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# Advent to Epiphany

 **Praise for God’s power** Luke 1:46-55 Let us sing the greatness of the Lord

and rejoice because God comes to save us.

*All* **Praise the Lord of hope.**

God has come down in blessing

to the one who is humble, a person unknown, and through her is doing a great thing.

*All* **Praise the Lord of grace.**

God is the unchanging one steadfast through all generations, and now is present with power,

in the coming of the Christ.

*All* **Praise the Lord of birth and death.**

In God’s coming

those are powerful meet the eternal power

and know how small they are, and those who are rich

meet the riches of grace and know their poverty.

*All* **Yes, Lord, come in power.**

God who led Abraham

and called Moses to his service and spoke through many prophets, come near us in a baby

cradled in the womb of Mary.

*All* **to be a blessing for ever, Jesus, our shepherd king.**

Bernard Thorogood

 **Fulfilment** Luke 1:68-79

A moment of crisis has come,

a time of opportunity and challenge.

Over the centuries we knew this time would come, a time when we must face reality.

*All* **Keep us true, O Lord.**

There were years of preparation, hints of the glory to come;

generations saw glimpses of the light and sought the path of God.

*All* **Keep us faithful, O Lord.**

But now it is a new day, a new era:

the last of the prophets is here to prepare the way speak the word,

and challenge our hearts.

*All* **Make us ready, Lord.**

And so after a long night dawn is coming

and the sunshine of God’s truth will burst through the clouds to guide us home.

*All* **Let your light shine on us today.**

In the Temple Hannah prayed

and the tears of distress flowed

as she poured her heart out to God.

Bernard Thorogood

##  Hannah prayed

‘Remember me,’ she cried, ’don’t forget me.’ Lord, remind us that you remember us,

that you knew us before we were formed in the womb, and that you cherish us;

help us to rest in the secure gentleness of your love, assured that you know us better than we know ourselves, content that we are remembered.

In the Temple Hannah prayed and the concerns of her heart were laid at the throne of grace.

So let us bring to God the concerns of our hearts:

For peace and unity amongst the people of earth, especially in Hannah’s land,

that vision and generosity may vanquish fear and assertion.

For justice and equity for God’s poor and put-upon ones,

that they may be allowed their share of the bounty of the earth, and the scourges of hunger and disease be parried.

For the nurturing of hope in landscapes of concrete walkways and urban impersonality

that strangers may be welcomed, cultures valued for their rich diversity

and the language of the knife and broken bottle be exchanged

for self-respect and confident friendship.

For the hurts and sorrows which cramp and confine us, and turn us into parodies of the people we could be that God might hear us and set us free.

Lord, you speak in Advent songs

offering your melody of change and transformation, a vision that things do not have to be as they are, that we can be different

and the world dance to a different rhythm, lions and lambs in stately gavotte together, the cow and the bear joined in friendship and a little child tending them.

No hurt, no harm on your holy mountain. advent God, lead us to Bethlehem

that it might be so.

Amen.

David G Cornick

 **Seeing is believing** Luke 2:29-32

Thank you, disarming God, for you have shown me that my work is done.

Today I have seen

and touched and blessed the one who will bless us all.

What a joy to be your servant today!

So now I know fulfilment.

So may we see and touch the gift of God

in every new life we meet,

each one a fresh word of grace. Bernard Thorogood

##  God of dark and light

God of dark and light, we praise you

for in the Spirit of Christ

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

In the warm dark,

in the silence of solitude, in the stillness of night, even in the scent of fear,

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

In the clear light,

in the sounds of laughter, in the security of friends even in the scorching heat

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

In the advent time

in the recall of faults,

in the remembering of sins, in the repenting of mistakes,

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

In this holy place

in the hymns of praise,

in the hush of expectation, in the host of saints,

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

God of dark and light, in you is welcome,

in you is forgiveness, in you is new life,

you are with us, your presence surrounds us.

Amen. Terry Oakley

 **Advent 1: Introduction to Communion** Luke 12:35-48

### Prayer

Lord Jesus,

prepare us for your coming.

