



St. Francis' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 17, 2023

The Season of Advent takes its name from the Latin words adventus, meaning "coming" or "visits." Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. This is an unusual year, as Christmas Eve is a Sunday. So we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent in the morning and Christmas Eve in the evening of the same day.

For Christians, Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. We prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of our Jewish ancestors for a Messiah and our own longing for forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning.

PRELUDE 10:30am only

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

At 10:30am, the lighting of the wreath begins with the cantor singing.

Leader Advent is a time to prepare.

People **Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the way for our God.**

Leader During Advent we prepare our eyes to see the light of Christ.

People **Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the way for our God.**

Leader During Advent we prepare our hearts to receive the Word of Christ.

People **Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the way for our God.**

Leader During Advent we prepare to share the joy of Christ.

People **Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the way for our God.**

Leader During Advent we prepare to embrace the promise of Christ.

People **Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the way for our God.**

The congregation listens as prayer is offered.

All join in singing.

(1st Sunday) We wait in
(2nd Sunday) We watch in
(3rd Sunday) We pre - pare in
(4th Sunday) We praise with
(Christmas Eve) We pro - claim with

hope_____ for the morn - ing Light,
for the love of Christ to il - lu - mi - nate_____ the night._____

We wait with
We watch with
We pre - pare with
We praise with
We pro - claim with

joy_____ for the Sav - ior's birth;
we wait in
we watch in
we pre - pare in
we praise with
we pro - claim with

hope for peace on earth.

Presider God in heaven, as we continue our Advent journey, help us to be people who wait for you, watch for you, and through your Spirit be prepared for you. Continue to shine your light in our lives as we look at all you have done, all you are doing, and all you will do. Amen.

THE GREETING

Presider Blessed be the Holy One whose coming we await,

People **And blessed be the One who comes to set all people free. Amen.**

THE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Deacon Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence is kept for a time.

People **Most merciful God,**
 we confess that we have sinned against you
 in thought, word, and deed,
 by what we have done,
 and by what we have left undone.
 We have not loved you with our whole heart;
 we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
 We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
 For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
 have mercy on us and forgive us;
 that we may delight in your will,
 and walk in your ways,
 to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Presider Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

People **Amen.**

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever.

People **Amen.**

WE HEAR THE SACRED STORIES *Seated*

THE FIRST LESSON

Reader

A reading from the Book of Isaiah.

61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.
The Word of the Lord.

People

Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM OF THE DAY

HOLY IS YOUR NAME

At 8am, the congregation joins in the refrain. At 10:30, congregation sings the entire psalm.

Verses



1. My soul is filled with joy
2. I am low - ly as a child,
3. I pro - claim your pow'r, O God!
4. To the hun - gry you give food,
5. In your love you now ful - fill



as I sing to God, my Sav - ior.
but I know from this day for - ward
You work won - ders for your ser - vants;
send the rich a - way with noth - ing.
all you prom - ised to your peo - ple.

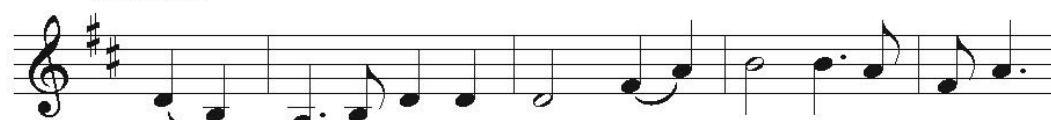


You have looked up - on your ser - vant,
that my name will be re - mem - bered,
you have scat - tered the proud - heart - ed,
In your mer - cy you are mind - ful
I will praise you, God, my Sav - ior,

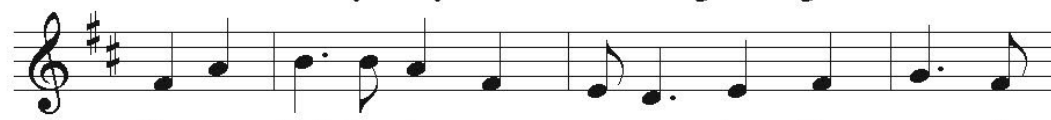


you have vis - it - ed your peo - ple.
and the world will call me bless - ed.
you have lift - ed up the low - ly.
of the peo - ple you have cho - sen.
ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy.

