



WAITING
TOGETHER

*An Advent
Prayer Companion*

Richella J. Parham

Dear friend,

What a year this has been.

We often say that at the end of the year, don't we? And yet this year has proved to be one of the hardest many of us have ever faced. Perhaps never before have we all resonated with the promise we hear in "O Holy Night":

A thrill of hope!
The weary world rejoices—
For yonder breaks the new and glorious morn!

Bring it on, right?

And yet, as eager as we all are to move to the celebration of Christmas, perhaps this year presents a particular need for us to embrace the weeks of waiting. We're all watching and waiting for so many things this year. Let's face it: this kind of waiting takes courage—courage to remain strong and faithful, no matter how long it takes.

The people of ancient Israel knew a lot about that kind of waiting. Long promised a Messiah, they endured centuries of hardship: siege, destruction, exile, slavery, enemy occupation. They had no choice but to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises, but they did have a choice of how to approach the waiting: in resentment and despair or in confidence and hope.

As they waited, the faithful of Israel talked honestly with God about their hardships. They did not deny the truth. Instead, they expressed their grief and sorrow; they entreated God to remember them; they asked bluntly how long the waiting would take. Yet they continued to trust God, choosing to remember God's faithfulness, resolving to praise God even in the midst of dire circumstances, such as in this lament:

I remember my afflictions and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning.
Great is your faithfulness!
I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.
The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
To the one who seeks him;
It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:19-26)

Now here we are, in this season of Advent, and in a powerful way, Advent links our hearts to the hearts of God's people who waited and longed for the coming of the Messiah. As we live on this side of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, it's tempting for us to skip over the observance of waiting. After all, we know that the promised Messiah came. We live now in the light of the Incarnation.

And yet, this year especially, as we survey the carnage of a world wracked with sin and sickness, we pine for the second coming of the Savior, when everything wrong will be set right. And like the people of Israel, we must choose to wait in confidence and hope rather than resentment and despair. Like them, we must talk with God honestly.

But what if we've run out of words? When we've cried out to God over and over, when we've begged for help, when we've wept and prayed our hearts out, how do we now talk to God in this season of waiting?

If your words have run dry, I invite you to join me in borrowing the words of others. I've pulled together those words into this prayer companion.

I should tell you that for many years I believed that only spontaneous, unrehearsed prayer could be acceptable to God. Fearful of offering to God the kind of "vain repetition" that Jesus warns about in Matthew 6, I had no idea that there was a rich history of written prayers spoken by the people of God across the centuries. In recent years, I've been grateful to learn that written prayers can help focus my heart and mind. Borrowing the words of others affords me a new way to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16).

In this booklet you'll find three things to aid you as you journey through the weeks of Advent: scripture passages to read, a brief passage of scripture to ponder and perhaps memorize, and morning, midday, and evening prayers centered around the themes of each week—Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. At the end you'll find additional scriptures and prayers to guide you during the season of Christmas, celebrating the Light of the world. My hope is that your spirit will be refreshed as you read the passages of scripture to begin each week, and then you will use the daily prayer guide for each day of the week.

My suggestion for using the daily prayers is that you pause for a few moments, take a deep breath, and go as slowly as you can. Remember not just to read the words, but to address them to God. If you can, light a candle to remind you of God's presence with you. If you have an Advent wreath, you might want to light the candles each time you pray.

You'll notice that each morning's prayer includes The Lord's Prayer. If you haven't already memorized this prayer, taken from Matthew 6:9-13, I encourage you to do so. I use the familiar words of the King James Version to pray the Lord's prayer:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in 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. Amen.

But you may want to use the words from another Bible version. BibleGateway.com is a wonderful online tool for comparing the words of different Bible translations. For instance, I love the way Eugene Peterson translates the prayer in *The Message*:

Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil.
You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.

Or you might like to use Dallas Willard's paraphrase, found in *The Divine Conspiracy*:

Dear Father, always near us, may your name be treasured and loved.

May your rule be completed in us—

May your will be done here on earth in just the way it is done in heaven.

Give us today the things we need today,

And forgive us our sins and impositions on you as we are forgiving all who in any way offend us.

Please don't put us through trials, but deliver us from anything bad.

Because you are the one in charge, and the glory too is all yours—forever—

Which is just the way we want it! Amen.

You'll also see that many of the prayers are taken from the book of Psalms. Sometimes these are direct quotations; other times I have re-phrased them a bit. And each day's prayer includes quotations from old Christian hymns, many of which are no longer routinely sung, but all of which I believe are worthy of reading as prayers.

Advent is a time for making room in our hearts for Christ. In this time of worldwide uncertainty, our thoughts turn easily to worry and fret. My hope is that this prayer guide will help us to focus on God's love and provision.

As we walk together through this season of waiting, may we rest in God's goodness to all who hope in him.

