

week one: Preparation

Advent Guide

chris moss

www.chrismoss-author.com

INITIAL PREPARATION

The Prophet Isaiah: Our Advent Guide

During Advent, I found it best to spend some time—even just five minutes each day—with the following traditional Scripture readings referenced below. All are from the book of Isaiah. They emphasize the need for repentance and salvation for the people of Israel, and by extension, the transference of salvation from Israel to all nations.

As we listen to Isaiah call Israel to repentance, it is advised that we think about those things that we do that separate us from God, and resolve to remove them from our lives this Advent, to prepare our souls for the coming of Christ.

I ask myself questions like: Is there anything I can control that gets in the way of God speaking to me? Is there any hurt, habit or hang-up I have that I need continued help with to finally be free? If I were free, how would I use that experience to prepare for the coming of Jesus?

[The selection of readings below comes from the Office of the Readings, part of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer of the (Catholic) Church. I intentionally changed the translation to The Message so it is more easily understood by those with a limited exposure to Advent, like me.]



BLESS THE WREATH

READ OUT LOUD

9:1-5 (NIV)

Now the Lord says, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past I stumbled 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— The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Step 2: Read this:

Patriarchs at Advent: why are they Important?

Advent is symbolized by a wreath with four candles: three are purple, one is rose. In the first week, we light a purple candle to represent the “patriarchs.” Examples of patriarchs are Abraham, Moses, Noah—the list of Bible story heroes from Sunday School goes on. Why do we celebrate them? Because they waited.

Abraham waited for the promised child into his old age.

Moses waited for deliverance for the Hebrews through multiple plagues and insults.

Noah waited for God to destroy the earth and restore it while his entire community mocked him.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come...So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” Matthew 24:42, 44

As we reflect on the Patriarchs at Advent, we realize they waited...for a really long time. Their stories teach us to wait, with hope, with conviction, and with obedience to God's instructions. And none of them ever laid eyes on Him.

How have we prepared for Christ to return?

Are there changes or priority shifts we need to make in our lives?

As spiritually single wives, how do we wait and watch till the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to our husbands?



First Sunday of Advent (Isaiah 1:1-18)



Light one purple candle and read this out loud:

On the first Sunday of Advent, we read the beginning of the book of Isaiah, where the prophet speaks in the voice of God and calls the people of Israel to repentance, to prepare them for the coming of His Son. But the Old Testament people of Israel also represents the New Testament Church, so the call to repentance applies to us as well.

The vision that Isaiah son of Amoz saw regarding Judah and Jerusalem during the times of the kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Heaven and earth, you're the jury. Listen to GOD's case:

"I had children and raised them well, and they turned on me.

The ox knows who's boss, the mule knows the hand that feeds him,

But not Israel. My people don't know up from down.

Shame! Misguided GOD-dropouts, staggering under their guilt-baggage,
Gang of miscreants, band of vandals—

My people have walked out on me, their GOD, turned their backs on The Holy of Israel, walked off and never looked back.

"Why bother even trying to do anything with you when you just keep to your bullheaded ways? You keep beating your heads against brick walls. Everything within you protests against you. From the bottom of your feet to the top of your head, nothing's working right. Wounds and bruises and running sores—untended, unwashed, unbandaged.

Your country is laid waste, your cities burned down. Your land is destroyed by outsiders while you watch, reduced to rubble by barbarians. Daughter Zion is deserted—like a tumbledown shack on a dead-end street, like a tarpaper shanty on the wrong side of the tracks, like a sinking ship abandoned by the rats. If GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies hadn't left us a few survivors, we'd be as desolate as Sodom, doomed just like Gomorrah.

"Listen to my Message, you Sodom-schooled leaders. Receive God's revelation, you Gomorrah-schooled people. "Why this frenzy of sacrifices?" GOD'S asking. "Don't you think I've had my fill of burnt sacrifices, rams and plump grain-fed calves?"

First Monday of Advent

(Isaiah 1:21-27 & 2:1-5)

In the reading for the first Monday of Advent, the Prophet Isaiah continues to call Israel to account, and God reveals His plan to remake Israel, purifying her so that she will be the shining city on a hill, toward which men of all nations will turn. This remade Israel is the Church of the New Testament, and it is Christ's coming that remakes Her.

Light one purple candle before reading every day this week.



Oh! Can you believe it? The chaste city
has become a whore!
She was once all justice,
everyone living as good neighbors,
And now they're all
at one another's throats.
Your coins are all counterfeits.
Your wine is watered down.
Your leaders are turncoats
who keep company with crooks.
They sell themselves to the highest bidder
and grab anything not nailed down.
They never stand up for the homeless,
never stick up for the defenseless.
This Decree, therefore, of the Master, God-of-the-Angel-Armies,
the Strong One of Israel:
"This is it! I'll get my oppressors off my back.
I'll get back at my enemies.
I'll give you the back of my hand,
purge the junk from your life, clean you up.
I'll set honest judges and wise counselors among you
just like it was back in the beginning.
Then you'll be renamed
City-That-Treats-People-Right, the True-Blue City."
God's right ways will put Zion right again.
God's right actions will restore her penitents.

