

Willerup “Spiritually Close” 2020 Advent Devotions – Week Four And Christmas Day

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Are You Ready for Christmas?

Isaiah 9:6-7

*⁶For 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. ⁷Of
the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.*

John 3:16

*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that
whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Are You Ready for Christmas?

On this 4-week Advent journey, our church family’s devotions have covered a wide range of perspectives using writing, photography, and hand crafts, all guided by scripture and carols. Participants came in a wide range of ages, as well- from 10 to 89.

The pandemic laid a pall over our lives and changed our usual ways of celebrating Christmas. In years past, we have been complacent, or stuck in a rut, or have down-played the significance of Christmas by putting ourselves at the center -

- Buying the best gifts possible (or not possible, but we spent the money, anyway), so as not to let down family or friends, or in order to increase our status in the eyes of others,
- Having family gatherings or workplace parties that showcase beautiful decorations and special foods that earn us compliments,
- Buying new, fashionable apparel and jewelry meant to impress those who see us.

In so many ways, Christmases past have been about us receiving things and praise- not Jesus, the one whom the holiday is actually about. It took the pandemic to shut us down, so that we could open up and see.

In our devotional sharing about getting ready for Christmas, we have been encouraged to:

- Be open to something different, something more
- Be expectant and alert
- See Joseph and Mary as real people coping with birth in a stable
- Feel the peace Jesus offers
- Be surprised, amazed, even terrified and awestruck at the birth of our Savior
- See the signs of peace, joy, and hope all around us
- Understand that Jesus came for the poor and insignificant like the shepherds, as well as for the wealthy and powerful like the Magi, and for everyone else in between.
- Recognize that He gave us the gifts of Light, Life, and Love

So, what were we doing when we made Christmas all about us?

The Wisemen brought gifts TO Jesus. That was the original way to celebrate His birth- come to Him, bring Him gifts. But how can we do that? He is royal- the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. What can we possibly give Him that would be fitting, that would be priceless to Him?

He wants us- our whole selves.

Jeremiah 29: 11-13. *For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. Then you will call upon Me, and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear and heed you. Then you will seek Me, inquire for, and require Me- as a vital necessity- and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.* (The Amplified Bible)



Romans 10:9-10- *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.* (NIV)

Is your HEART ready for Christmas?

Read on to see what some members of our congregation have to share that my help us...
Contributed by Judy Vasby

God's Gift to Us

This Christmas season isn't about Santa Claus, elves or gifts we exchange. It is about the birth of a little baby swaddled in cloths. He is the Savior of the world. *He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

This year has been a hard year on all of us. God has been with us all through all of these trials. This Christmas season, please remember that Jesus was born that we would trust Him for all or our needs.



Remember this Christmas season that the gift we receive is Eternal life through Jesus Christ. That little baby that was born over 2000 years ago is our Savior.

O come, all ye faithful, let us adore Him. Jesus, to thee be all glory given.

Amen and Amen. Halleluiah!

Contributed by Cris Trieloff

The Time to Pray

Did you know that Charlie Pride recently died? He wrote the song "I'll fly away", which is my favorite song to sing anywhere, but especially when we are out at the Bible Camp. He was a sharecropper's son and an African-American Country Singing Legend. I was reading an article about his life, and another one of his famous songs is "Did You Think to Pray," which reminded me NOW, IS THE TIME TO PRAY.

Pray constantly. If not for yourself and your loved ones, then pray for your neighbors and elderly in your community. I work at a hospital in Madison and daily I see people dying of COVID...I don't know these people, but I know they have family who love them and didn't know this was their last day or hour or the last holiday they would spend together. It is heart wrenching.

My sister and a friend walk around their community every Monday praying for the people living in the houses they pass by. Now is the time to pray. "Did You Think to Pray" today for your

neighbors and everyone you meet? Pray for comfort; pray for patience; pray for peace; pray for souls to accept Jesus; pray for the chaplains who get to see patients and meet their families.



This is the week that we celebrate the birth of Jesus, God's only Son, who came to give eternal life to all who receive Him and internal peace that goes beyond our understanding. We are surrounded by people who need that comfort and assurance during these Covid-gripping days, who need to feel the hope and love that arrived that holy night. The need is great...

