



2025
ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL



GRACE
ANGLICAN
CHURCH

Good Morrow Whouisville | Luke Buchmaier

Walking, walking without a compass
Slipping softly down the slope
Morning music: strings and trumpets
Each days sunrise renews hope
Stillness found in timeless sips, Turkish sand, clever wits
Company improves His gifts, fellow man, spirits lift

Rockin' Around the Advent Wreath | Joel Sims

“Tell me you have a good relationship with your father without telling me” goes the meme. To which the answer is “I enjoy listening to classic rock!” I tend to think I have a good relationship with my dad and I also enjoy listening to classic rock from time to time, so I guess we can say the meme is anecdotally true.

I grew up in a household where the only music that was allowed was contemporary Christian music (CCM), but whenever it was just dad and me in the car, he would play classic rock.

It has been said that classic rock is not so much a genre of music as it is a collection of songs from a given time period. One such song is 'The Waiting' by the late Tom Petty. It is a stereotypical love song with a rockin' beat. The chorus goes like this:

“The waiting is the hardest part
Every day you see one more card
You take it on faith, you take it to the heart
The waiting is the hardest part”

It's Advent and, throughout history, Christians have used this season leading up to Christmas to emphasize the importance of the discipline of waiting. Every day you see one more (Christmas) card. But Christmas isn't here yet. The waiting is the hardest part.

I spent a lot of time during my childhood waiting. Waiting for my mom to get off the phone so I could ask her what's for dinner. Waiting for my sisters to finish doing their hair and makeup in the bathroom so I could use it to dye my hair black. I even made up waiting songs for when I was waiting in my driveway for a friend's parent to pick me up for a sleepover.

Some of the hardest waiting I did as a kid was waiting for something that would never come. I'm adopted and my adoptive parents are the only parents I've ever known. They did a great job raising me and their biological daughters, my sisters. As wonderful as my parents were, I often wondered if my birth parents would ever just show up and bring me home. The waiting is the hardest part.

The New Testament speaks in many places of our status in God's family as one of adoption. We have been placed into our heavenly family by baptism, through faith (Galatians 3:26-27). While I have made peace with the likelihood of never meeting my birth parents, I have found profound hope in the discipline of waiting, as Paul puts it, "for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23).

The meme could just as well be told: "Tell me you have a good relationship with your adoptive Heavenly Father without telling me." To which the Christian could respond, "I have been baptized!"

Waiting is hard, but it is part of our everyday lives. Waiting rooms used to be filled with children's toys, books, and magazines. But now that we all have the entirety of the internet and beyond in our pockets at any given moment, we would be hard pressed to find a waiting room containing little more than a TV and a bottle of hand sanitizer. Our culture has seemingly become so afraid of waiting that we will resort to whipping our phone out during such a short wait as a traffic light.

Our calling as Christians includes becoming disciplined at waiting. The Liturgy of The Lord's Table includes these words of Paul's to the Church at Corinth: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." That last phrase "until he comes" implies waiting.

My prayer this Advent is that we would be able to redeem these times of everyday waiting by proclaiming Christ's death until he comes again. We can do this by remembering our baptism (Romans 6:3), practicing daily repentance for forgiveness through Christ's blood (Ephesians 1:7), and saying the Apostle's Creed.

These are just a few ways we can fill up our times of waiting with God's grace. And maybe during some times of waiting we should just put on some classic rock!



Mary Awaits the Christ Child | Hazel Lannon
A Study of “The Veiled Vestal” Sculpture by Raffaele Monti

Walking Prayer | Jeffrey Skinner

Thank you for this tree line of red maple against blue,
each leaf flipping over and back, sun blink.
Thank you for the dark in leaf banks the sun can't reach.
Thank you for this breeze that sweeps the pond
so it shivers like a satisfied animal. Thank you for this animal
walking behind me. I would be as devoted
to you as she is to me. But I am not. And I am sorry
for the countless times I have turned away,
though you have counted and know their number,
how my harm ripples out, traveling through my beloveds
and beyond, across this and other landscapes,
until the moon itself may be pocked by my pride and distain.
Forgive my claim that any action of mine
may touch the moon. I have confessed, but I forget,
choosing instead to remember wrongs done me
large and small, which you know also.
Thank you for the path that circles the field and skirts
the river as it moves from grass in light
to shaded earth, pebbles cobbled into its surface
by a thousand feet. Thank you for the river,
tugs pushing their trays of coal upstream against the current.
Thank you for this day, like no other. Continuous
flow from the center of being, what are you
that you give without ceasing, you open yourself
as we fade? What is man that you pay him such mind?