Save us from the complacency

that can grow through familiarity with this great festival. Save us from going through the same motions,

the cherished traditions, the joyful celebrations

without seeing or understanding

the implications of your birth amongst us.

Here,

where bread and wine are set before us,

help us to know the full extent of what it meant

for you to take our flesh,

to live our life,

to suffer our fate.

Awaken us and our sleepy world. We are not ready to receive you. Our house is not in order,

the naked are not all clothed, neither are the hungry all fed.

Many are still imprisoned

and the poor do not hear good news.

Then stir us, Good Lord, so that we may greet you

as servants who cannot wait for the time to come

when you will reign with justice,

heal our conflicts,

forgive our failures

and show us the way that leads to peace. Amen.

Lord Jesus,

you have warmed and welcomed us at your table.

We came empty and you filled us,

hungry and you nourished us.

With new-found strength and fresh determination,

help us now follow in your footsteps and run the race of human life

until you bring us home victorious. Amen.

### Closing prayer

Duncan Wilson

 **Bible Sunday** Second Sunday in Advent In the beginning, God, you spoke your word

and the universe came to be.

People saw you in the beauty of creation and glimpsed your glory in the heavens.

After we had sinned and paradise was lost

you called your ransomed people to live by your law, written on tablets of stone.

As the ages passed, storytellers, poets and prophets told of your saving love

and longed for it to be written in the human heart.

When the time was ripe

you spoke your last and greatest Word

in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

Through him the Holy Spirit makes the Scriptures come alive and he meets us in its words:

we have felt his healing touch,

walked with him on the lonely road to Calvary and heard him speak his greatest work of love from the silence of his death upon the Cross.

By the power of your redeeming grace

we proclaim him risen and ascended in our midst.

[We praise you for the gift of the Scriptures in which we read how

the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

May your Spirit so move upon these gifts

that Christ is known to us in the breaking of the bread.

May he so touch our lives

that we become his witnesses today. As we follow in his way,

treasuring his words of life,

may we be faithful in the service of his kingdom to preach his Gospel in both word and deed, until the whole world knows your love

and is made one in your eternal praise.

*All* **Amen.**

Colin Thompson

 **Advent 3** Isaiah 6

***Opening Scripture*** Psalm 126 paraphrase When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion

it was as if health came new to the people,

hearts filled with laughter,

voices sang aloud with joy.

‘The Lord has done great things for us,’ the people said.

And they rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, Lord,

like fresh springs rising in desert places, that those who sow in tears

may reap with songs of joy,

bringing home the harvest of their labours. Amen.

We can hardly wait, dear God.

Looking out upon a world

that is far too familiar with Isaiah’s sorrows, the mounting ashes of our failures

and the heavy heart of human suffering,

your coming cannot be too soon. So pour out your Spirit now, today.

Bind up broken hearts

and release the good word and the goodwill

that we have held back too long.

Announce your clear intentions now. Garland your sorry world with joy and clothe it with

the splendour of your presence here.

Plant a new way of life

in which truth and justice stand rooted like a tree.

Make us into a new race of people who love justice,

cherish their commitment to each other and are eager for your coming.

We can hardly wait. Amen.

### Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

born for us in a stable,

making your humble way into our lives,

### Prayer after Communion

we praise you for your tireless search for lost humanity. Hold us we pray.

And so that we might serve you, and you alone, grant us your Spirit’s wisdom

to know and reject all that is evil and harmful, to turn only to you for our pleasure,

and to spend ourselves for the sake of your kingdom and its peace.

Amen.

Duncan Wilson

God, our beginning and our end,

##  Eucharistic prayer for Advent

based on Isaiah 40-55

in whom we live and move and have our being, we thank you for the gift of your presence through the long night of our travails.

You led you people on their journey into freedom,

a pillar a cloud by day, a pillar of fire at night.

You spoke to them through the Law, and when, like sheep, they went astray

you sought them and guided them home. You comforted them in times of suffering and called them to be a light to the nations. Now you do a new thing in our midst:

the voice of the Baptist cries out in the wilderness and the way is prepared for the coming of your Son. Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

Born in a stable of Mary

he comes to us in the form of a servant, friend of the poor and forgotten,

to open eyes that are blind and to lead the prisoners free.