[Did You Think to Pray Today?](#)

Contributed by Lori Woolever

COME

The year 2020 has been a year of STAY! Stay Home! Stay Safe! Stay in your vehicle! Stay 6 feet apart!

How nice to hear the invitation to COME! My online dictionary's first definition of the word "come" is *to move or travel toward or into a place thought of as near or familiar to the speaker*. We might picture a friend inviting us to join them in their home for conversation or a child at a park inviting another child to join in on a game of soccer.

I like the word "come." As I ponder the word *come* and where I have heard it used, I think of:

Come, an invitation to join in *with* others!

Come, YOU personally are invited!

Come, just as you are!

Come, see what GOD has promised!

Come, adore HIM the promised SAVIOR!

Come, see the love HE has for YOU!

Come, believe it!

Come, begin a relationship with the ALMIGHTY GOD!

Come, take hold of LIFE in CHRIST!

Come, live eternally!



This Christmas and everyday know that you are invited to "Come, follow me." by the Savior of the World, into a personal relationship! Come as you are! No mask or vaccination required!

Contributed by Janice Lund

COME, LET US ADORE HIM

Merry Christmas!! This week we celebrate the birth of a baby born long ago that is still alive in our hearts today!!!

This week's verse and hymn are all about babies. This year I can relate!! Mary and I had a few things in common-

- Having a baby under stressful circumstances - check.
- Extra uncertainty about the future and what is in store- check.
- Lots of snuggly time with an adorable infant - check.

However, the extra pressure of carrying God's son, giving birth in a barn, etc. I can't even imagine. The song *O Come All Ye Faithful* is such a powerful hymn celebrating the birth of our Savior. It's one of those songs that just begs to be belted out in a deep rich voice for all to hear. The line that I keep coming back to is the chorus, "O Come Let Us Adore Him." We sing it over and over, but do we really take time to think about what it actually means and looks like to Adore Him?



Holding a baby... The sweet baby smell, looking into their big eyes, soaking in their innocent glow as they gurgle and smile up at you. I don't know about you, but I could sit there for hours. Our little girl is 5 months old now and growing fast. When she's in my arms gazing up at me, it's easy to get lost in adoration. The chaos of her brothers wrestling in the next room fades into the background. Time seems to stand still. And I'm overwhelmed by the sweetness, the innocence.... I'm in awe of this little creature.

All that lay ahead of her and the life she will live, as well as the perfectness of these quiet moments when she is still so small and dependent. Adoring... sweet time spent in adoration.

Adoration. If we look adoringly at someone.... their brilliance and radiance shines in such a way that all else fades, or seems less important. In that moment they have our full attention. We are focused on them, actively admiring them, giving them our undivided attention.

O Come Let Us Adore Him

Baby Jesus, born in a stable, born the King of angels. He will be called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*. When do we stop and take time to adore Him? To turn our whole selves toward Jesus and let the craziness of the season and the stressfulness of this last year fade into the background as we soak in His radiance and allow ourselves to be filled with His peace. And knowing that God sent this precious baby into the world to save us from our sins, to one day die on the cross for us. How much more urgently and feverishly do we embrace and hold onto this Savior born in Bethlehem?

O Come, Let Us Adore Him.

Maybe it looks like this:

- Stopping and giving God our full attention: Carve out 5,10, or 30 minutes each day to drop your Christmas to-do lists and spend time in prayer, reading scripture, etc.

- Worshipping Him and giving thanks for the beautiful gift He has given - His Son, Savior of the World. Here's an idea: Stand outside on a crisp night and sing *O Come All Ye Faithful* to the heavens.
- Soaking in His unfailing love: Find a quiet place, nestle by the fire, or literally take a soak in a nice hot bath! Close your eyes and relish how much your God loves you!!
- Opening our hearts and allowing the wave of God's powerful presence to give us peace and strength: Push out the stress and worry and make room for peace and God's assurance that He's here with you!!

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

O Come Let Us Adore Him - Jesus- The Savior of the World!

Contributed by Emily Klingbeil

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem,
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
3. Child, for us sinners, poor and in the manger,
We would embrace thee with love and awe.
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy
morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