Monday continued

The Message Isaiah got regarding Judah and Jerusalem:
There's a day coming
when the mountain of God's House
Will be The Mountain—
solid, towering over all mountains.
All nations will river toward it,
people from all over set out for it.
They'll say, "Come,
let's climb God's Mountain,
go to the House of the God of Jacob.
He'll show us the way he works
so we can live the way we're made."
Zion's the source of the revelation.
God's Message comes from Jerusalem.
He'll settle things fairly between nations.
He'll make things right between many peoples.
They'll turn their swords into shovels,
their spears into hoes.
No more will nation fight nation;
they won't play war anymore.
Come, family of Jacob,
let's live in the light of God.



Blow out the candle

First Tuesday of Advent

Isaiah 2:6-22; 4:2-6

The Prophet Isaiah continues the theme of the judgment of Israel in the reading for the first Tuesday of Advent. Because of the sins of the people, God will humble Israel, and only the "bud of the Lord"—Christ—will shine in glory.

GOD, you've walked out on your family Jacob because their world is full of hokey religion,

Philistine witchcraft, and pagan hocus-pocus, a world rolling in wealth,

Stuffed with things, no end to its machines and gadgets,

And gods—gods of all sorts and sizes. These people make their own gods and worship what they make.

A degenerate race, facedown in the gutter. Don't bother with them! They're not worth forgiving!

Pretentious Egos Brought Down to Earth

Head for the hills, hide in the caves

From the terror of GOD, from his dazzling presence.

People with a big head are headed for a fall, pretentious egos brought down a peg.

It's GOD alone at front-and-center on the Day we're talking about,

The Day that GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies is matched against all big-talking rivals, against all swaggering big names;

Against all giant sequoias hugely towering, and against the expansive chestnut;

Against Kilimanjaro and Annapurna, against the ranges of Alps and Andes;

Against every soaring skyscraper, against all proud obelisks and statues;

Against ocean-going luxury liners, against elegant three-masted schooners.

The swelled big heads will be punctured bladders, the pretentious egos brought down to earth,

Leaving GOD alone at front-and-center on the Day we're talking about.

And all those sticks and stones dressed up to look like gods will be gone for good.

Tuesday continued

Clamber into caves in the cliffs, duck into any hole you can find.
Hide from the terror of GOD, from his dazzling presence,
When he assumes his full stature on earth, towering and terrifying.
On that Day men and women will take the sticks and stones
They've decked out in gold and silver to look like gods and then worshiped,
And they will dump them in any ditch or gully,
Then run for rock caves and cliff hideouts
To hide from the terror of GOD, from his dazzling presence,
When he assumes his full stature on earth, towering and terrifying.
Quit scraping and fawning over mere humans, so full of themselves, so full of
hot air! Can't you see there's nothing to them?

And that's when GOD's Branch will sprout green and lush. The produce of the
country will give Israel's survivors something to be proud of again. Oh, they'll
hold their heads high! Everyone left behind in Zion, all the discards and rejects
in Jerusalem, will be reclassified as "holy"—alive and therefore precious. GOD
will give Zion's women a good bath. He'll scrub the bloodstained city of its
violence and brutality, purge the place with a firestorm of judgment.
Then GOD will bring back the ancient pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire
by night and mark Mount Zion and everyone in it with his glorious presence,
his immense, protective presence, shade from the burning sun and shelter
from the driving rain.



First Wednesday of Advent

Isaiah 5:1-7

In this passage for the first Wednesday of Advent, Isaiah discusses the vineyard that the Lord has built—the house of Israel. The passage calls to mind Christ's parable of the vineyard, in which the vineyard owner sends his only son to oversee the vineyard, and the workers in the vineyard kill him, foreshadowing Christ's own death.

I'll sing a ballad to the one I love, a love ballad about his vineyard:

The one I love had a vineyard, a fine, well-placed vineyard.

He hoed the soil and pulled the weeds, and planted the very best vines.

He built a lookout, built a winepress, a vineyard to be proud of.

He looked for a vintage yield of grapes, but for all his pains he got junk grapes.

“Now listen to what I'm telling you, you who live in Jerusalem and Judah.

What do you think is going on between me and my vineyard?

Can you think of anything I could have done to my vineyard that I didn't do?

When I expected good grapes, why did I get bitter grapes?

“Well now, let me tell you what I'll do to my vineyard:

I'll tear down its fence and let it go to ruin.

I'll knock down the gate and let it be trampled.

I'll turn it into a patch of weeds, untended, uncared for— thistles and thorns will take over.

I'll give orders to the clouds: ‘Don't rain on that vineyard, ever!’”

Do you get it? The vineyard of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies is the country of Israel.

All the men and women of Judah are the garden he was so proud of.

He looked for a crop of justice and saw them murdering each other.