He comes to preach good news of peace, to establish justice in our midst.

to share our sorrows and be acquainted with our grief. He comes to be despised and rejected,

to be wounded for our transgressions and to bear our iniquities.

He is led like a lamb to the slaughter bearing the sin of the world;

he is raised at the break of day,

and ascends to the heavenly places that we may rise with him.

Through him the Holy Spirit comes

to bring us and all creation to new birth.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

May the Spirit come upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may strengthen us on our journey

with the food of Christ’s own presence.

May the Spirit so increase our faith and our commitment that we may be Christ’s servants in the world,

until he comes again

and all your purpose, Father, is accomplished, in your eternal glory.

*All* **Amen.** Colin Thompson

##  Christmas Eve

Of all the nights,

in each and every year.

This one is special

time seemingly stands still remembering when,

eternity collided with the present, this re-shaping history.

Life could never be the same again.

years of patient expectation, prophesies in prose and poetry.

Realised at last. God in human form.

A sentimental story, just for children, some will say,

tradition and myth mingled together. A folk tale that warms the heart.

Yet these avoid the truth

rob the revelation of its power.

The creator chose

to do things in such a way.

A plan of salvation for this soiled earth,

he who measured our creation with a surveyor’s chain,

and positioned each star, chose to be re-born,

as a helpless child in a cattle crib

on that first Christmas night.

Each subsequent year we remember, recalling the message that numbs the brain,

stirs the soul, gladdens the heart

as we marvel at the magnitude of God’s love.

We thank you God for the light of your grace shining for us in Jesus.

In sharing our darkness

he has overcome the darkness.

In sharing his light

we have found our hope. It is true!

You do not abandon us

Your Word is alive among us, one of us.

We rejoice in your love, here for good in Jesus,

and begin to live as your children in your promised peace.

*All* **Amen.**

Where are you Lord Jesus, on this special night? Are you safe and warm in a Bethlehem manger?

Watched over by a loving mother. Gazed on in awe by simple shepherds.

Worshipped by wise men from far away lands. With a choir of angels to sing you to sleep.

Y Mochyn Daear

##  Christmas

Peter Trow

##  This special night

Where are you Lord Jesus, on this special night? Are you lonely, cold and afraid on some City street?

Preyed upon by drug dealers.

Moved on by those to whom you are an inconvenience.

Despised by the wealthy in their comfortable homes. Deafened by the City’s noise.

Where are you Lord Jesus, on this special night?

Are you lying in a hospital bed, frightened and in pain?

Or lonely and sad in your own home.

Waiting for that one person who will never come.

Isolated and unnoticed by the busy people all around you. Longing for someone to break the lonely silence.

Where are you Lord Jesus, on this special night? Are you hungry, thirsty and homeless?

With no idea when you will next get a meal.

Desperate for a drink of clean water.

Waiting for a rich World to drop a few pence in the collection box. Too exhausted to cry out at the injustice.

Where are you Lord Jesus, on this special night?

Are you there in the workplace, stressed and anxious?

Pressured to work longer and longer hours in a job you hate. Worried that you might lose your job.

Where decisions are made based on profit and not people.

Unheard and ignored by those around you.

You are here Lord Jesus, on this special night.

We see you in the face of the street child, the sick and lonely, You are the patient in the hospital bed,

the grief-stricken neighbour we avoid speaking to. You are the stressed colleague at the next desk, our unemployed neighbour.

You are here Lord Jesus, on this special night.

Waiting for us to offer a helping hand, a friendly face, a shoulder to cry on.

The recipient of our small change in the collecting box.

May we always be ready Lord to see you in those around us,

and to follow your example as we seek to care.

Dwell with us Lord Jesus, not just on this special night

but through all our bright days and dark nights.

Amen.