Refrain



And ho - ly is your name through all gen - er - a - tions!



Ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy to the peo - ple



you have cho - sen, and ho - ly is your name!

THE SECOND LESSON

Reader	A reading from the first letter to the Thessalonians.	5:16-24
	Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.	
	May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.	
	The Word of the Lord.	
People	Thanks be to God.	

GOSPEL SEQUENCE *Stand* **O COME, O COME EMMANUEL**

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst give the law,
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!*

THE GOSPEL

Deacon	The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.	1:6-8,19-28
People	Glory to you, Lord Christ.	

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are

you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

GOSPEL SEQUENCE *Stand* **O COME, O COME EMMANUEL**

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!*

SERMON

MICHAEL BOOKER

After the sermon, silence is kept for a time.

THE ADVENT CREED

Our Advent Creed seeks to affirm our trust in God found in Jesus Christ.

Deacon Let us stand and affirm our hope in the light of Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God?

People **We believe and trust in God, eternal, almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Deacon Do you believe and trust in Jesus Christ?

People **We believe and trust in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all, the Only Begotten One; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived and loved among us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; who descended to the dead, and on the third day rose again; Jesus, Our Savior, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the loving God, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Deacon Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

People **We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic and apostolic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Deacon O God whose Messiah's coming we await, keep us awake and alert to watch for the signs of your coming. As the fig tree puts forth its leaves and the portents of the new day dawns, keep us awake and alert for the second advent of Christ our Savior. "May the Light of Christ; ***shine in our hearts.***"

People's response **Shine in our hearts.**

The Presider offers a concluding prayer.

Presider Shine forth O God of Hosts, encourage, embolden and energize your people to keep awake and alert to the coming of Jesus the Christ, that he, at his second Advent, may find us ready to greet him and eager to serve those in need; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PEACE

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's peace.

We invite you to extend the peace of God to those in the congregation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS *Seated*

GATHERING AT CHRIST'S TABLE

We return with thanksgiving the gifts God has given us. This includes bread and wine of the earth and financial offerings from our labor.

MEDITATION HYMN *8:00am*

PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY PERFORMED BY IN CLOUDS AND STARS

**O COME TO SET US FREE
ST. FRANCIS' SINGERS**

Come, o come, our Savior, Messiah; come, o come, our Savior, Messiah;
Come, o come, our Savior, Messiah; come to set us free, hallelujah! Come to set us free.
We await Your holy birth, Jesus, light of the world; King of kings and Lord of lords,
Come to set us free, hallelujah! Come to set us free.
Prince of Peace, He is God, our redeemer; Prince of Peace, He is God, our redeemer;
Prince of Peace, He is God, our Redeemer; come, to set us free, hallelujah! Come to set us
free.
Glory to the Son of God, Light and life of the world;
King of kings and Lord of lords, come to set us free, hallelujah! Come to set us free.
O come, O come, Emmanuel! Come, O come, our Savior, Messiah!
O come, O come, Emmanuel! Come, O come, our Savior, Messiah!
O come to set us free! Emmanuel! O come to set us free! Emmanuel!

As the gifts are brought forward, the congregation stands.

Presider	Everything comes from you, O God,	1 Chronicles 29: 14
People	and we have given you only what comes from your hand.	

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING *Stand*

Presider	The Lord be with you.
People	And also with you.
Presider	Lift up your hearts.
People	We lift them to the Lord.
Presider	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People	It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Presider It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.
Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever proclaim the glory of your Name:

Say at 8am:

People **Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

SANCTUS 10:30am

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Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Blessed the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Music: From *A Community Mass*; Richard Proulx (b. 1937). Copyright © 1971, 1977 GIA Publications, Inc.

Presider We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

People Therefore, according to his command,
We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;

Presider And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with St. Francis, St. Clare, and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and for ever.

