

Devotions for the Second Week of Advent, December 8-12, 2025

Monday of Advent 2 – Prayer of the Week

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

“Pastor, I am so worked up, I can hardly sleep at night.” My friend wasn’t going through a crisis or some sort of terrible moment in her life or the world around her. She was preparing for her daughter’s wedding. There was much to do, a hundred little things that needed attention. She had probably laid on herself some unrealistic expectations, but all of it was really flowing out of her love for her daughter.

The prayer today urges God to stir up our hearts so we can prepare the way of Jesus. We beg God that the coming of Jesus would be an occasion to serve our God with a pure mind. If we would have that purity of mind, we probably need to be stirred up a little from our comfortable status quo, or even from an uncomfortable status quo. The coming of Jesus is a big deal, a really big deal, bigger than your daughter’s wedding. It is worth putting some effort into getting ready.

Of course, our struggle with this is timing. We don’t know just when. But many a parent has started saving for a wedding which will happen at some undetermined date in the future. They see how much such things cost, and they are a little stirred up to save and prepare. Advent is a time when we consider our preparation for the coming of our Lord Jesus. We pray God to stir us up in this season. Help us to be less comfortable with the suffering of others, less comfortable with the brokenness of our world and society, and less comfortable with our own sins. Alleviate some suffering today, strengthen the good around you, examine yourself and confess with God your sin and your Savior’s good work. Be stirred up by God. Jesus comes.

Tuesday of Advent 2 – Isaiah 11:1-10

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,

- and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.
- ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
- ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
- ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
- ¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall
the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

I have several fruit trees in my back yard. One apple tree bears better than others. A rather misshapen tree, it has a one branch that seems to be overloaded every year. As the summer progresses, I trim a few off, but even then, the weight of the fruit in August bends the branch closer and closer to the ground.

Isaiah likens our Lord to a fruitful branch which springs out of the root of Jesse. As I have come to know, the fruitful branches bend low, and so does our Lord. You could imagine that the rest of these verses are cataloguing the fruit of that branch. It is a Spirit-filled fruit, full of the Spiritual gifts of wisdom, understanding, and more. But it bends low, seeking justice for the poor and the meek, the little people of the earth, not only the high and mighty. He will exact justice, striking the earth itself in answer to the affliction of His people. Sometimes that branch bends down so far that it almost touches the ground. Then I must prop it up.

While the breath of his lips shall kill the wicked, it will also utterly change the earth itself. Death itself shall be banished. Even the predators will be changed. The fearsome lion, leopard, wolf, and bear will no longer prey upon the other creatures. The child shall play over the den of a poisonous snake, and no harm shall come the child. No one shall kill or destroy in God's holy mountain.

That branch bears some awesome fruit. I cannot say that I can even imagine all that Isaiah sees. What is a lion without his fearsome teeth? How shall he eat straw like an ox? I do not know. I will keep my eyes fixed on that righteous branch, that Son of David who bends low to a manger and a cross to serve me. That is enough. I wait for him with eager expectation.

Wednesday of Advent 2 – Psalm 72:1-7

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- ² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
- ³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!
- ⁵ May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
- ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

There is talk of us going back to the moon and from there to Mars. Not me personally. I am a little too old for the astronaut program, but some human beings will do it, younger and fitter and better equipped for it than me. The first time we were there, the astronauts of the Apollo missions set up an experiment which is still running, over 50 years later. It involved some special mirrors. Scientists on earth can bounce laser beams off those mirrors thereby taking exact measurements. They tell us that the moon is slowly getting farther and farther away from the earth, at a rate of about an inch and a half per year. At that rate, in about 600 million years it will be so far away that solar eclipses will stop happening.

I am not terribly saddened by that, honestly. I like eclipses and rather enjoy seeing the moon looming large over the horizon on a summer's night, but that is a long time from now. I am more concerned about what happens before that day. The psalmist speaks of God giving Christ our King His justice and righteousness. In the next verses we read what that means. He judges the poor and need with that righteousness and justice. He defends the cause of the poor and crushes the oppressor. His rule is like the rain that falls on a mown field, causing the abundance of the earth to sprout and grow, blessing all.

