

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE

DAILY ADVENT READINGS & PRAYERS

All prayers and readings also available on www.thecommonrule.org

DAILY KNEELING PRAYERS

MORNING: *Father, I pray that I would enter this day as your Son entered the world, full of love and hope. Amen.*

NOON: *Jesus, I pray that I would be present in my work as you were present in this world, full of humility and service. Amen.*

BEDTIME: *Holy Spirit, I pray that I would be at peace in my rest knowing that you came to bring peace to the world, and will one day bring rest to all things. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE READINGS

First Week of Advent | Dec. 1-7

Sunday	John 1:1-9
Monday	Matthew 4:12-17
Tuesday	Isaiah 60:1-3
Wednesday	John 3:16-21
Thursday	Ephesians 5:6-14
Friday	Isaiah 60:19-22
Saturday	"Oh Realm of Light"

Second Week of Advent | Dec. 8-14

Sunday	Psalms 119:105-106
Monday	Mark 1:1-3
Tuesday	Luke 15:6, 9 & 32
Wednesday	Isaiah 40:1-11
Thursday	Isaiah 55:1-8
Friday	Luke 3:1-6
Saturday	"Joy to the World"

Third Week of Advent | Dec. 15-21

Sunday	Eph. 2:13 & Lev. 26:13
Monday	Luke 4:16-21

Tuesday	Romans 15:4-13
Wednesday	Zephaniah 3:14-17
Thursday	Psalms 27:1-4
Friday	Isaiah 11:1-10
Saturday	"O Holy Night"

Fourth Week of Advent | Dec. 22 - 25

Sunday	Luke 2:25-33
Monday	Luke 2:8-15
Tuesday	"O Come O Come Emmanuel"
Wednesday	Matthew 1:18-23

New Year's Readings | Dec. 22 - 28

Thursday	Revelation 21:1-5
Friday	Proverbs 29:18
Saturday	"All Things New"
Sunday	Romans 12:1-2
Monday	Psalms 115:2-8
Tuesday	1 Sam. 7:12 & "Come Thou Fount"
Wednesday	Revelation 22:20

Week 1 | December 1-7

LIGHT & DARK

In the shadow of darkness, a light has dawned.

Sunday | December 1 John 1:1-9 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

There is light. There is dark. We do not live in a neutral world. There is life. There is death. And it is in the light that we find our life. Yet often we live as if the stakes are not high. As if good and evil do not war within us, and around us. Pray, and ask God whether you are aware of the light and the dark and the difference.

Monday | December 2 Matthew 4:12-17 Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."* From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

It is us, and it is our neighbors, who are the people dwelling in darkness. The beginning of Advent is to admit that we live in the valley of the shadow of death. That things are not well. We may be numb to it, we may be blind to it, but we must wake up to it. To wake up means to realize that reality is a dim shadow of what it could be and what it ought to be. Yet in this shadow of death, a light has dawned. Pray and ask God to help you feel (not just see, but feel) that you live in a time and a place that is not OK, and that this time and place needs many things, but more than anything else, it needs the presence of Jesus.

Tuesday | December 3 Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Light has the quality of attraction. Light a candle at your table or desk today, see if it does not make the space more welcoming. Fires and lights are places of warmth and conversation. They are the places where light happens. This is what the glory of God is: a light so warm and bright that we all want to come to it. This is the light we are waiting for. Pray this morning that you and your community would be like the light of Jesus, the kind of warm presence that draws the outsider in.

Wednesday | December 4 John 3:16-21 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Light is comforting, but it also exposes. It reveals the truth, even when the truth is unpleasant. It is in the light of Jesus that we finally see what is actually in us, who we really are and what we really do. But do we want to see? Do we want that darkness exposed? Confess this morning what needs to be exposed in your life. Then tell that to a trusted friend and ask them to pray with and for you.

Thursday | December 5 Ephesians 5:6-14 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them, for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

The way of secret lives and inner darkness is death. But that is why Christ came, to shine the light that we might rise again from this darkness. Yesterday you confessed something, today is the day to turn and leave it. Today is the day to see that to walk as a child of light is to walk out of that former darkness and into the light. Pray that God would lead you out of that thing today. And know that whenever you walk to the light, you are walking towards Christ - He is with you, and that is always the better place to be.

Friday | December 6 Isaiah 60:19-22 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever, the shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified. The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.

It will not always be like it is now. This constant wrestling with yourself and the world, the ever-present tangle with darkness. There is a day coming where all that will be put to rest. You may have never named it, but this is the day you have spent your whole life longing for. Everyone has. This day of eternal morning, where the presence of God is with us and we are with each other, this is what the whole world longs for. Advent reminds us that the world has a future. Because of Jesus, that day is actually coming. Pray that you would long for nothing short of that, because nothing short of that is worth your longing.

Saturday | December 7 Oh Realm of Light

Oh realm of light! whose morning star to Bethlehem's manger led the way. Not yet upon our longing eyes shines the full splendor of thy day. Yet still across the centuries fall, both strong and sweet, our Lord's command. And still with steadfast faith we cry, "Behold, the kingdom is at hand!"

