

ADVENT CHALLENGE

Bible readings for busy people



2022

Advent Readings for busy people

We invite you this Advent to take a deep breath each morning:
breathe in the Holy Spirit,
breathe out the pre-Christmas stress.

Then read the day's short reading and prayer.

Take a moment or two to hold each day's reading and prayer in your hearts.

Then re-enter your day with the peace of the Lord.

The Promise

Day 1 – Monday Nov 28th

Genesis Chapter 12:1-4

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him

Prayer: Lord God, Ancient of Days, thank you that you hold eternity in your care. Help us to trust in your promise that all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Amen

Day 2 – Tuesday Nov 29th

Jeremiah 31:31 & 33

'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah....

...'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the reassurance of your promise that you will be our God and we will be your people. We pray that you will help us to hold that promise in our hearts. Amen

Day 3: Wednesday Nov 30th

Malachi 3:3

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, during this Advent season, help us to seek the Lord with delight in the sure and certain knowledge that indeed He is coming. Amen

Day 4: Thursday Dec 1st

Malachi 3:6-7

For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

Prayer: Eternal and unchanging God, we thank you that no matter how many times we turn away from you, like the father of the Prodigal Son, you welcome us back with loving arms. Amen

Day 5: Friday Dec 2nd

Galatians 3:26-29

..for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Prayer: God of all peoples, thank you that we are all one in Christ Jesus and a fulfilment of your great promise made to Abraham. Help us to be welcoming to everyone - this Christmas and always. Amen

Day 6: Saturday Dec 3rd

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Prayer: Lord God, we know that we and all the human race have done so many things that deserve condemnation. We are overwhelmed that you still love us so much that you gave your Son to save us. Help us to walk in the warmth of that love today and every day. Amen

Day 7: Sunday Dec 4th

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for your promise that you will always view us as your children – and that, as a child, we will always be forgiven our mistakes and be a loved and cherished member of your eternal family. Amen

The Light of the World

Day 8: Monday Dec 5th

John Chapter 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word*, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

* Jesus

Prayer: Lord of Light, light our steps this Advent that we may see you in our daily lives. Amen.

Day 9: Tuesday Dec 6th

Isaiah 9:2

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

Prayer: Lord of Light, we pray that you will dispel the darkness in our lives. Help us to work towards the day when there will "be no more death or sorrow or crying". Amen

Day 10: Wednesday Dec 7th

John 1:6-9

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, help us to put aside our busyness and breathe in excitement and anticipation of your true light coming into the world. Amen

Day 11: Thursday Dec 8th

Isaiah 42:5-7

This is what God the Lord says – the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;

I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you

to be a covenant for the people

and a light for the Gentiles,

to open eyes that are blind,

to free captives from prison

and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.'

Prayer: Lord of all life, majestic creator God, we praise and bless you for the gift of your Son to be a light to all peoples: to open our eyes to truth, to free us from the prison of sin and to release us from the darkness of evil. Amen

Day 12: Friday Dec 9th

John 1:9-13

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus help us to recognise your true light in our daily lives and to receive you in our hearts, that we may know that we are beloved children of God. Amen

Day 13: Saturday Dec 10th

Philippians 2:14-16

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.'

Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to become Your light in the world – to shine like stars in the sky – so that those around us may not hear us grumbling or arguing, but see Your love in our lives. Amen

The Prince of Peace

Day 14: Sunday Dec 11th

Isaiah 9:6 -7

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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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 for ever.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, we worship you. We yearn for the time when your justice and righteousness will reign in all the earth. Amen

Day 15: Monday Dec 12th

John 1:14-18

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the Son who is close to the Father's heart, we thank you that you make Him known in this world. Help us to receive your grace, and glorify your Name. Amen

Day 16: Tuesday Dec 13th

Isaiah 42:1-4

'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.'

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to seek your justice, follow your teaching and put all our hope in you. Amen

Day 17: Wednesday Dec 14th

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we worship you: the image of the eternal God; the first and the last; above all things; the source of all peace. We worship you. Amen

Day 18: Thursday Dec 15th

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, name above all names, we pray that we will always have the will and the courage to confess to those around us that you are Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen

Obedience

Day 19: Friday Dec 16th

Luke 1 26-29

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Prayer: Lord God, help us to listen for when you are speaking to us and seek to understand your will in our lives – no matter how perplexing it may be. Amen

Day 20: Saturday Dec 17th**Luke 1:30-33**

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Prayer: Father God, help us not to be afraid but to trust in your love and wisdom. Amen

Day 21: Sunday Dec 18th**Luke 1:34-38**

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Prayer: Father God, we find Mary's obedience astonishing. Show us your plans for us, we pray, and help us to learn to obey you with a willing heart. Amen

Day 22: Monday Dec 19th**Matthew 1:18-25**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for Joseph's selfless willingness to put aside his pride and obey. Help us to follow his example and seek the good of others before ourselves. Amen

Day 23: Tuesday Dec 20th

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

Prayer: Eternal God, loving Father, thank you that you have plans to prosper and not harm us, plans to give us hope and a future. Help us to see your will for our lives and trust in your good purpose. Amen*

* Jer 29 v.11

Joy to the World

Day 24: Wednesday Dec 21st

Luke 1:46-53

And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Prayer: Mighty God, Lord of all life, as we draw near to Christmas, help us to know your Majesty and to worship you with joy in our hearts. Amen

Day 25: Thursday Dec 22nd

Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to recognise your presence in our daily lives and in the lives of those around us and to leap for joy at the sound of your voice. Amen

Day 26: Friday Dec 23rd

1 Samuel 2:1-2

Hannah prayed and said,

'My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my God.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.

'There is no Holy One like the Lord,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

Prayer: Lord God, we rejoice in you – there is none beside you. We put our joyful trust and hope in the One on whom we can depend. Amen

Day 27 Saturday Dec 24th - Christmas Eve

Luke 2 :1-11

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Prayer: Lord God, as we read this familiar story, help us to feel in our hearts this Christmas, and always:

the joy of Mary,

the awe of the shepherds,

the humble obedience of Joseph and

the deep peace of knowing Your salvation and Your eternal love. Amen

Join us to Celebrate Christmas @ St Mary's

Saturday 17th December - **Carol Service** 6pm

Saturday 24th December - **Christingle** 4pm

Saturday 24th December - **Midnight Communion** 11pm

Sunday 25th December - **Christmas Day Celebration** 10am

for more details: www.stmaryshanwell.org.uk/Christmas



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