

# *The Coming of the Light*



*Reflections and Prayers for Advent  
and into Christmas*

*Peter M Down*

## **Introduction**

The season of Advent is loved by many Christians but sadly for many of us it becomes a hectic time of preparation for our family celebrations at Christmas. These readings, reflections and prayers are presented to help us to spend a few minutes each day in focussing our thoughts upon what God might have to say to us as we prepare and begin to celebrate the birth of his Son.

Each day offers a short reading from scripture followed by a reflection on that reading. It ends with a suggestion for prayer.

Use these reflections as feels best to you. You might want to read the bible passage two or three times first and then use the reflection.

The readings focus on the Advent themes of waiting, preparation, light in the darkness, and the coming of the promised Messiah. I am indebted to the website Catholic Online ([catholic.org](http://catholic.org)) for the cycle of readings.

Fr Peter Down

Join a discussion each day of issues raised by these reflections on Facebook or Google+. There are links via the Benefice website ([fourcrosses.weebly.com](http://fourcrosses.weebly.com)).

## **December 1 – Advent Sunday**

### **Reading** – *Romans 13.11-14*

*The night is far gone, the day is near.* Dawn is a hopeful time of day. With dawn the past can be put behind us. Everything is now possible. We start with a blank canvas. The day that lies ahead is ours to shape. Of course, it is always possible that we will make the same old mistakes. We could repeat the past. That is why we must *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. That way today becomes his day. We give control of our lives to him.

## Prayer

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>1</sup>

## December 2

### Reading – 1 Corinthians 1.3-9

*In every way you have been enriched in him.* Jesus makes us what we are. It's a process that has never been completed. It happens a step at a time. With every repentance, with every forgiveness, with every grace given and received we change a little. Sometimes we don't even notice. But there is a goal - *so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That's when the transformation will be complete.

## Prayer

Lord, lead us to our heavenly home  
by single steps of self-restraint  
and deeds of righteousness;  
through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>2</sup>

## December 3

### Reading – Mark 13.33-37

*Beware, keep alert.* Keeping alert is important. If we don't we might miss something. It might be something important. We might never know that we've missed it – until it's too late. It's like being prepared – we might not notice until it's too late. *You do not know when the master of the house will come.* We dare not be asleep, or not paying attention, when Jesus comes to us.

## Prayer

O Lord our God,  
make us watchful and keep us faithful  
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;  
that, when he shall appear,  
he may not find us sleeping in sin  
but active in his service  
and joyful in his praise;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*<sup>3</sup>

## December 4

### Reading – John 1.1-5

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* Darkness hides things. It keeps everything out of sight. Sometimes we like to keep things hidden; things we're ashamed of; things we don't want anybody else to see. Sometimes, in our lives the darkness takes over. But nothing can be hidden from God. His light cannot be overcome. His light reveals – and heals. That is why the darkness cannot overcome it.

## Prayer

Hail, gladdening Light, of his pure glory poured  
who is the immortal Father, heavenly, blest,  
holiest of holies, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now we are come to the sun's hour of rest,  
the lights of evening round us shine,  
we hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine.

Worthiest art thou at all times to be sung  
with undefilèd tongue,  
Son of our God, giver of life, alone:  
therefore in all the world thy glories, Lord, they own.

*Greek, tr. John Keble*

## **December 5**

**Reading** – *John 1.6-9*

*He came as a witness to testify to the light.* In every generation the light needs the testimony of those who have been drawn to it. We must be called to the light or else we may continue to live in our own darkness – a darkness which always holds us back. The darkness holds us back. The light can be frightening though. We need the testimony to assure us that it is safe to come to it.

## **Prayer**

Blessed are you, Lord God, creator of day and night:  
to you be praise and glory for ever.

As darkness falls you renew your promise  
to reveal among us the light of your presence.