Oh realm of Heav'n! whose dawn began with love's divine, incarnate breath, our hearts were slow to understand the lessons of that life and death. Yet though with stammering tongues we tell redemption's story, strange and sweet. The world's Redeemer, lifted up shall draw the nations to His feet.

Oh realm of peace! whose music clear swept through Judea's starlit skies, still the harsh sounds of human strife break on thy heavenly harmonies. Yet shall thy song of triumph ring in full accord, from land to land, and men with angels learn to sing, "Behold, the kingdom is at hand!"

LOST & FOUND

We have a home. We have a way home.

Sunday | December 8 Psalms 119:105-106 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules. I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word! Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules. I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

It is hard to know where to go, it is hard to know what to do. This confusion is one of the hallmarks of being human. We do not always know the way. We spend so much of our life confused. But the word of God is a light to our feet - it shows us the way so that we can walk straight - so that we can go somewhere worth going. This Psalm is in part about scripture, yes. Indeed there is so much wisdom in scripture for showing us the way in life. But it is ultimately about Christ, the Word made flesh. He is the Word to end all words. He is the path. He is the one that turns us from being lost, to being found. Pray that you would not walk alone in your confusion, but that by studying the word of God and relying on the Word made Flesh you would find the way, the truth and the life.

Monday | December 9 Mark 1:1-3 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

To live in the world is to live in the wilderness, in exile. But there is a way home, and there is Someone to lead us home. Have you ever considered the remarkable fact that someone has gone before you? That even when you cannot quite see it yet, Someone has prepared the way for you. Even in your wilderness and your confusion, there is a God who goes before you, who protects you, who guides you. Even in the strange places, you are not alone. Because Jesus (whose name is Emmanuel - God with us) walks before us, creating a path. Pray a prayer of thankfulness, that even when you think you are lost, God is with you, making a way.

Tuesday | December 10 Luke 15:6, 9 & 32 He calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' / 'She calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' / 'It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'

Yesterday you considered that God is with you, and that he goes before you and makes a way for you. But there is more than that too. He does not just walk before you, he has actually come out to find you! Over and over, Jesus tells stories that describe him as the crazed lover, the one that defies all logic and reason to go out and find something that he loves. Did you know that it is you? It is you that he goes out to find. Pray and ask God to open your eyes to the remarkable reality that he loves you, individually and specifically. He loves you enough to leave everything, come and find you, and take you home.

Wednesday | December 11 Isaiah 40:1-5 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Think of a child lost in a crowd, and then think of the comfort that follows when she is found by her parent. Think of the overwhelming peace that settles in when you know that you were lost, but now you are found.

This is what God is bringing the world. We are lost in our selfishness, lost in our depression, lost in our injustice, lost in our wars, lost in our wilderness of a world. We have gotten ourselves lost and it is nobody's fault but ours. And yet - God will find us. And God will bring comfort. He will hold us like the Father that he is, and tell us that the war is over. That all has been forgiven, and that all will be made well. Spend a moment of silence, and try your best to envision yourself found and in his arms.

Thursday | December 12 Isaiah 55:1-8 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.” “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

We spend our lives searching after so many things. Spending money where we think it will buy us happiness, spinning our time away trying to feel like we are worth something. “Why do you do it?” God gently says to his people. “Here I am. I am everything you are looking for, and more. Come find me.” It is somewhat incredible that the mysterious God who created everything from nothing reveals himself. He can actually be found. Today, think of how you can look for him. Look for him in the ordinary moments and places of your day. Walk around in the wonder that God can be found.

Friday | December 13 Luke 3:1-6 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiber'i-us Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Every valley. Every mountain. All flesh. We have spent time this week considering that God came looking for you, and loves you, and can be found by you. But now consider the vastness of God's advent. He came so that every valley may be filled and every mountain brought low. He came so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Consider God's vast love for all things, and ask yourself - How can you be a part of that? How can you be a part of God's renewal of all things? Pray and ask how you can be a part of shining his light into a dark world, how can you be a part of bringing his joy to all the world.

Saturday | December 14 Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love.

Week 3 | December 15-21
FREEDOM & SLAVERY

"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

Sunday | December 15 **Ephesians 2:13 & Leviticus 26:13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. / I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so you can walk with your heads held high.

We were far off, and we were slaves. But by coming near, God has set us free. Consider that running away from the presence of God always lands us in slavery to some other master - a master who does not love us. But when we are near to God, he is the light burden, and the easy yoke. Under his gentle hand we are finally free to be who we were made to be. Put another way - in his presence, we finally become fully human. Fully alive. We finally walk with our heads held high. Pray that you would see that apart from him, you are always enslaved, but in the nearness of God, you are finally free.

Monday | December 16 **Luke 4:16-21** And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Yesterday we considered how the nearness of God sets us free, but today, consider that he has come not just for you but to set the whole world free. When he teaches in the temple, Jesus talks about proclaiming liberty to captives and giving sight to the blind. Jesus loves the vulnerable and the oppressed and he has come to set them free from all the forms of sin and death. Pray today that you would turn your head to the vulnerable, just as God has turned his head to you. We were the vulnerable and the oppressed until God's nearness set us free, so think today on how you can serve those in need as God served you when you were in need.