AMEN



A - men.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Presider And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People **Our Father, who art in heaven,**
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Presider breaks the consecrated Bread. A period of silence is kept.

Presider Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

People Therefore let us keep the feast.

FRACTION ANTHEM *At 8am, spoken*

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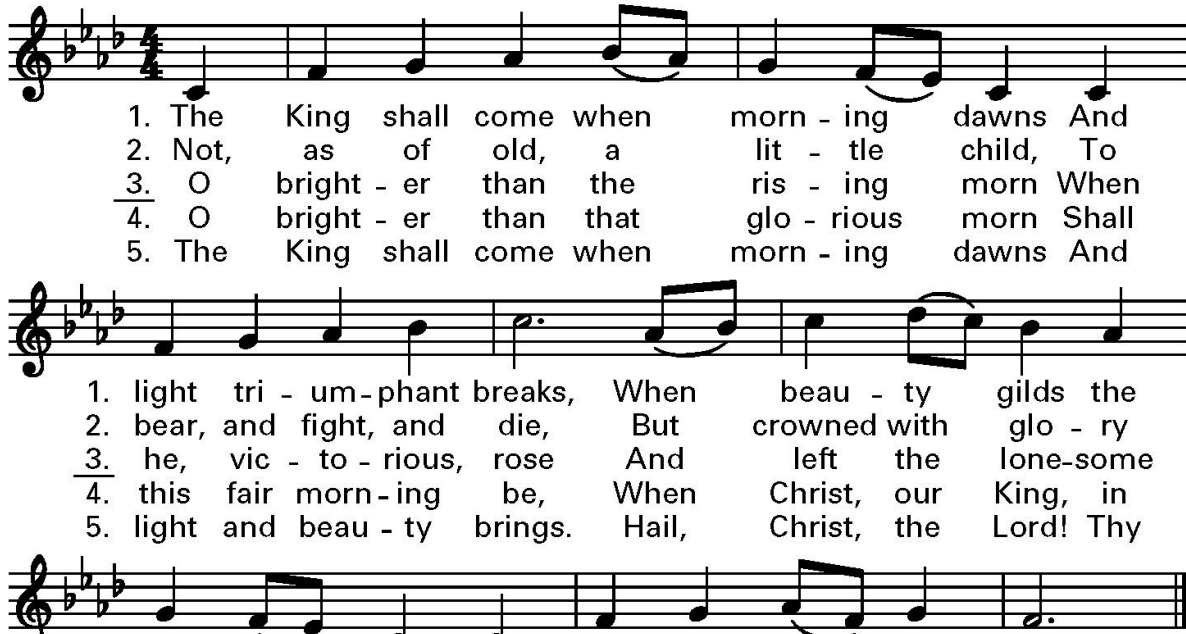
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:
have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sins of the world: have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

Music: From *New Plainsong*; David Hurd (b. 1950). Copyright © 1981 GIA Publications, Inc.

Presider The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Our bread is gluten-, dairy- and nut-free. This Eucharistic table does not belong to the Episcopal Church or to St. Francis'. This is God's table, and all are welcome. In the Episcopal Church, we receive both the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Jesus. If you choose not to receive communion, please come forward and cross your arms over your heart to receive a blessing.

COMMUNION HYMN 10:30am THE KING SHALL COME WHEN MORNING DAWNS



1. The King shall come when morn - ing dawns And
2. Not, as of old, a lit - tle child, To
3. O bright - er than the ris - ing morn When
4. O bright - er than that glo - rious morn Shall
5. The King shall come when morn - ing dawns And

1. light tri - um - phant breaks, When beau - ty gilds the
2. bear, and fight, and die, But crowned with glo - ry
3. he, vic - to - rious, rose And left the lone - some
4. this fair morn - ing be, When Christ, our King, in
5. light and beau - ty brings. Hail, Christ, the Lord! Thy

1. east - ern hills And life to joy a - wakes.
2. like the sun That lights the morn - ing sky.
3. place of death, De - spite the rage of foes.
4. beau - ty comes, And we his face shall see!
5. peo - ple pray: Come quick - ly King of kings.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

After all have received communion the Presider says

Presider God is with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

People **Eternal God, whom we await, you have fed us with the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation: keep us ever watchful, that we may be ready to stand before the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

BLESSING

Presider Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing ...