By the light of Christ, your living Word,  
dispel the darkness of our hearts

that we may walk as children of light  
and sing your praise throughout the world.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>4</sup>

## December 6

**Reading** – *Jeremiah 33.14-16*

*He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.* We look for justice and righteousness. God, who sends his light, hears our cry and acts. David was a just and righteous king. His descendant will share those qualities. He will be the answer to our prayers. But he will be our judge too. But he comes to save – that is why we welcome him.

### **Prayer**

Marana tha! Our Lord, come!

*1 Corinthians 16.22*

## December 7

Reading – *Isaiah 60.19-22*

*Your days of mourning shall be ended.* The light of God brings hope, peace, joy. Sorrow is ended because the love of God is seen clearly. No darkness can ever cast its shadow. With God's light there is no need of other sources of light – no candle, no electric light, no moon, no sun. God will be our light – the light which brings true life.

### **Prayer**

From your royal throne, O God,  
you sent your living Word  
to pierce the gloom of oppression;  
so, in our souls' night,  
come with your saving help  
and penetrate our darkness with the  
rays of your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>5</sup>

## December 8 – The Second Sunday of Advent

**Reading** – *Romans 15.4-13*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. Peace and joy are his gifts to us. Peace such as the world cannot give. He comes for all. Jew and Gentile; slave and free; female and male; black and white; rich and poor. Joy and peace comes only with believing in him. Joy and peace comes only when we are one in him.,*

**Prayer**

We are all one in Christ Jesus.  
We belong to him through faith,  
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*<sup>6</sup>

## December 9

**Reading** – *Psalm 43.3-6*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? God will represent me to vindicate me. He will stand up for me. He will let the truth be known – he will make it known. Nothing is hidden from him. His light shines to reveal the truth. The only response is worship and praise. How can I be downcast, how can I be sorry when God is on my side?*

**Prayer**

Come, creator Spirit, light and truth;  
bring us to the altar of life  
and renew our joy and gladness  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>7</sup>

## December 10

**Reading** – *Psalm 27.1-4*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? All I can ask of the Lord is to be found worthy to be in his presence. If he grants that privilege to me I will want for nothing. Nothing else can ever matter. No one can take that away from me. The Lord is mine, and I am the Lord's. That is to be in heaven; that is to know God fully.*

**Prayer**

God, our light and our salvation,  
illuminate our lives,  
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,  
and, looking on your beauty,  
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>8</sup>

## December 11

**Reading** – *Psalm 119.105-106*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. All God asks of us is obedience. That we do his will. That we follow his word. That we listen to what he says. It sounds so easy, so straightforward. But we know that is not really how it is. We know how easily we can be led astray. We know how attractive the wrong path seems. But God has given us his word – to lighten the path and make it clear before us.*

**Prayer**

And now we give you thanks  
because the wisdom of your word sustains all things  
and reveals you to us in your fullness.

*New Patterns for Worship*<sup>9</sup>

## December 12

**Reading** – *John 12.35-36*

*If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. The only certainty we have is in God. How else could we know who we are or where we are going? His light reveals the path before us. His light reveals the choices we make in life. His light draws us to him. His light allows us to see ourselves as we are.*

**Prayer**

Almighty Father,  
whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world:  
may your people,  
illuminated by your word and sacraments,  
shine with the radiance of his glory,  
that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed  
to the ends of the earth;  
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England<sup>10</sup>*

## December 13

**Reading** – *Ephesians 5.6-14*

*Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Having been called by God we are no longer people of the darkness. We are people of the light. Now we must shun the darkness. We must hold to the light. Just as the light has shone on us, so it will shine in us. Our lives will reveal the light which is in us.*

## Prayer

“Sleepers, wake!” the watch cry pealeth,  
While slumber deep each eyelid sealet:  
Awake, Jerusalem, awake!  
Midnight’s solemn hour is tolling,  
And seraph-notes are onward rolling;  
They call on us our part to take.  
Come forth, ye virgins wise:  
The Bridegroom comes, arise!  
Alleluia! Each lamp be bright with ready light  
To grace the marriage feast tonight.

