

Seasons in the Key of Worship

devotions for

Advent



Reflect: Advent – Week 4

Scripture Readings*: Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45, Psalm 80 (NRSV)

The Old Testament reading expresses hope for Israel – and for the world. Micah speaks of a coming ruler who would fulfill all the ideals about kingship, which the people of Israel held dear. Micah's prediction went as far as to identify that the birthplace of the Messiah would be in Bethlehem.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that with the coming of the Messiah, the sacrificial offerings, required by Levitical law, would no longer be necessary or efficacious. The incarnation of Christ would become the means by which the ultimate sacrifice of Christ's body upon the cross established a new covenant.

From the beginning of time God has been at work in bringing forth Jesus Christ so he could be one with his people. Now, in this final annunciation story, found in our Gospel reading according to Luke, God's purpose will be fulfilled. God will act to save his people. The child is to be born to a humble peasant girl, Mary, for the saving of the world! We join our voices with Mary's song: "...For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His Name."

Celebrate: Make Ready Your Heart and Home

Advent means "to come." It is a season of waiting... preparation... expectation. We remember His coming 2,000 years ago and we wait for His return when He gathers His people into a joyful embrace. In the meantime, we celebrate the coming of Christ in our own hearts and lives through His daily visitation. We recognize Jesus as the light of the world – sharing His light with those who still cry, "O come, o come, Emmanuel..."

In the 16th century, the Spanish began lighting bonfires along the roads and churchyards to guide people to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. European missionaries introduced the tradition to the native people of Mexico, along with a reenactment of the story of Mary and Joseph's search for lodging in Bethlehem. Over the centuries, the tradition spread throughout Mexico and the Southwest with bonfires replaced by candlelit brown paper bags called luminarias.

Today, luminarias are a Southwestern holiday tradition of hospitality. Lighting sidewalks, walls, rooftops, and driveways, these simple decorations offer the warm light of welcome, guiding travelers and guests to their destination.

Gather your family and make your own luminarias to light the way to holiday gatherings. Simply fold down the edges of brown paper lunch bags and fill with enough sand to weigh them down. Place a votive candle in each bag and line your driveway and sidewalk with them before lighting.

Prayer when lighting the fourth candle of the Advent wreath – "God of light, we're thankful for the peace of Christ which graces our hearts and home. Make us instruments of your peace in our world, shining your light into the hearts of those around us. Blessed be God forever. Amen."



*Readings are from the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C

This seasonal gift resource is provided by Music Serving the Word Ministries Phoenix, Arizona www.musicservingtheword.org