



Abide in me,
and I in you

John 15:4a



ADVENT

Unto us a Son is Given

ADVENT: UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN

Edition 1

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Dear Friend,

We are excited you are joining us for this spiritual retreat. We know how impactful this time can be with the Lord. As a result, we are humbled and honored to be a part of what God will do in your life on retreat.

Our prayer is that you will follow the Holy Spirit's lead, and that you will embrace all that God has for you in this time. Come and find rest and refreshment in the Lord. Come and take refuge in Him.



PSALM 34:8 (NIV)

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

God's grace and peace be with you,

Spiritual Maturity Team

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Advent



*The birth of Christ is the central event in the history of the earth—the very thing
the whole story has been about.*

— C. S. Lewis

The Story



INTRODUCTION

We all know the story of Christmas. A baby born in Bethlehem is the Savior of the world. We can picture Mary overwhelmed by God's call on her life. We can imagine the scene as the angels declare the good news to the shepherds. Yet, it is often because we know the story so well that we no longer recognize what an amazing story it is. We also have become distracted from the story. Amidst the decoration, presents, and meals we forget what Christmas is truly about.

This advent we celebrate Jesus' arrival two thousand years ago. We open our hearts anew to the great story of Christmas. It is a story of hope, peace, joy, and love.

HOPE



JEREMIAH 33:14-16

¹⁴ *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.*

¹⁵ *“In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land.*

¹⁶ *In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.”*





PEACE



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 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.*



JOY



LUKE 2:8-14

⁸ *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

¹³ *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

¹⁴ *“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his
favor rests.”*





LOVE



JOHN 3:16-17

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. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.





Advent Exercise

INTRODUCTION

Today you will spend some time in prayer, opening your heart to the gift of Jesus. In the exercise below you will spend time contemplating the amazing story of Christmas. You will also explore what it means to find hope, peace, joy, and love in God alone. Conversely, you will explore the ways in which you have been looking for hope, peace, joy, and love apart from God.

Follow each step of the prayer exercise. You will find space below each step to write your reflections. Take your time. Be honest with God. Receive his love.

Begin your time in prayer by opening your heart to God. What is consuming your heart right now? What things are you worried about this holiday season? What has your life been focused on as you prepare for Christmas? Perhaps you are worried about buying presents. Perhaps you are anxious about seeing your extended family. Take 10 to 15 minutes to prayerfully consider where your heart is at this advent season. You may use the provided to write down your reflections.



Read . . .



LUKE 2:1-7

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

You have undoubtedly heard this story many times. Take a few minutes to hear the story afresh. Imagine the scene. Picture Mary, having long awaited the birth of this child she knew to be the Messiah. What was she thinking? What was she feeling? Imagine Joseph, uncertain at first, but now equally committed to God's great plan of salvation. What is going through his mind in this moment? Remember, all of the prophecies pointing to this day. Remember, the angel's appearance to Mary and Joseph. Take a few minutes to take the scene in. Focus your heart on what Christmas is all about. Write your reflections below.





Spend 20 minutes prayerfully considering where you have been looking for hope, peace, joy, and love in your life. Perhaps you have been looking for hope in a job promotion. Perhaps you have been looking for joy in a romantic relationship. Where have you been searching for hope, peace, joy, and love? Use the sections below to prayerfully consider each area individually. Remember, you can be honest with God. He knows you fully and loves you unconditionally. You may use the space below each section to write your reflections.