Vivian Salter

I stopped beside a holly bush smothered with berries scarce room for a pin branches covered

leaves obscured

bright in the winter gloom

*All* **Blood red**

Gathered for decoration trim up the church

hang the wreath on the door links with the distant past evergreen

tokens in mid-winter holly berries bright

*All* **Blood red**

Not just borrowed but made our own

remembering that holy birth

‘the word made flesh’

true humanity on earth

life pulsating in human veins

*All* **Blood red**

Bethlehem was just the start a long journey home

Nazareth to Calvary via Gethsemane living life to the full

all too short

it ebbed away on the Hill

*All* **Blood red**

Yet put of winter gloom comes a message of hope a simple tale

with profound repercussions not just for travelling scholars but local labourers too

love that is their life blood

*All* **Life blood**

##  Blood red

Y Mochyn Daear

We thank you, God,

##  Eucharistic prayer for Advent

Based on the Great O Antiphons

for your wisdom, that from the beginning ordered the universe and shaped the earth.

We thank you that of old

you showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush and revealed to him the law on Sinai.

We thank you for your promise spoken through the prophets of the One who was to come,

to open doors long closed

to bring deliverance from slavery and death.

He is the king of all the nations binding all in one;

his name shall be Immanuel, God with us, for whose coming we prepare.

Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

When he appeared among us

he brought light and hope to all in darkness.

His judgments were all mercy

his power was shown in words and acts of love.

He welcomed sinners and outcasts and made then glad with his presence. But Satan entered into human hearts and pursued him to the death.

We thank you that death could not hold him, that he rose again, ascended into heaven, and that he will come again

to establish for ever his kindgom of justice and peace.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

We pray that you will send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine,

that we may taste his death and resurrection and serve him through our earthly journey.

May he dawn upon the darkness of our time;

may we be ready to receive him when he comes in glory and you are all in all, one God in Trinity of love.

*All* **Amen.**

Colin Thompson

Light in our darkness Guide in our wandering Friend in our loneliness,

##  Eucharistic prayer for Christmas

one God of wisdom, power and love: when the night was half spent

the all-powerful Word leapt from your royal throne and came to dwell among us in great humility,

to seek and to save the lost. Born of Mary, naked and poor, he shone in our darkness

he revealed the way to the Father

befriending sinners, gently calling us to follow.

He is the longed-for Saviour,

in whom all human hope and longing finds fulfilment; in whom all outcasts find welcome and shelter.

Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

For his kingdom of justice and peace he gave up his life.

His love would not let us go even in the darkest hour.

He was raised at break of day

and his light shines for ever in our midst, undimmed.

He is present with us in this sign of love which he shared with his disciples

on the dark night of his Passion.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

May the fire of the Holy Spirit

come upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may stay our hunger and our thirst through his body and his blood.

May the power of that same Spirit

touch our dying loves and raise them to a flame

until the darkness is no more:

through him who was and is and is to be, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

God of surprises who is not locked up by our narrow thinking or small ways, we pray

for small children waiting for big presents especially for those whose parents are poor.

Colin Thompson

##  God of surprises

God of surprises changing the world we live in and calling us to new ways of being, we pray

for families who do not enjoy being together especially for homes where there is violence.

God of surprises born to be a man on the earth and calling us to use the earth well, we pray

for those who put themselves at risk who chain themselves to ships and lie on train tracks

we pray for the green warriors, for the challenging ones who work with you but outside respectable society.

God of surprises,

surprise us at this season because we are used to you and some are even faintly bored.

God who walked the earth we pray in your name. Amen.

Lesley Charlton

##  Sting in the tail

There’s always that sting in the tail with God. Just when you think you’ve got it worked out,

back he comes with something you hadn’t thought of. Something so blindingly obvious, but still you’d missed it –

well, I’d missed it –

and you’re pulled up short and made to think again.

This Christmas thing, for example. The carols seemed to say it all.

‘Joy to the World.’

‘Christians awake, salute the happy morn.’ And there’s many more, of course.

So very – well, collective, somehow.

God reconciled with all sinners. Christ came to save the world. And of course that’s right.

God did come to this world for everyone;

his message is for all people, everywhere.

And somehow, I managed to lose myself in the crowd. That word: ‘Everyone’ – such an all embracing term And so comforting at times.

You don’t have to think too much about it;

You know it’s large, comprehensive – and that’s it.