With every blessing,



Richella J. Parham

I'd love to connect with you!

richellajparham.com

@richellaparham

Email: richella@richellajparham.com

First Week of Advent

Hope

Begin the week by reading these passages:

Isaiah 64:1-9

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would tremble before you!
As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil,
come down to make your name known to your enemies
and cause the nations to quake before you!
For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
who remember your ways.
But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry.
How then can we be saved?
All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have given us over to our sins.
Yet you, LORD, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.

Mark 13:24-27

“But in those days, following that distress,

“‘the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

I Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ponder this:

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Daily Prayer for the first week of Advent

Morning Prayer

I wait in hope for you, Lord; you are my help and my shield.

In you my heart rejoices, for I trust in your holy name.

May your unfailing love be with me, Lord, even as I put my hope in you. (Psalm 33:20-22)

The Lord's Prayer

Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth you have for me;

Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unlock and set me free.

Silently now, on bended knee, ready I wait your will to see;

Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Show me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 25:4-5)

Dear Lord, I want to go through this day with faith, never failing to hope in you. I need your help to do that, God, so I ask for it now. Be with me, Lord; I dare not try to take one step alone. Amen.

Midday Prayer

My soul is downcast and disturbed within me.

But I will put my hope in you, for I will yet praise you, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:5)

Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth you send so clear;

And while the message sounds in my ear, everything false will disappear.

Silently now, on bended knee, ready I wait your will to see;

Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress;

My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.

But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God." I will be strong and take heart, for I hope in you. (Psalm 31:9, 14, 24)

Lord, I am clinging to hope, but as the day progresses, I need a fresh filling of your Spirit. You've never failed me, Lord; remind me of that as I go through this day. Give me strength to persevere, I pray. Amen.

Evening Prayer

You have always been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth.

Do not be far from me, my God; come quickly, God, to help me.

Then, Lord, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. (Psalm 71:5, 12, 14)

Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere;

Open my heart, and let me prepare, love with your children thus to share.

Silently now, on bended knee, ready I wait your will to see;

Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine! (Clara H. Scott, 1895)

My soul finds rest in you, God; my hope comes from you.

Truly you are my rock and my salvation; you are my fortress, I will not be shaken. (Psalm 62:5-6)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: as this day draws to an end, I stop to remember your faithfulness. I know, Lord, that my hope in you is not unfounded, and I ask your help to keep my mind fixed on you.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen. (from *Compline, Book of Common Prayer*)

Second Week of Advent

Love

Begin the week by reading these passages:

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.
A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
"All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever."
You who bring good news to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good news to Jerusalem,
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.
He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”—
“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'”

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

II Peter 3:8-15a

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation.

Ponder this:

I John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Daily Prayer for the second week of Advent

Morning Prayer

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, Lord, for I have put my trust in you.

Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. (Psalm 143:8)

The Lord's Prayer

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here:
The storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

I will sing of your strength; in the morning I will sing of your love;
For you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. (Psalm 59:16)

Dear Lord, your love never fails, but I confess that mine does. Humbly I ask you to fill my heart with your love, casting out my fears and doubts. Grant me wisdom and courage for the living of this day. Amen.

Midday Prayer

When I said, "My foot is slipping," your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy. (Psalm 94:18-19)

Wherever he may guide me, no want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim,
He knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with him.

I give you thanks, Lord, for your unfailing love and your wonderful deeds for humankind,
For you satisfy the thirsty and fill the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:8-9)

Lord, as the day goes on, I cling to the fact that your love is unfailing, unlimited, and unstoppable. I thank you that your love is strong enough to overcome even the most dreadful of circumstances. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 17:7-8)

Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where darkest clouds have been.
My hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free;
My Savior has my treasure, and he will walk with me. (Anna Letitia Waring, 1850)

I will sing of your great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.
I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. (Psalm 89:1,2)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: you are a God of love, and I will never get over the fact that you have lifted me into your circle of love. Thank you, Lord.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen. (from Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*)

Third Week of Advent

Joy

Begin the week by reading these passages:

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.

For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants will be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples.
All who see them will acknowledge
that they are a people the LORD has blessed."
I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.

Luke 1:47-55

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

I Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Ponder this:**Romans 14:17**

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Daily Prayer for the third week of Advent

Morning Prayer

I will proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night,
For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord; I sing for joy at what your hands have done. (Psalm 92:2,4)

The Lord's Prayer

Awake, my soul, to joyful lays, and sing thy great Redeemer's praise;
He justly claims a song from me; his loving-kindness is so free!

Lord, you are my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in you, and you help me.
My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise you. (Psalm 28:7)

Dear Lord, I need a fresh infusion of joy for this day. Help me, Lord, to look for joy where it can be found: in you. I ask you to share your joy with me. Amen.

Midday Prayer

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge. I trust in you.
I will be glad and rejoice in your love, Lord, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.
You have not given me into the hands of the enemy, but have set my feet in a spacious place. (Psalm 31:1, 6-8)

Thro' mighty hosts of cruel foes, where earth and hell my way oppose,
He safely leads my soul along; his loving-kindness is so strong!
When earthly friends forsake me quite, and I have neither skill nor might,
He's sure my helper to appear; his loving-kindness is so near!