Hope



Peace



Joy



Love



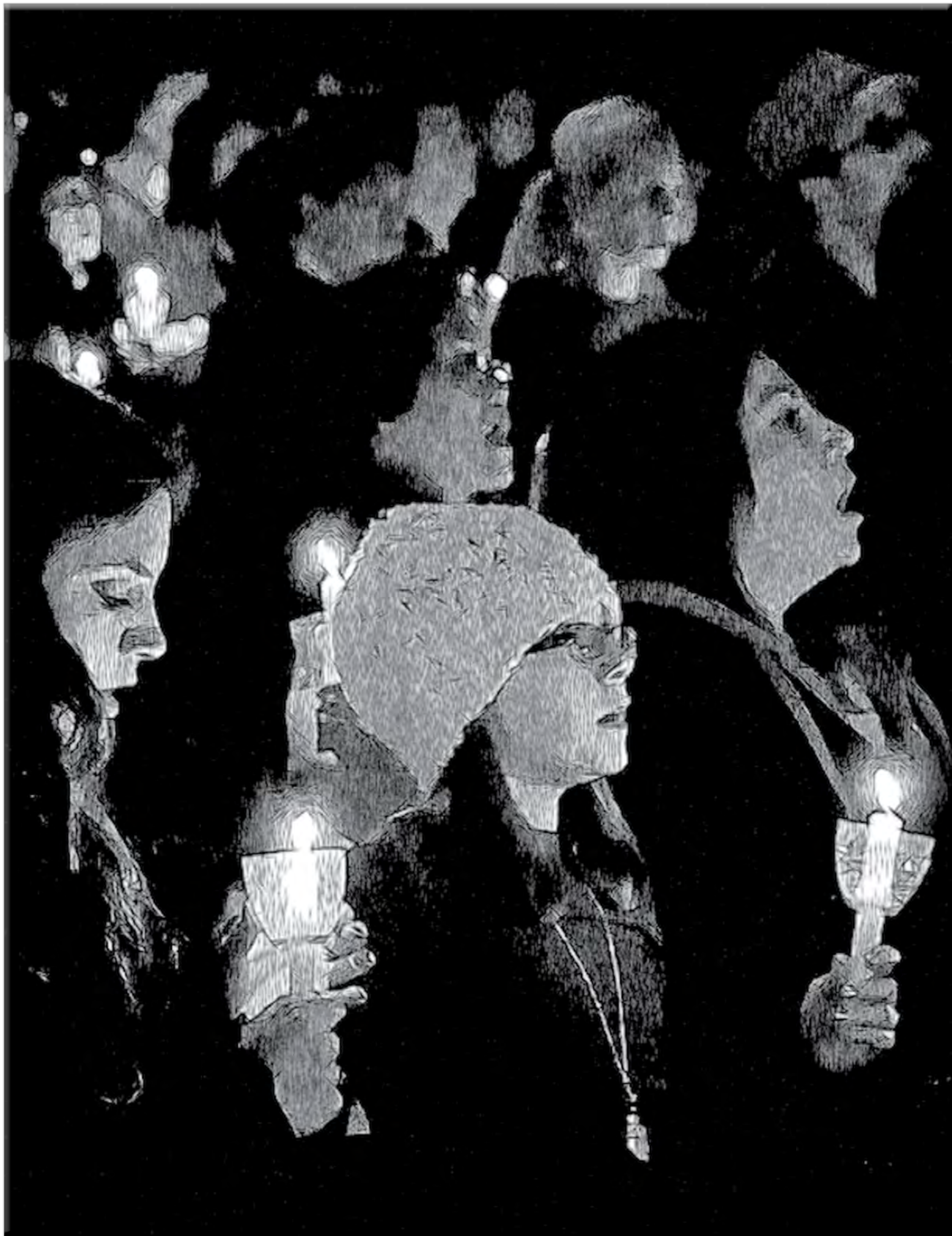


Spend a couple of minutes slowly re-reading the Scripture passages. What do these passages tell us about where our hope, peace, joy, and love are really found? Christmas is a reminder that God has given us all we need in his Son, Jesus. Write down any reflections you have during this time in the space below.



In closing, take a few minutes to thank God for the hope, peace, joy, and love that you now have in Jesus. Give him praise for the gift of his Son two thousand years ago. This baby born in a manger was the hope of the world. He was our peace. His birth was the ultimate cause of joy. In him, God had poured out his love on all of creation in a radical way. Celebrate God's goodness this advent season. You may want to speak words of praise out loud. You may want to write out a prayer of praise. Or, perhaps you will draw a picture. Express your praise to God in whatever way you feel is most fitting.





Advent Worship

INTRODUCTION

As you close your retreat take time to praise God for the gift of his Son. Praise him for the hope, peace, joy, and love that are found in him alone.

Below you will find a series of Christmas worship songs coupled with passages of Scripture for reflection.



O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer,
Our spirits by Thine advent here,
And drive away the shades of night,
And pierce the clouds and bring us light.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All people in one heart and mind,
Bid envy strife and quarrels cease,
Fill all the world with heaven's peace,
And be yourself our King of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

SOURCE: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, translated by John Mason Neale and Henry Sloane Coffin of the Ecclesiastical Latin text “Veni, veni, Emmanuel.” Its origins are unclear. The text is based on the biblical prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 that states that God will give Israel a sign that will be called Immanuel (Lit.: God with us).



LUKE 1:46-55

⁴⁶ *And Mary said:*

*“My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”*



O Holy Night

O holy night!

The stars are brightly shining,

It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

'Til He appear'd 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!

O hear the angel voices!

O night divine,

O night when Christ was born;

O night divine,

O night, O night Divine.

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!

O praise His Name forever,

His power and glory evermore proclaim.

Fall on your knees!

O hear the angel voices!

O night divine,

O night when Christ was born.

SOURCE: *O Holy Night*, Adolphe Adam (1847), ed. John Sullivan Dwight, *Dwight's Journal of Music*, 1855. The text reflects on the birth of Jesus and of humanity's redemption.



LUKE 2:13-14

¹³ *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

¹⁴ *“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*



Angels We Have Heard On High

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o’er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!



Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark the herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled”
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”
Hark the herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”

Source: *Angels We Have Heard On High*, original French title *Les Anges dans nos Campagnes*. Translated into English by Bishop James Chadwick for *Holy Family Hymns*, 1860. The song commemorates the story of the birth of Jesus Christ found in the Gospel of Luke, in which shepherds outside Bethlehem encounter a multitude of angels singing and praising the newborn child.

Source: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739.



ISAIAH 9:1-5

¹ 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.



O Come All Ye Faithful

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.

Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God, 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.

For He alone is Worthy,
For He alone is Worthy,
For He alone is Worthy, Christ the Lord

We'll give Him all the Glory,
We'll give Him all the Glory,
We'll give Him all the Glory, Christ the Lord

SOURCE: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*, English author by Frederick Oakeley, edited by Francis Wade, Cantus Diversi, 1751.

Next Steps

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Journaling

Are you intimidated by journaling? Wondering how journaling fits in as part of the Christian life? Searching for some practical steps on how to incorporate this into your life?

This retreat is designed to help you look at journaling as a spiritual practice and teach you how to begin. Download the free guide at www.saddleback.com/retreats.



Silence & Solitude

Feeling drawn to silence and solitude with God, but unsure how to practice this in the midst of a busy life? Wondering how this fits in as part of the Christian life? Searching for some practical steps on how to incorporate silence and solitude into your life?

In the Bible we often see Jesus going off by himself to pray. Yet, today we struggle to regularly enter into the practice of silence and solitude. This retreat, guides you through what it means to develop this spiritual practice in your own life.

Download the free retreat booklet at www.saddleback.com/retreats.





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