He looked for a harvest of righteousness and heard only the moans of victims.

Add a little bit of body text



First Thursday of Advent

Isaiah 16:1-5; 17:4-8

In this reading for the first Thursday of Advent, we see Isaiah prophesying the purification of Old Testament Israel. The Chosen People have squandered their inheritance, and now God is opening the door of salvation to all nations. Israel survives, as the New Testament Church; and over her sits a just judge, Jesus Christ.11.5

“Dispatch a gift of lambs,” says Moab, “to the leaders in Jerusalem—
Lambs from Sela sent across the desert to buy the goodwill of Jerusalem.
The towns and people of Moab are at a loss,
New-hatched birds knocked from the nest, fluttering helplessly
At the banks of the Arnon River, unable to cross:
‘Tell us what to do, help us out!
Protect us, hide us!
Give the refugees from Moab sanctuary with you.
Be a safe place for those on the run from the killing fields.’”
“When this is all over,” Judah answers, “the tyrant toppled,
The killing at an end, all signs of these cruelties long gone,
A new government of love will be established in the venerable David tradition.
A Ruler you can depend upon will head this government,
A Ruler passionate for justice, a Ruler quick to set things right.”

“The Day is coming when Jacob’s robust splendor goes pale and his well-fed
body turns skinny.
The country will be left empty, picked clean as a field harvested by field
hands.
She’ll be like a few stalks of barley left standing in the lush Valley of Rephaim
after harvest, Or like the couple of ripe olives overlooked in the top of the olive
tree,
Or the four or five apples that the pickers couldn’t reach in the orchard.”
Decree of the GOD of Israel.
Yes, the Day is coming when people will notice The One Who Made Them,
take a long hard look at The Holy of Israel. They’ll lose interest in all the stuff
they’ve made—altars and monuments and rituals, their homemade,
handmade religion—however impressive it is.



First Friday of Advent

Isaiah 19:16-25

The Prophet Isaiah continues with his theme of the conversion of nations in the reading for the first Friday of Advent. With the coming of Christ, salvation is no longer confined to Israel. Egypt, whose enslavement of the Israelites represented the darkness of sin, will be converted, as will Assyria. Christ's love encompasses all nations, and all are welcome in the New Testament Israel, the Church.

On that Day, Egyptians will be like hysterical schoolgirls, screaming at the first hint of action from GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies. Little Judah will strike terror in Egyptians! Say "Judah" to an Egyptian and see panic. The word triggers fear of the GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies' plan against Egypt.

On that Day, more than one city in Egypt will learn to speak the language of faith and promise to follow GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies. One of these cities will be honored with the title "City of the Sun."

On that Day, there will be a place of worship to GOD in the center of Egypt and a monument to GOD at its border. It will show how the GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies has helped the Egyptians. When they cry out in prayer to GOD because of oppressors, he'll send them help, a savior who will keep them safe and take care of them. GOD will openly show himself to the Egyptians and they'll get to know him on that Day. They'll worship him seriously with sacrifices and burnt offerings. They'll make vows and keep them. GOD will wound Egypt, first hit and then heal. Egypt will come back to GOD, and GOD will listen to their prayers and heal them, heal them from head to toe.

On that Day, there will be a highway all the way from Egypt to Assyria: Assyrians will have free range in Egypt and Egyptians in Assyria. No longer rivals, they'll worship together, Egyptians and Assyrians!

On that Day, Israel will take its place alongside Egypt and Assyria, sharing the blessing from the center. GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, who blessed Israel, will generously bless them all: "Blessed be Egypt, my people! . . . Blessed be Assyria, work of my hands! . . . Blessed be Israel, my heritage!"



First Saturday of Advent

Isaiah 21:6-12

Isaiah's prophecy foretells the coming of Christ, and of His triumph over sin. In the reading for the first Saturday of Advent, Babylon, the symbol of sin and idolatry, has fallen. Like the watchman, in this Advent we wait for the triumph of the Lord.

The Master told me, "Go, post a lookout. Have him report whatever he spots. When he sees horses and wagons in battle formation, lines of donkeys and columns of camels, Tell him to keep his ear to the ground, note every whisper, every rumor." Just then, the lookout shouted, "I'm at my post, Master, Sticking to my post day after day and all through the night! I watched them come, the horses and wagons in battle formation. I heard them call out the war news in headlines: 'Babylon fallen! Fallen! And all its precious god-idols smashed to pieces on the ground.'" Dear Israel, you've been through a lot, you've been put through the mill. The good news I get from GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel, I now pass on to you.

A Message concerning Edom:

A voice calls to me from the Seir mountains in Edom, "Night watchman! How long till daybreak? How long will this night last?" The night watchman calls back, "Morning's coming, But for now it's still night. If you ask me again, I'll give the same answer."

All text boxes explain the concept each daily scripture is meant to convey.

All were written by:

Scott P. Richert, Catholicism Expert

<http://catholicism.about.com/od/holydaysandholidays/p/Advent.htm>



 Chris Moss