Tuesday | December 17 **Romans 15:4-13** As it is written, "Therefore I will praise thee among the Gentiles, and sing to thy name"; and again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; and again, "Praise the Lord, all Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; and further Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, he who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles hope." 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.

God is coming to be our king, our ruler. You may balk at this suggestion of his authority, but think about how we actually long so deeply for a good ruler. We spend so much of our time lamenting and complaining and suffering under people in power who act selfishly and unjustly. But Jesus will be a better king, the one for whom we have always longed. He is the king who sets captives free to be human and flourish. Pray today that you would long for no other kingdom but the kingdom of God, and that you would put your hope in no other king but Jesus the king.

Wednesday | December 18 **Zephaniah 3:14-17** Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

The king we are waiting for is a king unlike any we have ever known. He is strong, he is tender, he is just, he is forgiving. Here God is a warrior, a judge, a protector and a lover. He fights for us, he pronounces us innocent, he comforts us, and he sings over us. This is the only king who deserves your service. Pray that he would reign in your life.

Thursday | December 19 Psalms 27:1-4 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

In an age of darkness, it is helpful to admit that there really is a battle raging. Evil exists, and suffering is real. Whether physically or mentally, whether from human enemies or spiritual enemies, to live in the world is to be assailed and assaulted. We trip and we fall not just because we are fallen and sinful people (though we are), it is also because evil wants to ruin us and take us captive. Unless we understand this, we will not see how marvelous it is that we have a strong God who has come to fight our battles. Here the Psalmist acknowledges the fight of life, but takes refuge in God his protector. Even more, he sees that the end of the battle will not just be victory - but beauty. He will be with His God - and so will we. Pray that today you would acknowledge the battle, see God as your protector, and trust that the end will be beautiful.

Friday | December 20 Isaiah 11:1-10 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.

This week we have considered that apart from God, we are enslaved, but he has come to set us free. Further, we have seen that he has come to set the whole world free, and deliver us from evil and suffering. We have seen that this is not just an image of victory, but of beauty and comfort. Here, in this passage, is a vision of the end we are hoping for: a king who ushers in an eternal peace, where wolves lay with lambs and lions with calves. This is a vision of what is to come, and it will be glorious.

Saturday | December 21 O Holy Night

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining, It is the night of the dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'till he appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices! O night divine! O night when Christ was born. O night, O holy night, O night divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming; with glowing hearts by his cradle we stand. So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming, here come the wise men from Orient land. The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger, in all our trials born to be our friend. He knows our need, to our weakness no stranger! Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend! Behold your King! Your King! Before him bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another; his law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, and in his name all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we; Let all within us praise his Holy name! Christ is the Lord, then ever! ever praise we! His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim! His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!

HE IS COMING.

On longing for the King to come.

Sunday | December 22 Luke 2:25-33 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

For Simeon, that advent of the Messiah is the very culmination of his life. This is all he has hoped for. He can now leave life in peace. Like Simeon, in Advent we celebrate that God has come near to a people who were far. Like Simeon, in Advent, we practice yearning for this salvation to come. Meditate on what it would be like to yearn for this. Confess what you actually spend your life yearning for.

Monday | December 23 Luke 2:8-15 And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was 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!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

This morning, try to imagine the shepherds. You've heard this story so much that the extraordinary has become normal. But think again. These were normal shepherds, doing their normal job, on a normal night, when suddenly something happens that changes everything, and changes it forever. This is the core truth of the incarnation. Jesus - who is the King we have been waiting for, who is the Way we have been looking for, who is the presence of God made manifest - changes everything! He comes into our ordinary and makes it extraordinary. Nothing will be the same again, because Emmanuel is coming.

Tuesday | December 24 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Now that you have spent weeks reading and pondering what it means that God is coming, read this old song with new eyes and ears. Pray that you would feel the longing it communicates:

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny. From depths of hell Thy people save, and give them victory o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high, and cheer us by Thy drawing nigh. Disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home. Make safe the way that leads on high and close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.


O come, Adonai, Lord of might, who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height. In ancient times didst give the law in cloud and majesty and awe. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Wednesday | December 25 Matthew 1:18-23 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).

The story of the Bible is a story of presence. We began in the garden with God, then sin drove us out of God's presence. But the Old Testament is a story of God tracking down his people, and showing them his presence is tents and tabernacles, in pillars of smoke and columns of flame. He wants to be with us again. And that story culminates in today - Christmas, because today we celebrate that the presence of God has found us again, in the form of a baby boy. This is Emmanuel - God with us. In the body of a small baby, the presence of the infinite God who set the stars in motion is here with us. This is a fantasy tale unlike any other. This is a story you couldn't make up if you tried - and it's true. God is near, God is here - and nothing will ever be the same.

Merry Christmas!

***There are more readings for Christmas morning in the
Christmas Morning Liturgy, on the next page
or online at www.thecommonrule.org/advent-xmas-morning-liturgy.***



***For continued Scripture Before Phone
readings up through January 1st,
see the "All Things New" New Year's Devotional
which continues after the Christmas Morning Liturgy .***