

*Come, Let Us
Adore Him*

A Daily Advent Devotional

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Come, Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional

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My mind is a puzzle, each piece placed by a pastor, professor, or mentor greater than I, all working under the gracious guiding hand of God. Through them I have come to know the Word, learned to interpret life, been humbled by a sense of my own need, and grown to love my rescuing Savior. To all those willing instruments in my past and present and by God's grace in my future, I say, "Thank you."

Introduction

It is a mind-boggling, hard-to-grasp, awesome story unlike any other story ever told. But what makes this story so wonderful and so important is not that its plot is way beyond anything you would've ever conceived. What makes this story vital to know and understand is that it is not a well-crafted fantasy. The thing that should make you stop in your tracks, activate your heart and mind, and fall to your knees is that this story is *real*. It took place in real time at real locations with real people. All human history was marching to the specific point in time when this story would unfold, and the implications of the events of this story reach to everyone who has lived since. The Christmas story is the story of stories.

When writing this devotional, I was brought to a new place of wonder and worship as I considered that that baby boy in the manger was not only a real human baby but also fully God. For the months it took to write this collection of meditations, it was wonderful to consider day after day that God knew that the only way to fix everything sin had broken was to give us the ultimate gift, the gift of himself. My prayer is that focusing on the glory of the incarnation of Jesus will fill you with wonder too.

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Permit me to share what motivated me to write a Christmas devotional. I've thought a lot about the danger of familiarity in our lives as the children of God. It is good to be familiar with the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It means that God has met you by grace. It means that he has opened the eyes of your heart to what, without him, you would not see or understand. He has drawn you close to his side. He has pulled back the curtain and shown you the deep mysteries of his redeeming plan. He has blessed you with the presence of his Spirit, who continues to illumine his truth for you. You are familiar with the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ because the love of God has been lavished on you.

But familiarity often does bad things to us. Often when we become familiar with things, we begin to take them for granted. When we are familiar with things, we tend to quit examining them. Often when we are familiar with things, we quit noticing them. When we are familiar with things, we tend not to celebrate them as we once did. Familiarity tends to rob us of our wonder. And here's what's important about this: what has captured the wonder of our hearts will control the way we live.

Let me give you an example. Pretend that you have moved to a new neighborhood and the first morning, when you go out to walk your dog, you happen upon a beautiful municipal rose garden. Although Fido is yanking on his leash, you just stand there, blown away at the display of early-morning beauty that is before you. You can't wait to get home to tell your family

what you discovered, and you're excited about taking them there to see it too. But as you walk by that garden day after day, something happens to you. Within a few weeks you walk by without stopping, and in a few months you don't even notice the roses anymore. Familiarity has done this to you; what you once celebrated, you now don't even notice.

Sadly, many of us aren't gripped by the stunningly magnificent events and truths of the birth of Jesus anymore. Sadly, many of us are no longer gripped by wonder as we consider what this story tells us about the character and plan of God. Sadly, many of us are no longer humbled by what the incarnation of Jesus tells us about ourselves. We walk by the garden of the incarnation, but we don't see the roses of grace anymore. Our eyes have gone lazy and our hearts have grown cold.

I know how easy it is for me, on any given day, to forget who I am and what I have been given in the person and work of Jesus. Other things in life capture my attention and the allegiance of my heart. Other things rise to levels of importance in my mind, way beyond their true importance. And when other things capture and control my heart, little room remains for wonder and worship. Familiarity often means that what is very important may no longer exercise important influence over us in the way it should.

So I wrote this devotional with the prayer that God would use it to recapture your attention. I wrote it with hope that this amazing story would reactivate your awe. I hope that as you read, your heart will be surprised by things in this

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story you've never seen before or maybe haven't seen in a very long time. I am going to ask you to come with me, kneel down, and look into that manger. I will ask you to look up and listen carefully to the song of the angels. I'm going to ask you to examine the wonder of the shepherds. And I will help you to grasp how this story is meant to enliven, motivate, excite, and transform you.