People **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN *8:00am*

STAY AWAKE BE READY

Stay awake, be ready.

You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.

Stay awake, be ready. The Lord is coming soon!

Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord is coming soon!

Go back. Tell John all that you have heard and have seen me doing.

Go back. Tell John, the wonders that you see.

Alleluia, alleluia! the wonders that you see.



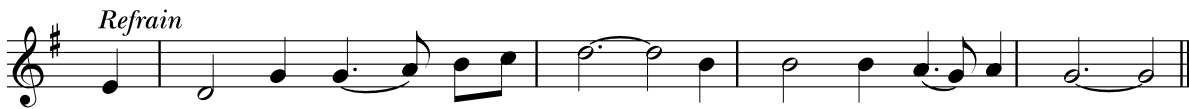
1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
 2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
 3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
 His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
 His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
 Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
 All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.



Refrain
 Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

DISMISSAL

Presider Our worship is ended, our service in the world begins. As we await our coming Savior, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE *10:30am only*

THE LITURGIES OF ADVENT

There are several significant shifts in the four liturgies of Advent.

Color: Because the Episcopal Church's roots are in the Church of England, we follow the old English tradition of using blue as the color of Advent. Blue is the color of Blessed Mary, and Advent is all about Mary as we await with her the arrival of the Incarnate God. Blue is the color of hope, expectation, confidence, and anticipation. These are all adjectives which describe the season of Advent.

Seating: Advent is a penitential season, a time of expressing sorrow and regret for having done wrong. Therefore, in our seating, we face one another to confess our need for God and the ways in which we have not loved God and our neighbors with our whole hearts.

Liturgy: The liturgy also highlights that Advent is a penitential season. We confess that we have "sinned against God in thought, word and deed" at the beginning of our liturgy. We do not sing the Gloria nor do we say "Alleluia." We open our liturgy singing of our expectant waiting for God.

Lectionary Readings:

The Advent readings, and what they say to us, are well explained in this excerpt from "Naming Where We Are" by Debie Thomas.

"Like some of you, I didn't grow up observing Advent. Since my childhood church didn't follow the liturgical calendar, my family went straight from Thanksgiving turkeys and pumpkin pies to Christmas trees and 'Jingle Bells' — one consumer feeding frenzy pressing hard into the next. It's only in the past few years that I have come to value what Nora Gallagher calls the "counterweight" of liturgical time. "One time set against another." It's only recently that I have embraced the stark, hard-edged gifts Advent provides. As ever, I believe we need these gifts desperately.

According to the week's readings, we enter this first season of the Christian New Year — if we dare enter it at all — in lamentation. Eschewing all forms of denial, polite piety, and cheap cheer, we allow the radical honesty of Scripture to make us honest, too. "How long will you be angry with your people's prayers?" asks the Psalmist in desperation. "Because you hid yourself, we transgressed," cries Isaiah. During Advent, we stop posturing and pretending. We quit trying to make God's hiddenness okay. We shed our greeting card assumptions about the Divine. We get real.

"Our world is not okay," is what these Advent readings declare in stark, unflinching terms. God's apparent absence is not fine — it hurts. It hurts so much we can barely breathe from the agony of it. We are surrounded by evil and suffering, we're not sure our faith can endure what our eyes reluctantly witness each day, and though we long for a Savior to rend the heavens and come down, the very ferocity of that longing is wearying our souls. Hope itself has become a grind.

The first gift of Advent is the permission to tell the truth, even if that truth is laced with sorrow. We are invited to describe life "on earth as it is," and not as we mistakenly assume our religion requires us to render it. Into our surrounding cultures of denial and spin, apathy and hedonism, we are called to speak the whole truth: we need God. We need God to show up. We need God to stay. We need God to love, hold, deliver, and restore us. We were created for intimacy with a just, gracious, and profoundly compassionate Savior, and when that intimacy is missing, we suffer.