Perhaps it’s a bit impersonal at times, but you know what it means;

it takes in my neighbours, the people in the next road, everyone out there in the High Street,

in the next town or city;

we know it takes in other countries – across the channel, across the oceans, other cultures, other continents.

Yes – everyone.

And you think you’ve got it sussed.

Then God whispers in your ear; quietly, as he always does. And you realise there’s a bit you’ve missed.

Everyone includes ‘me’. God came for **me**.

Not just me, but I’m part of ‘everyone’ And so God came for me.

And that’s not always quite so cosy.

I can’t hide under this ‘everyone’ blanket all the time. The impersonal suddenly becomes very personal.

If God came in his love for all people, then he came in his love for me.

And how should I respond to that? And how **do** I respond to that?

Perhaps I need to think **that** through a bit more. Perhaps I need to thank God a bit more.

Perhaps I need to understand what ‘God’s love for me’ really means.

And to see the manger in a new light this Christmas time.

Brian Hudson

##  Eucharistic prayer for Epiphany

Creator who called light into being, Light shining in our darkness,

Fire of transforming love:

we praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the beauty of your creation,

the cost of our redemption,

the power of your renewing love. Your love is without limit,

your purpose knows no boundaries.

We thank you that you made the first of your covenants

made with Noah and every living thing; that you called to yourself a people

to be a light for all the nations;

that you also called others who did not know you: Rahab the harlot, who sheltered Israelites;

Ruth, a faithful stranger in Israel and mother of kings; Cyrus the Babylonian Emperor,

whom you used to accomplish your will.

From out of your chosen people

and from those whom you were pleased to call you raised up your Son to shine in our darkness, whose showing forth we celebrate with joy.

Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

*All* **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**

For he too loved outcasts and sinners:

he made streams of living water flow

for the woman of Samaria at the well;

he healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman because he saw her faith was great.

Yet he was despised, rejected by his own:

evil powers pursued him to the death and darkness covered the whole land.

But yours is a light no darkness can overcome: the flame of your love burned bright on Calvary to change death into everlasting life.

Our age-old sickness was healed

and of that healing this bread and wine is the sign.

[The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed

took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this is remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’]

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

*All* **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

May the living flame of your love

transform these gifts of bread and wine

that they become for us the body and blood of Christ and so nourish our lives

that we shine as light amid the dark places of the earth. And when all your purpose is complete,

may all your scattered children come with joy into the house of prayer for all the nations

and the whole creation join to sing your praise through Jesus Christ and in the Spirit evermore,

*All* **Amen.**

Colin Thompson

##  Epiphany – A prayer of confession

Child of the promise to Mary forgive our lack of hope and vision

and our failure to believe the good news you bring. Child of the annunciation

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child for whom there was no room in the inn forgive our judgment of others

our finding no room for them in our heart.

Child of the stable and manger

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child of poverty and humility

forgive our love of wealth and power and the slavery in which they hold us. Child of the gift of gold

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child of miracle and wonder

forgive our spoiling of the beauty of the world and our failure to live holy lives.

Child of the gift of frankincense

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child of great sorrow to come

forgive our fear of pain, suffering and death

and the despair which tempts us and haunts us. Child of the gift of myrrh

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child of poverty and persecution

forgive our complicity in systems which crush others and condemn the innocent to death.

Child of the wrath of Herod

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Child with nowhere to lay your head forgive our indifference to the homeless and to the plight of refugees.

Child of the flight into Egypt

*All* **have mercy upon us.**

Colin Thompson

The star was there in the sky for all to see – but not everyone saw it.

Just those men with open and enquiring minds.

A bit like the shepherds –

only a few heard the message of the angels and came to see the baby in the crib.

The rest of the world got on with its work,

unaware, blind to the immensity of what was happening.

Save us, Lord, from being so busy

that we don’t see the star in the sky,

that we don’t hear the angels bringing your message.

Forgive us when we miss the immensity of your incarnation. Open our eyes to the truth and reality of what your birth means,

not just as a December treat, soon to be forgotten, but as a guiding light for the months of the new year and as a message to lead us, all the days of our life.

##  Epiphany

Brian Hudson

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