One year, for the thirty-one days of December, I decided I would dedicate the three tweets that I post every morning to the Christmas story. Those tweets are the foundation of the meditations that make up this devotional. Each meditation begins with a tweet, which is then explained, defined, expanded, and applied in the meditation that follows. Following each meditation are Scriptures to use for further study.

A Word to Parents

I added something in this devotional that wasn't in *New Morning Mercies* (Crossway 2014). At the end of each meditation I present *one central theme*, one core truth from the narrative of Jesus's birth for you to discuss with your children. Obviously, these meditations were written to adults, but they have nuggets of truth that every child could and should grasp. You can approach this devotional in several ways with your children. You may want to select a portion of the meditation to read to them, and then discuss the one central theme. You may think the meditation is too deep for them and choose to read all or a portion of the support Scripture, and then talk with them

about the core truth. You may just want to talk to them about the core truth.

In a culture that uses this season to get children to dream about how their lives would be made better by possessing a certain material thing, where Christmas has been reduced to a shopper's nightmare and a retailer's dream, it is vital to draw the wonder of our children away from the next great toy and toward the wonder of the coming of our great Lord and Savior, Jesus. Use these devotionals with the hope that, as you do, God will plant seeds of true faith in their young hearts. Take a few moments every morning or at the dinner table to take the thoughts of your children away from trees, carols, toys, snowballs, and cookies. Invest the time needed to introduce them to the multifaceted glory of the grace that is displayed in the coming of the promised Messiah to earth. You can use this devotional to fight what familiarity has already done to the way their young hearts think about Christmas.

May the glory of the best gift ever recapture our hearts so that we really do come to adore him and so that we will all live with a renewed appreciation for the grace that we have found in him.

May your Christmas be rich in spiritual blessings!

December 1

The angels sang because the everlasting Father had come to extend arms of redeeming grace to all who would give their hearts to him.

It is a wonderful, mysterious, hard-to-grasp, and beyond-the-scope-of-our-normal-reasoning story. But when you get it, when you come to fully understand the purpose and implications of this story, you will sing too. This story's amazing plot wasn't written when Mary got pregnant or when prophets began foretelling it or when God announced it after the disastrous rebellion of Adam and Eve. This story is so miraculous in every way that it could have only come out of the mind of God in eternity before the foundations of the earth were laid down by his mighty hand. It points to the divine imagination and screams the power of the divine hand. No man could write this plot and if he did, no man could expedite what he had written. This story is itself an argument for the existence of God and is a portrait of his holy character.

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The beautiful world that God had created was now broken and groaning—the direct result of the rebellion of the ones God had made in his own image and had placed his guiding and providing love upon. The evidence of its brokenness was everywhere, from the inner recesses of the hearts of people, to violence and corruption of government, to the existence of plagues and diseases. Sure, there was beauty still to be seen, but the whole world groaned under the weight of its brokenness. It would have been just for God to stay his distance, to let the world quake and groan. It would have been a just response to the arrogant rebellion that brought this brokenness on the world. But in one of the gorgeous mysteries of God’s sovereign grace, he looked on his broken, rebellious world with eyes of mercy.

Yes, God would act decisively, and his actions would be what he had planned in the beginning, but they would be a stunning surprise to every mere mortal. His response would not be condemnation and judgment. His response would not be a meting out of justice. Rather, his response would be intervention and rescue. He would do in grace what the law could never do. He would do in grace what we could never do for ourselves. He would do what philosophers could never conceive, what leaders could never strategize, and what poets could never imagine. He would offer the only thing that would ever address the need and solve the problem. He, himself, would become the greatest, most costly, most transformational gift ever.

God would take on human flesh and invade his sin-broken world with his wisdom, power, glory, and grace. But he wouldn't descend to a palace. Instead, the Lord Almighty, the Creator, the sovereign King over all things would humble himself and take on the form of servant; he would live on our behalf the life we could have never lived, he would willingly die the death that you and I deserve to die, and he would rise from his tomb as the conqueror of sin and death. He would suffer every single day of his life so that he could, with his life, give grace to rebels, extend love to those who would deny his existence, impart wisdom to those who think they know better, and extend forgiveness to everyone who seeks him. His coming stands as an affirmation that he will not relent, he will not be satisfied until sin and suffering are no more and we are like him, dwelling with him in unity, peace, and harmony forever and ever.