"Walking Prayer" was first published in Mockingbird



Mary Holds God | Rubekah Lowman
A clay sculpture of Mary holding baby Jesus

The Mad Prince | R.W. Lee

I slam closed the last shutter, letting darkness have me; dreading even the motes which dance across the sun's rays. None may see what I become—least of all, God Himself. By earth and sky, the shadow belonged to me as much as I to it. “The Mad Prince,” that’s what they called me! All the while gallivanting uncovered before all heaven, every deed laid bare before Almighty ogles. They persist, yet comprehend little. No, I am the wiser. This is why I hide.

How could the greatest among us hope to overthrow such power?
Never let it in.

Though blind to my steps, I find many companions. We wander the great hall together, supping in eternal twilight. It’s better this way, don’t you see? Better to tremble in gloom than dance in his putrid radiance.

I stumble my way to the throne and collapse into its frigid rest. At last I have my highest desire. My creaky voice echoes throughout the chamber as I call out to my friends to join me. Though I do not see them, each are lovely to me. Their presence fills all awareness. Each speak to me with honeyed lips,

“You are so wise!”

“We have such peace here!”

“All is as it was meant to be!”

How I delight in their praise! This land has never known one so great as I! Contented by all accounting, here I remain until time fades into memory, basking in flattery’s glow. “How pitiful the others are,” I think to myself, “those poor exposed souls outside!” My companions bring me food and give me endless entertainments. I hold back nothing which my soul desires, and they gift it joyfully.

So enraptured am I drinking pleasure’s fill, in gratitude my hands strain out to embrace these beloved comrades. As one fills my goblet, stealing compliments to my ears, I grasp. Fingers touch frozen air. Another wafts lavender incense across my face. I step forth, seeking affection, desiring to feel another’s presence. A viscid fog twists about my arm like weightless serpents. My feet fumble

in confusion, but no steps rise to meet them. My body tumbles forward to the floor as if in drunken stupor.

“Friends!” I wail in pain, “Loveliest servants! Come to your master!”

Nothing answers back in the darkness... not at first.

An orchestral swell of hideous cackles bursts forth around the hall. Innate senses feel the space shrink until I am entombed in a coffin of shadow. Adoring worshippers now turn to poisonous adversaries. “You blighted fool!” one screams. Another tosses a mocking whoop, “Here lies the Prince of Paupers!” I writhe in pain as an invisible kick collides with my chest.

Trying to rise, only then I feel the ironclad manacles locked on my wrists and ankles. Each chain rattles against the dais. Surely, my imprisonment began from the first. In despair I thrash against the cobblestone until my head slams hard against mysterious force. Betrayers! Tricksters! In the last vestiges of consciousness I confess to any who hear, “Woe is me! I’ve played the fool!” The world spins. All slips into void. I am lost.

The wind blows warm when I awake. To my astonishment, blessed light sets the great hall aglow, every window thrown wide open. Eyes weak, they alight upon my former seat.

A True Prince I know, far greater than I, adorns the erstwhile throne. The cadence of his voice sings sweeter than sparrow song: “You who are weary, come.” Every muscle trembles in obedience. Sight now unbarred, all becomes clear: my ragged robes, the filthy ichor dripping in each goblet, rottenness spilling over every plate.

My voice shakes, “H-Highness, how did you find me?”

“I never departed, though you could not see.”

“But I hid in the shadows...”

“Night is as day to me.”

“I despised you,” I bared through many tears, “Why rescue me?”