Zion hears the voice that singeth  
With sudden joy her glad heart springeth,  
At once she wakes, she stands arrayed:  
Her Light is come, her Star ascending,  
Lo, girt with truth, with mercy blending,  
Her Bridegroom there, so long delayed.  
All hail! God’s glorious Son,  
All hail! our joy and crown,  
Alleluia! The joyful call we answer all,  
And follow to the bridal hall.

Praise to Him Who goes before us!  
Let men and angels join in chorus,  
Let harp and cymbal add their sound.  
Twelve the gates, a pearl each portal:  
We haste to join the choir immortal  
Within the Holy City’s bound.  
Ear ne’er heard aught like this,  
Nor heart conceived such bliss.  
Alleluia! We raise the song, we swell the throng,  
To praise Thee ages all along.

*Philipp Nicolai, tr. From the German by Frances E. Cox*

## December 14

**Reading** – 1 Peter 2.5-9

*See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious. God is building a new creation. Christ is the cornerstone. Those who believe are being built into the new creation. We have come to the light. We have been purified and cleansed by the light. We will never be put to shame. Our whole life is to be found in him.*

**Prayer**

O Lord of hosts,  
purify our hearts  
that the King of glory may come in,  
your Son, Jesus our redeemer.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer<sup>11</sup>*

## December 15 – The Third Sunday of Advent

**Reading** – Isaiah 60.1-3

*The Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. The light reveals the glory of the Lord. His glory overwhelms us. His glory empowers us. His glory lights the way for us – to him, and to heaven. When we turn to his glory his glory will be revealed in us. When we are in Christ, we reveal Christ to the world.*

## Prayer

We praise you, O God,  
we acclaim you as the Lord;  
all creation worships you,  
the Father everlasting.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,  
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>12</sup>

## December 16

**Reading** – 2 Corinthians 4.3-6

*We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. The light reveals the truth. Christ is revealed to us. He is not veiled. We can see him as he is – in the light. When we proclaim Jesus we invite others to come to the light. We remove the veil from their minds. We allow them to come to the light.*

## Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and power,  
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world  
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:  
confirm us in this mission,  
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*New Patterns for Worship*<sup>13</sup>

## December 17

**Reading** – 1 John 1.4-7

*If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true.* There is a world of difference between light and darkness. Darkness cuts us off from God; light brings us close to him. Darkness means that we live in sin; light means that we have our sins forgiven, and we are one with God – and one with all his people.

**Prayer**

In the tender mercy of our God,  
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,  
to give light to those who dwell in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

*New Patterns for Worship*<sup>14</sup>

## December 18

**Reading** – John 3.16-21

*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.* The coming of the light is God's gift to us – the gift of life. We judge ourselves – by how we respond to his light. If we choose darkness we can have no life; if we choose the light we have the fullness of life. If we live in sin we cannot bear the light, but the moment we repent the light gives us life.

## Prayer

Free us, God of mercy,  
from all that keeps us from you;  
relieve the misery of the anxious and the ashamed  
and fill us with the hope of peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>15</sup>

## December 19

**Reading** – *Isaiah 40.1-11*

*The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it.*  
God's saving work cannot remain hidden. It will be proclaimed from the high mountains; a way will be prepared; all people will see the Lord's glory. How will they respond? How will we respond? Who will come to him? Who will hide from him?

## Prayer

God, our light and our salvation,  
illuminate our lives,  
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,  
and, looking on your beauty,  
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>16</sup>

## December 20

**Reading** – *John 9.1-7*

*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* Christ is the light of the world, and that light brings healing; that light reveals the glory of God. The world needs Christ's light. How can Christ's light remain in the world today if not through us. Those of us who have come to the light must share the light in the world today. God's glory must continue to be revealed.

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
light of the nations and glory of Israel:  
make your home among us,  
and present us pure and holy  
to your heavenly Father,  
your God, and our God.

*Common Worship: Additional Collects*<sup>17</sup>

## December 21

**Reading** – *Luke 3.1-6*

*He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* The message must be heard; the light must be revealed. God sent a forerunner to prepare the way; to make the people ready. John called on people to repent in readiness for the coming of the light. The coming of the light requires our repentance, or else we remain in the darkness.