It is true that you just can't write this stuff! The majesty of the patient and forgiving love of this story defies words. The implications of this birth are not only transformational to the cosmos, but also eternal in their extent. This is the story of Jesus, born in a barn in Bethlehem. The Messiah the earth cried for now cries to be held by Mary and will soon cry in torment of the cross of salvation. He came to suffer because he came to save. The angels sang because finally hope had come. Don't you want to join them?

For further study: Luke 2:13–14; Revelation 5:8–11

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For parents and children:

Central theme: Singing

Ask you children what their favorite song is, ask them why they think people sing, read Luke 2:13-14 to them, and talk about why the angels sang at the birth of Jesus.

December 2

Jesus knew he had come not just to preach the gospel of sacrifice, but also to be that sacrifice, yet he was perfectly willing.



One of the dark character qualities of sin that we don't recognize as much as we should is unwillingness. We're often unwilling to do what God says if it doesn't make sense to us. We're often unwilling to inconvenience ourselves for the needs of someone else. We're regularly unwilling to wait. We're often unwilling to be open and honest. We're too often unwilling to consider the loving rebuke of another. We struggle to be willing to say no to our own wrong thoughts and desires. We often struggle to be willing to answer God's ministry call. Often we are unwilling to admit that we are wrong. Too often we struggle to serve willingly and to give generously. Unwillingness is one of sin's powerful damaging results.

So here's what the Christmas story is all about: a willing Savior is born to rescue unwilling people from themselves

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because there is no other way. Jesus was willing to leave the splendor of eternity to come to this broken and groaning world. He was willing to take on human flesh with all its frailty. He was willing to endure an ignominious birth in a stable. He was willing to go through the dependency of childhood. He was willing to expose himself to all the hardships of life in this fallen world. He was willing to submit to his own law. He was willing to do his Father's will at every point. He was willing to serve, when he deserved to be served. He was willing to be misunderstood and mistreated. He was willing to endure rejection and gross injustice. He was willing to preach a message that would cause him personal harm. He was willing to suffer public mockery. He was willing to endure physical torture. He was willing to go through the pain of his Father's rejection. He was willing to die. He was willing to rise and ascend to be our constant advocate. Jesus was willing.

You see, it's not just the Christmas story; rather, the entire redemptive story hinges on one thing—the eternal willingness of Jesus. Without his willingness, you and I would be without hope and without God. Without his willingness, we would be left with the power and curse of sin. Without his willingness, we would be eternally damned. During this season of celebrating don't forget to stop and celebrate your Savior's willingness. His willingness is your hope in life, death, and eternity.

But there is even more to be said. The Advent willingness of Jesus is your guarantee that he continues to be willing today. Right here, right now, he is willing to love you on

your very worst day. Right now he is willing to forgive you again and again. Here and now he is willing to be patient as you continue to grow and mature. Right now he is willing to battle on your behalf against evil within and without. Here and now he is willing to teach you through his Word. Now he is willing to supply every one of your spiritual needs. Now he is willing to be faithful even when you're not. He, right now, is willing to empower you when you're weak and to restore you when you've fallen. He is willing to comfort you when you are discouraged and protect you when you've stepped into danger. And he remains willing to do everything necessary to feed, guide, sustain, and protect you until eternity is your final home.

You see, the Advent story reminds us that our past, present, and future hope rest not on our willingness, but on the willingness of the One for whom the angels sang, the shepherds worshiped, and the magi searched. Willing Jesus is the only hope for unwilling sinners!

For further study: Hebrews 12:1–3

For parents and children:

Central theme: Willingness

Talk to your children about what it means to be willing and how the sin in our hearts makes us unwilling. Encourage them to talk about places in their lives where they're unwilling. Then talk about how Jesus came to earth and willingly did hard things because he loves us.