He rose to full height, wordless in his command to kneel. No will now lived in me to contest.

A gentle touch lifted my head, and now I saw the unshakeable strength in his eyes. “I knew you from your mother’s womb,” the True Prince said. “Your life is ever known to me. I know of your transgressions, and your sin is ever before me. Yet, I have mercy and compassion on whom I wish.”

My head fell low. How could one such as I repay such kindness? Yet in that instant he made all things whole, like sunrise breaking on a stormy shore. My robes now shined in the True Prince’s white. My goblets filled to brim with new wine. Each plate now held my Master’s bread. He took my hand and bid me stand. I felt new life pass between us, the strength of my former days returned.

He directed my gaze to the uncreated light beckoning beyond the palace doors. “Come, my son,” he said in voice intoning friendship, “My joy is yours. Return to this place no more.” Delivered from my liar’s reign, I went forth and followed and walked again under gladdened sun.

In spontaneous surprise, a song sprung forth from my lips—one which my master joined in the singing. It told the tale of a maddened prince and his undeserved deliverance.

Chapter Four | Shane Stiles

Jonah

Pouting prophet of Nineveh

Waits beneath his wormy tree.

Instead of destruction, came mercy.

The Denouement of Simeon | Will Schlopy

No mountain have I scaled, yet I have seen -
My eyes have seen salvation - Yes! have gazed
Upon not land that reached the Western Sea,
But on this Child of Light I now embrace.

For God, atop Mount Nebo, Moses brought,
Revealing promised lands 'neath radiant skies.
Now God, inside His temple, holds my lot:
To take into my arms the promised Christ.

I hold this Child at His commencing dawn,
A Shout of Light that henceforth will increase;
As my frail body is from earth withdrawn,
Consoled am I, fit to depart in peace.

The demons, Gentiles, sinners of the dark
Will see the light leap from this swaddled Spark.

Crossing Myself | Sarah Gorham

Shyly at first
Along with the street faithful
Staring at a boy and his crushed
Bicycle. Or in courtesy, a tidy one
After grace and before we ate,
A bit of restraint, quick-release
Lately I've tried it long and deep
Over the Jewish half of me,
Dubious, self-reliant.
For them, the forehead touch
Then the tap, gentle to the heart,
The two shoulders.
Like sewing a three-foot stitch
That fastens me down, a fly,
But leaves my wings flailing.
Still room to wiggle out
Though it might mean damage.
So, when I'm all alone,
Humbled on the floor
Without my glasses on,
I double back to the left shoulder;
Fasten a pin there, then the right.
I'm grateful He was half-
human, and at Gethsemani,
Pleaded for a little company,
Before turning his Jewish face
Toward that last kiss.



Christingle | Samantha Griffiths

The Christingle orange dates back to 18th century Germany, when it was used as part of a children's Advent service. The orange represents the world, while the red ribbon represents the love (and blood) of Christ. Dried fruits and spices, typically cloves, would decorate the orange. These represent God's creation. During the original Christingle service, a lit candle was placed inside of the orange, as Christ is the Light of the World. The tradition spread to England, where it has been used as part of Advent celebrations and decorations for years. Many choose to hang the oranges and cloves without the candle as a fragrant reminder of God's faithfulness throughout the Advent season.



Nativity | Samantha Griffiths

In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi created the first live nativity scene. The tradition grew throughout the centuries, as churches commissioned large nativity sculptures. In 18th century France, in response to the closing of churches during the Revolution, small ceramic figures portraying the nativity were made available to people for the first time. The faces were of unglazed clay or porcelain, as depicted here in this still life of antique French nativity figures. Now, setting up the nativity scene is a beautiful and tangible way to tell the story of Christ's birth.

Wait, Eat, Find Strength | Tiffany Childs

The older I get, the more words chosen by God in scripture to describe a narrative minister to me in unexpected ways. Even words I have heard a thousand times, when used to evoke solidarity in human experience, bring a more precise life-expectation and therefore an odd peace.

