

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 4, 2024

Weekly theme: Hope

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 50

1 The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.
3 Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.
4 He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

5 "Gather to me my faithful ones,
 who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
 6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
 for God himself is judge. Selah
 7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
 O Israel, I will testify against you.
 I am God, your God.
 8 Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
 your burnt offerings are continually before me.
 9 I will not accept a bull from your house,
 or goats from your folds.
 10 For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
 the cattle on a thousand hills.
 11 I know all the birds of the air,
 and all that moves in the field is mine.
 12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
 for the world and all that is in it is mine.
 13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
 or drink the blood of goats?
 14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
 and pay your vows to the Most High.
 15 Call on me in the day of trouble;
 I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."
 16 But to the wicked God says:
 "What right have you to recite my statutes,
 or take my covenant on your lips?
 17 For you hate discipline,
 and you cast my words behind you.
 18 You make friends with a thief when you see one,
 and you keep company with adulterers.
 19 "You give your mouth free rein for evil,
 and your tongue frames deceit.
 20 You sit and speak against your kin;
 you slander your own mother's child.
 21 These things you have done and I have been silent;
 you thought that I was one just like yourself.
 But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you.
 22 "Mark this, then, you who forget God,
 or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.
 23 Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
 to those who go the right way
 I will show the salvation of God."

DEVOTION

The Rev. Caitlin Werth '10

I invite you, after reading the scripture above, to sit for a moment, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. This is a tough passage for the Advent season! It doesn't exactly paint a picture of hope, peace, joy, or love, at least not in the way we like to imagine while listening to Christmas music, walking past holiday lights, or drinking hot cocoa.

But the first Advent was a tough season. It didn't have the same aura we work hard to create in our culture and time. Advent, at its core, is meant to be a time of eager and recklessly hopeful waiting. It first came at a time when salvation felt greatly needed. A time when God was about to do a new, amazing, miraculous thing that no one could have expected.

We now know what Advent brings, but the celebration that comes from that realization would be better suited for the Christmas season (starting on December 25).

What if, instead, we spent the season of Advent as a time of true listening for God's voice?

Psalm 50 reminds us that God speaking is action—a creative force. God spoke this world into being and continues to speak love. God is calling for us to hear that voice and respond in kind. God is not interested in what they already have, but instead, asks for thanksgiving. I don't believe God wants gratitude in the way we do (as affirmation) but as a way to bring us deeper into connection with our Creator. Our awareness and gratitude for all that God has done draws us close to the Heart of Love and sends us out to share God's mercy.

So instead of focusing on trying to cultivate the “perfect season” this Advent, let’s instead use it as a faithful preparation for the day when God broke into the world that she birthed. Instead of opening advent calendars filled with chocolates or Legos, let’s look around each day at the gifts we have already been given and lift up our praise: in hope, peace, joy, and love.

PRAYER

Listen to God’s voice now. Center yourself and become aware of God’s presence within and around you. Sit in silence or meditate on these words: “O God, you surround me and fill me.” As you feel God’s presence, lift up your thanksgivings, and when you are ready, share your “Amen.”

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