been using prayers associated with the week of advent, lighting of the advent calendar.