Following along in the book of Acts with our Wednesday evening group, one such word in Greek exists that has done such a thing in my life. And I love the way in this context Paul attends his listeners with it and then gives a hopeful prescription. Now I am no Greek scholar— I know enough to use a lexicon and be mildly dangerous! Leaving it to the experts, I am still strengthened by it. We see it in Acts 27. Paul's missionary journey has found him all over the Mediterranean in all kinds of circumstances. Hostility toward him and his ministry has grown. And after years of imprisonment, he is found Rome-bound on a ship with other prisoners. I will leave the full teaching of the text to Nick. It is riveting! What I want to focus on, in this season of waiting, is the word **προσδοκάω** (prosdokaō) in verse 33.

(33) As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing.

The NIV uses the term constant suspense. I'll never forget the first time I read this verse, I was in a season of life lasting much longer than 14 days of constant suspense. Such marked time does something to the body and the brain. A shipwreck is one thing to consider in Paul's time and place. Nursing a sick child, watching a parent decline, seeing someone we love make unwise, detrimental choices, making unwise choices ourselves, anticipating the hammer of justice or natural consequence to fall is quite another. All leave us in constant suspense.

(34) Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.

Paul, ministers to his companions by describing what they are all feeling. He even adds that their suspense is going to kill them— not the northeaster that is upon them— as they have not eaten. He reminds them that because they were all with Paul (as he has already comforted them in verse

22), they will not perish as promised by the angel of God. Then, he does something we do every week; he breaks bread for them and invites them to eat. What a normal thing to do in the midst of surrounding chaos yet seemingly impossible in extreme distress.

This is what Advent feels like. I imagine all the years before the birth of Christ— slavery in Egypt, wandering the wilderness, settling fresh the promised land, being attacked on every side, going into captivity, being subjugated by Roman law (so much history!), hearing the Law and prophets foretell of the Messiah evoked constant suspense.

Then Jesus came. The silence broke with a baby's cry. But His life and ministry wasn't without angst. The disciples weren't sure what to expect even though he told them all the time. Then, they watched Him minister, teach, and pray, only to see him die. After waiting three excruciating days, they would find Him alive. He left again with the promise to return.

And here, with Paul, we find ourselves waiting again— in constant suspense.

So eat and drink dear friends. Those with Jesus are promised unimaginable good gifts of forgiveness of sins, unearned, imputed righteousness, eternal life, breath, and everything else. We wait in constant suspense for the sound of the trump and His glorious return.

Until then, I'll see you at the table friends.

Christmas Is | Breanna Lowman

Christmas is silent
It's the hush of snow falling
Of owl wings and settled peace
Of hearts that hear hope softly calling
It's breath that hangs in frozen air

Christmas is loud
It's the bray of the donkeys song
Mixed with cries of laboring pain
The sound of a newborns wail, sharp and strong
It's the breaking of the dark, so deep and long

Christmas is ordered
It's a long awaited star crossing the sky
A chosen womb, a promise foretold
A nativity scene with shepherds and magi
It's the plan emerging as prophecies unfold

Christmas is messy
It's the stench of straw on the stable floor
Swaddling rags 'round a babies skin
It's an infant lying in a feeding trough
For no welcome waits within the inn

Christmas is hopeful
It's reckoning and reconnecting
The first faint signs of the coming spring
Longest of winter nights behind us
It's God come to live among us again

Christmas is desperate
It's the arduous journey for the census
A pregnant woman with no shelter covering
A devoted husband who isn't the father
It's fleeing from a murderous jealous king

Christmas is holy yet Christmas is human
It's divinity wrapped in humanity; it's holiness draped in dust and skin
The King of Heaven born to earth; no crown waiting, save that of thorn and sin
Love Himself born of blood and suckled at Mary's side
Christmas is Him who loved us, who opened His mouth and cried



Awake, O Sleeper | Jordan Stiles

The Good Grief of Advent | Rev. Jacob A. Davis

“I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus. Christmas is coming, but I’m not happy. I don’t feel the way I’m supposed to feel. I just don’t understand Christmas, I guess. I like getting presents and sending Christmas cards and decorating trees and all that, but I’m still not happy. I always end up feeling depressed.”