## Prayer

Almighty God,  
purify our hearts and minds,  
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as  
judge and saviour  
we may be ready to receive him,  
who is our Lord and our God.

*Common Worship: Additional Collects<sup>18</sup>*

## December 22 – The Fourth Sunday of Advent

### Reading – Isaiah 11.1-10

*With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.* The coming of the light is a time of judgement. The judgement will be just – not like human justice, but with the righteousness of God. The judgement, like the light, will bring healing and wholeness. It reveals what is good – and what is evil. The whole creation will be made whole.

## Prayer

Free us, righteous God, from all oppression,  
and bring justice to the nations,  
that all the world may know you  
as King of kings and Lord of lords,  
now and for ever.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer<sup>19</sup>*

## December 23

**Reading** – *Zephaniah 3.14-17*

*Rejoice and exult with all your heart.* Those who welcome the light; those who are ready for the coming judgement can rejoice. The Lord comes to bring security, justice, new life and hope. No more will God's people live in fear; no more will disaster threaten their lives. God gift is peace – peace such as the world can never give.

**Prayer**

O Emmanuel, our King and our lawgiver,  
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:  
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

*Common Worship: Times and Seasons*<sup>20</sup>

## December 24 – Christmas Eve

**Reading** – *Matthew 1.18-25*

*She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus.* The promise is fulfilled. The light is coming into the world. Emmanuel, God is with us. To judge, to cleanse, to heal, to bring life. There can be a new beginning – for sinners, and for the world.

**Prayer**

Almighty God,  
as we prepare with joy  
to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child,  
embrace the earth with your glory  
and be for us a living hope  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Additional Collects*<sup>21</sup>

## December 25 – Christmas Day

**Reading** – Luke 2.8-20

*The glory of the Lord shone around them. On the mountainside – and in the stable – the glory of the Lord shone around. The glory of the Lord is irresistible to the shepherds; it is irresistible to Mary and Joseph; it is irresistible to us – once we have seen it. Who could refuse this call?*

**Prayer**

Eternal God,  
who made this most holy night  
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:  
bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth,  
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*<sup>22</sup>

## December 26

**Reading** – Matthew 4.14-16

*The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. The words, the hope, of the prophets is fulfilled. The light is revealed to all the world. It cannot be hidden. The darkness cannot overcome it. God will not be refused. His light is filling the whole world.*

## Prayer

God our Father,  
whose Word has come among us  
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:  
may the light of faith illumine our hearts  
and shine in our words and deeds;  
through him who is Christ the Lord.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*<sup>23</sup>

## December 27

### Reading – Isaiah 2.1-5

*Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!* Now we are drawn to the light. Now we are called to follow Christ. Now we are called to bring others with us. If we are obedient to the call the world will be changed for ever. In Christ nothing can ever be the same. It will be changed – conformed to the will, and the ways, of God.

## Prayer

In the face of Jesus Christ  
your light and glory have blazed forth,  
O God of all the nations;  
with all your people,  
may we make known your grace  
and walk in the ways of peace;  
for your name's sake.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>24</sup>

**December 28**

**Reading** – Luke 2.25-33

*A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*  
The light, the glory is for the whole world. What we have watched and waited for is come. It cannot be taken away. The light, once in our lives, remains. It is the sign of a God who keeps his promises.

**Prayer**

King of the universe,  
you show the bright glory of your reign  
in acts of mercy and enduring love;  
raise the spirits of the downcast  
and restore those who have fallen away,  
that we may sing for ever of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer*<sup>25</sup>

In addition to this booklet these daily reflections are available to download from the Benefice website ([fourcrosses.weebly.com](http://fourcrosses.weebly.com)) as a pdf, or for eBook readers (epub or Kindle). They will also be posted each day on the Benefice Facebook and Google+ pages (links to these are on the Benefice website) where you can join in a discussion if you wish (registration required).



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