I wait in hope for you, Lord; you are my help and my shield.
In you my heart rejoices, for I trust in your holy name. (Psalm 33:20-21)

Lord, you are good. You are strong. You are near. I know that my heart can rejoice as I remember these things, but I forget so easily! Help me remember. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on you. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Lord, I cling to your promise that those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy,
that those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. (Psalm 126:5-6)

When trouble, like a gloomy cloud, has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood; his loving kindness—oh, how good! (Samuel Medley, 1782)

I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths.
You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
That my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever. (Psalm 30:1a, 11-12)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: I pray that the joy of your eternal relationship will rivet my thoughts this night.
Help me to remember that your joy never wavers and that you invite me into it.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen. (from Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*)

Fourth Week of Advent

Peace

Begin the week by reading these passages:

II Samuel 7:1-11, 16

After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.

Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you."

But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'

"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

"The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.'"

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Ponder this:

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Daily Prayer for the fourth week of Advent

Morning Prayer

Lord, I ascribe to you the glory due your name;
I worship you in the splendor of your holiness.
You, Lord, give strength to your people; you bless your people with peace. (Psalm 29:2, 11)

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, by whose power are burst the bands of death,
On our cold hearts thy blessing shower and stir them with thy breath.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:7-10)

Dear Lord, today I choose to trust that you will bless me with peace, but I need your grace to maintain that trust. Help me to hold fast to you even as you hold fast to me. Amen.

Midday Prayer

I will listen to what you say, God;
You promise peace to your people, your faithful servants—but let us not turn to folly. (Psalm 85:8)

Tis thine to point the heavenly way, each rising fear control,
And with a warm, enlivening ray, to melt the icy soul.
Tis thine to cheer us when distressed, to raise us when we fall,
To calm the doubting, troubled breast, and aid when sinners call.

God, you are my refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore I will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.
Help me to be still and know that you are God. (Psalm 46:1-3, 10)

Lord, my fears rise as the day progresses, so I turn again to your promises. Settle my heart, Lord, so that I can walk ever more closely to you. Grant me your peace to sustain me. Amen.

Evening Prayer

My soul finds rest in you, God; my hope comes from you.
Truly you are my rock and my salvation; you are my fortress, I will not be shaken. (Psalm 62:5-6)

Tis thine to bring God's sacred word and write it on our heart,
There its reviving truths record and there its peace impart.
Almighty Spirit! Visit thus our hearts and guide our ways,
Pour down thy quickening grace to us and tune our hearts to praise. (William H. Bathurst, 1831)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.
So I will trust in you forever, for you, Lord, are the Rock eternal. (Isaiah 26:3-4)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit, only in the circle of your life is true peace found. Thank you for opening that circle to me, God. Grant that I may rest in the sure and certain knowledge of your love and mercy.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen. (from Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*)

For Christmas and beyond

Light

Read these passages:

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
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.
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.
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.
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 forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Psalm 97

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad;
let the distant shores rejoice.
Clouds and thick darkness surround him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
Fire goes before him
and consumes his foes on every side.

His lightning lights up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.
The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
and all peoples see his glory.
All who worship images are put to shame,
those who boast in idols—
worship him, all you gods!
Zion hears and rejoices
and the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments, LORD.
For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
Let those who love the LORD hate evil,
for he guards the lives of his faithful ones
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
Light shines on the righteous
and joy on the upright in heart.
Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous,
and praise his holy name.

John 1:1-14

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.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

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 recognize 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.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Ponder this:

I John 1:5b-7

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Daily Prayer

Morning Prayer

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

The Lord's Prayer

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led to thee.

I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God."

My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.
Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. (Psalm 31:14-16)

Dear Lord, you are my light and my salvation. Help me this day, Lord, to remember that because of you I need not fear anything. I praise you and thank you, Lord. Amen.

Midday Prayer

Awaken your might, Lord; come and save us.

Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. (Psalm 80:2-3)

Holy Jesus, every day keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glory hide.

Praise be to your name for ever and ever; wisdom and power are yours.

You change times and seasons; you depose kings and raise up others.
You give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

You reveal deep and hidden things; you know what lies in darkness, and light dwells with you. (Daniel 2:20-22)

Lord, everything belongs to you. I know that every good gift comes from you, and that you do not change; you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Help me to dwell in your glorious light. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Jesus, you were with God in the beginning.

Through you all things were made; without you nothing was made that has been made.

In you was life, and that life was the light of all humankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:2-5)

In the heavenly country bright need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing alleluias to our King. (W. C. Dix, 1858)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from you, dear Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: I praise you, Lord of life and light, for all that you are. I thank you for all that you give so freely. I place myself in your blessed hands.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen. (from Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*)