— Charlie Brown in A Charlie Brown Christmas

You know the scene. Charlie Brown has been dealing with more than his share of the winter blues. Leaning on their iconic brick wall, he confesses to his good friend Linus that, despite all the holly jolly festivities, he can’t seem to feel happy. This is the time of year I am most like Charlie Brown in that famous 1965 TV special. The “holiday season” is here, and I’m not feeling it. It’s not just me, though. Many have a hard time conjuring the seemingly expected happiness. For us, such emotion is elusive this time of year. Therefore, it’s appropriate that Advent is here to give voice to our melancholy.

A Season of Grief

Like Charlie Brown, in the face of all the festivities, I end up feeling depressed. I lack the energy. I don’t want to shop for presents. And I certainly don’t want to be with people. No number of colored lights blinking on a thousand homes can illuminate the kind of darkness I feel this time of year.

Of course, as alone as I feel in the cold darkness at the cusp of winter, I’m far from alone in this experience. It’s shared across a broad swath of people. For some, it’s because the holidays call to mind the people they’ve lost. For others, it raises the fear of family conflict and pours salt on past wounds. And then, for some, like me, it’s because our very brains turn against us this time of year.

Seasonal Affective Disorder makes it hard for me to function in December. Getting out of bed is a chore. Stringing thoughts together takes substantial effort. It has taken me two weeks to finish this article. At the very time of year when church activities and social functions increase, I am at my weakest. This is not ideal for anyone, much less a priest. Nothing makes sense. Like King David, I ask,

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
— Psalm 43:5

Advent is for the Broken

However, Charlie Brown's lack of joy in the season—and my own—points to our own brokenness. Whatever its source, it reminds us that this world is not as it should be, and we desperately long for it to be made right.

We often speak of Advent as remembering Israel's longing for the coming Messiah. Thus, Christmas becomes the time we remember Christ's birth. However, there is another longing that Advent recalls—our own, here between his Ascension and Second Coming. Israel longed for a savior to deliver them from their perceived political captors, but we know that far more than earthly principalities enslave us. We also know all that sin has wrought: every bit of creation has been marred by our fall, with suffering, sickness, and death resulting. We also know that Christ endured all the brokenness this world has to offer.

Christ arrived in a stable strewn with straw and dung when he was born in Bethlehem. He entered the grime of this world from his first breath onward. He faced humanity's beauty and brokenness from the crèche to the cross. In his crucifixion and death,

He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..
— Isaiah 53:3a

Advent reminds us that we live in the liminal state—the time between the times. We still await the day that is not here, when suffering and sorrow will be no more. It gives us the moment in the church year to express our longing for that day.

Let Advent Do Its Work

Returning to Charlie Brown, we find many of his friends trying to fix him, particularly Lucy. “What you need is involvement,” she says. After saddling him with the director’s duties for the neighborhood kids’ Christmas play, which he quickly loses control of, she sends him to fetch a Christmas tree. In this, by bringing back a sparse, tiny sapling, he has failed again in the eyes of Lucy and others. They ridicule his repeated failure. He melts down.

Instead of coming beside Charlie Brown and being with him in his melancholy, Lucy—much like Job’s friends before her—had labeled what was wrong with Charlie Brown so he could quickly and cleanly remedy his problem. Only her brother Linus, his own insecurities in hand, embodied by his iconic blue blanket, journeys with Charlie Brown on his mission to obtain a tree. It is then Linus who, in the face of others’ laughter and ridicule, speaks the one truth that brings a moment of hope into Charlie Brown’s heart.

Linus’s message is not another method by which our protagonist can fix himself. It’s Luke chapter 2: the proclamation of Christ’s arrival itself. No human “fixing” can match the hope only God can give.

A Companion in the Grief

The season of Advent, like Linus, meets and comes alongside us. It gives us a chance to voice our lament that we’re in a broken world that has not yet been made whole. Advent resonates with us the age-old, oft-repeated cry in Scripture, “How long, O Lord?”