I get to be part of that righteous reign every time I forgive a poor sinner, every time I feed a hungry man or woman, every time I stand up for someone whom the oppressor would oppress. If I am a police officer or government official, I might get in on the crushing of a few oppressors too. I certainly want to be on God's side of that equation, not on the oppressor's side. I do not want to be among the crushed. While God's kingdom is not always apparent to me now, the day comes when my eyes shall see it very clearly. May the righteous flourish and peace abound until the moon is no more.

Thursday of Advent 2 – Romans 15:4-13

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

¹⁰ And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹ And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples extol him.”

¹² And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

“He’d better do it!” my friend exclaimed, “I need that thing on Friday.” He was talking about the mechanic who was currently fixing his car. The old Mazda had seen better days and needed some work done on the constant velocity joints, those critical junctions that deliver power from the engine to the front wheels of his car. The mechanic had told him it would be done by Thursday, and this was Wednesday. My friend had heard the promise which the mechanic had made and was expecting it to be done. This is not strange to us. We have all had similar expectations of those who have made promises to us. Sometimes we have been disappointed but often the promises have been kept.

The word Paul uses for hope in this passage, a word which both begins and ends these verses, is perhaps better translated as “expectation.” We have often turned hope into something that we wish would happen but think rather unlikely. If my friend had said about the mechanic, “I hope he gets it done,” he probably would have meant that he was not sure, perhaps even anticipating that it would not happen. Words change over time. A couple of centuries ago, “awful” used to

have a meaning much more like “wonderful” today. It filled us with awe. I think hope has weakened in our understanding of the word. We use the word for things we imagine are unlikely.

Paul wants us to have an expectation, something he tells us that comes through both the experiences of life (endurance) and the promises of Scripture (vs 4). We have learned to count on God. He is trustworthy and true to His word. Jesus said he would rise from the dead. The disciples saw and even touched him, and Paul met him on a road to Damascus. He kept the promise. Encountering that Jesus gave Paul both joy and peace, which he also wants for us (vs 13.) God had sent His Messiah, Jesus, and had kept a promise which He had made long ago in a garden to our first parents, a promise he had reiterated many times in Scripture. That same Jesus has promised to come again with blessing for all humanity. In this Advent season, we expect something. God has promised it. We count on it. Abound in that expectation!

Friday of Advent 2 – Matthew 3:1-12

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

“No, get out of my house and don’t come back until I say you may!” Her eyes flashed as she spoke these words to her son. She was not without her reasons. He was addicted to drugs and, like many people suffering with such an addiction, he had disappointed, betrayed, and stolen from her. Still, I thought it was a little harsh. But she knew what she was doing better than I did

at the time. Not only was she protecting herself, but she really did have his best interests in mind. She was looking for results, or as John says in this passage from Matthew, “fruit in keeping with repentance.” She knew that acceptance and forgiveness given to the impenitent is far worse than rejection and isolation. Such forgiveness affords neither the forgiven nor the forgiver a blessing, only greater suffering to come.

All the Gospels, Matthew included, indicate that the crowds that flocked around John the Baptist were noteworthy. “Jerusalem and all Judea” had come to hear what this strangely dressed and wild-eyed preacher had to say. Even the religious leaders had found their way to the Jordan to hear him. But what they heard! John’s words to them are fierce and terrifying. Yet, I sometimes wonder what he would say to us in our comfortably middle-class Christianity. Does your heart burn for justice for the oppressed? Do you mourn the sins of your own life and home? Have you assessed your life and undertaken the arduous fight against temptation and sin? Or have you put it off until after the football game this afternoon.

I know I have not pursued righteousness with anything like the vigor which John calls for. I am too comfortable with the state of things. My life is relatively comfortable, and the problems of the poor seem far away from me, at least far enough that I do not have to think about them often. I have learned to cope with sins, both my own and those of the people close to me. Like many, I am too willing to put off until tomorrow the hard work of being a better human being, a better Christian, a better follower of Jesus. I seem to say, “Not today, John. I have a meeting to attend and there is a great show on Netflix I really want to see.” Yet, Christ comes to clear the threshing floor. All my sins will be swept away with the other chaff and detritus of this broken world. I had better get used to being separated from them. It is time to start practicing lest I embrace them too tightly and get swept away with them.