Advent is a solemn yet hopeful expression of the reality that Christ’s work has been accomplished but not consummated. Even as we mourn, cry, and experience life’s current pain, Advent voices the truth that a day will come when “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). It comforts us with Christ’s assurance, “I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

A version of “The Good Grief of Advent” originally appeared at Anglican Compass.



"But Mary treasured up all these things in her heart and pondered them."
- Luke 2:19

A Trace of Tears | Evelyn Peercy

As the Advent season draws near, I always am drawn back to Mary. We so often overlook her in the whole big story of Jesus being born, but she is honestly the most important character in this story of Christ being born. Chosen by God to carry Jesus at such a young age would have been a wondrous thing but also be so scary and overwhelming. So in my picture, in which I used pencil, pastels, and watercolors, I chose to depict Mary and Jesus in a happy moment but you can see the trace of tears on Mary's face. And so as we begin this season of anticipation, we should examine our hearts and acknowledge all of our inner thoughts and feelings.

In Between | Kattie Percy

This song was written as a reflection on Luke 2:19, “But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart”. As we follow Mary’s story during advent, I find myself curious about her daily life; her challenging day-to-day realities held in between these extraordinary moments. I love the glimpse we are given here of Mary’s heart. To see the wonders of the Lord before her eyes and still ponder at them. This passage felt like a gentle invitation for our own hearts during the season of Advent to stop and remember as we live in our own kind of “in between” days. I imagined as I was writing this song that it could be a way for making space to sit and ponder in our own hearts the treasures of God’s faithfulness to us. Those extraordinary moments where we have clearly beheld the wonders of the Lord. Our ponderings of these kinds of treasures can act like bookends to hold us up as we live in between our own challenging reality of “Christ has come, Christ will come again.”

[Listen Here!](#)

Revelation and Joy in Advent | Rebekah Borah

I have come to look forward to our annual Christmas pageant, when the children of Grace regale us with the song “Joy That Will Be For All People,” a paraphrase of the revelation of Christ to shepherds by Luke 2’s angelic choir. (This song is yet another proof that Christian children’s music has improved since I was a child singing “Deep and Wide” and “This Little Light of Mine” at VBS.) Nevertheless, I cannot help but feel like the joy of Luke’s nativity pales when it becomes isolated Christmas card text or decontextualized word art on mantles.

Worse perhaps than the verbal anemia of ambiguous declarations of Christmas joy is the prophet Simeon’s insistence, a bit further on in Luke 2, of the dual revelatory ministry of Jesus Messiah. (If your impulse is to point out that we don’t get to talk about Simeon and revelation until Epiphany, please don’t; I am working towards a point here and cannot suffer liturgical roadblocks at this moment.) For right after declaring that Jesus is “a light for revelation to Gentiles/ and for glory to your people Israel,” Simeon also declares “this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Luke calls this a “blessing,” but I cannot imagine that Mary took it that way. Simply put, her son’s ministry of Messianic revelation will enlighten gentiles, glorify her subjugated and shamed nation, create social instability and conflict by revealing people’s hearts, and culminate in her own heartrending suffering.

Only some of those seem joyful.

For Christ, called “Prophet, Priest, and King,” at turns by scripture, this is prophetic ministry at its purest. Jesus, the Word incarnate, is the living manifestation of the Bible’s nature: “Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart... Everything is uncovered [revealed!] and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Jesus will make it impossible for the religious leaders of his day, as well as anyone else, to escape the Law’s revelation of their sin and judgement before God. It will later cost Him his life, both as the Pharisees intended consequence of his defiance, and as

God's means of salvation for the sin He revealed.

As believers awaiting his Advent (remembered past and future promised), what can this mean? It means that at the very moment Jesus confronts us with the revelation of our daily sin, he extends to us the joy of His salvation. For some, God's inevitable revelation of their hearts will end in eternal judgement. But at the nativity of Christ, we can know that "a Savior has been born to you."

We don't have to be afraid. This is good news of great joy for all people.



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:1-5