

# Advent Devotional 2019

## Preparing for the Coming of Christ

### Week One – Keep Awake



Can you spare a few minutes for God?

It is a busy season. We rush to celebrate the holidays with family and friends. But throughout the ages, at this time of year, the church calls her members all over the world to come in from the hurry and prepare the way of the Lord.

*This devotional guide is designed to help you set aside time to focus on preparing your heart for the coming of Christ. Within, you will find a meditation for the week and daily guides with short passages of Scripture, questions for your reflection, and suggestions for prayer. The Saturday/Sunday opening sets the theme for the week. This section is your weekend devotional. In it you will find an opening prayer, meant to be carried over into the week and prayed each day as you begin. There is also a spiritual practice for the week to help you incorporate the Advent themes into your day to day life. May you be richly blessed as you seek the presence of God this Advent and may it make your celebration of Christmas all the more meaningful.*

## Nov 30/Dec 1 – Saturday/Sunday – Reflection and Template for the Week

The Psalmist says that “God gives to His beloved sleep.” God created Sabbath that we might have rest and perspective. But sleeping at the wrong time can be dangerous. I was recently driving home from a late-night airport pick up and I was fighting to stay awake. Falling asleep while driving can have fatal consequences.

And so likewise in life. We can go through life in a fog-like sleep unaware of the things that are really most important. Jesus reminds us, the Scriptures remind us, that living that way can have fatal consequences for the state of our souls. This first week in Advent concentrates our attention on staying spiritually awake, being alert to God’s Presence in and around us all the time. It is so easy to miss the spiritual realities, forgetting the Lord as we get lost in the tyranny of the urgent in our day to day lives.



**The Interior Castle:** In her book, *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa of Avila likens the human soul to a castle with several rooms. She describes the journey of faith as passing through the outer darker rooms to seek the Presence of God in the inner-most room. There His light shines to enlighten the castle of the soul. As you enter the rooms of your castle each morning this week – begin the day by seeking to go to that deep dark place within your center. Imagine kindling the morning fire there to invite the warmth of God’s love and Light of Christ to your interior house as you awake to the new day.

*“The door by which we enter this castle is prayer. It is absurd to think that we can enter heaven without first entering into this castle and finding out our own sinfulness and how much we owe to God for our redemption...You will not be able*



*to enter all the dwelling places [of your interior castle] by your own efforts, even though these efforts may seem to you great, unless the Lord of the castle Himself brings you there.” -- St. Teresa of Avila, the Interior Castle*

**Opening Prayer (to use each morning as you begin)**

*Dear Heavenly Father, I will kindle the fire of my soul this morning in the presence of the holy angels of heaven. God, kindle in my heart a flame of love for You and for my neighbor, for my friend, my family, my foe, for everyone I meet. Lord Jesus, shine the light of the fire of*

*the Holy Spirit in the dark places of my soul, and by Your light allow me to see. This day, make me alert to Your Presence dwelling within me and Your hand at work in the world about me. O Holy Spirit set my heart ablaze with love for You now and lead me into the heart of God. Grant me eyes to see, ears to hear and a spirit to perceive that You are here, present with me now and throughout the day. In the Name of the One Who is Coming soon, Jesus Christ, the Lord. AMEN.*

**Scripture** from Sunday’s Gospel Reading:

*Jesus said, “Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour....Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives.” -- Matthew 24: 42-44,46*

**Prayer today:** Spend time praying for the week ahead. Ask God to help you to know Him present with you as you use these devotions, ask Him to speak to you, to guide you and to lead you. Ask Him to make you alert to the spiritual realities all around you. Ask Him to make you expectant that He will come again.

**Spiritual Practice** (to use each day this week *at the close of the day*)

Talk to the Holy Spirit and ask the Spirit to guide you as you reflect upon the day:

When did I feel most awake today? When did I feel the warmth of God's love, or sense the Light of His Presence? When did I feel lost in darkness or asleep to what was going on around me and within me? What is God saying to me now about this?

**Dec 2 – Monday – Opened Eyes to See**

**Begin** with the opening prayer for the week. Then read today's Scripture:

*<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup>Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. <sup>5</sup>For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup>and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. <sup>8</sup>For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For anyone who lacks these things is short-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. –2 Peter 1:3-9*

**Ponder:** Peter says if you forget these things you are short-sighted and blind.

1. How can one be blind even when they are physically able to see?
2. What things does Peter list that we should not forget?
3. Ask God to open your eyes to *really* see today – to be alert to any danger to the health of your soul. As you do, what comes to mind? What is He guiding you to see?

**Close:** Ask God to enable you to see Him at work in your life today.

**Remember:** to use the spiritual practice from Saturday/Sunday at the end of your day.

**Dec 3 – Tuesday – Attentive Ears to Listen**

**Begin:** with the opening prayer for the week. Then read today's Scripture:

*<sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup>We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. – 2 Peter 1:16-18*

**Ponder:** Peter says the power of the Lord Jesus Christ was made manifest with honor and glory at Jesus' baptism. Those who were there heard God's voice from heaven.

1. What would it have been like to be there and hear God's voice from heaven?
2. How might one person listen to another even when no audible voice is heard?
3. Ask God to enable you to listen to His voice. As you do, what comes to mind? What is He helping you to hear?

**Close:** Ask God to enable you to hear His voice today.

**Remember:** to use the spiritual practice from Saturday/Sunday at the end of your day.

**Dec 4 – Wednesday – Lighting the Interior Darkness**

**Begin:** with the opening prayer for the week. Then read today's Scripture:

*<sup>19</sup>So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. – 2 Peter 1:19-21*

**Ponder:** Peter says that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets in the Scriptures. He says that being attentive to them is like bringing a lamp into a dark place or like a morning star rising in our hearts.

1. What might it mean to go through life in broad day-light but feeling like you are in the fog or darkness?
2. How can a clear message bring light and understanding?
3. Ask God to make you attentive to His Holy Spirit speaking through the Scripture and into your life.

**Close:** Think of a verse or two of scripture you know by heart. It can be anything. What comes to mind? Take that scripture with you throughout the day. Try saying it to yourself whenever you have a moment: on a break, while driving, or at any time you can.

**Remember:** to use the spiritual practice from Saturday/Sunday at the end of your day.

### **Dec 5 – Thursday – Delay Does Not Mean Never**

**Begin:** with the opening prayer for the week. Then read today's Scripture:

*This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you <sup>2</sup> that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. <sup>3</sup> First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts <sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, <sup>5</sup> all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" <sup>6</sup> They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, <sup>7</sup> through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. <sup>8</sup> But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. <sup>9</sup> But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. – 2 Peter 3:1-8*

**Ponder:** Peter says do not be mistaken. Just because it has been some time and Jesus still has not returned to set things right does not mean that He never will. A delay doesn't mean it will never happen. Do not presume that each day will just bring the status quo, that God isn't going to shake things up at any moment!

1. What surprises have you experienced in your life? Any surprise God-moments?
2. What difference might it make to your life to live alert and expectant that Jesus Christ is coming back very soon?
3. Ask God to help you live today alert and expectant.

**Close:** Try to live today as if it were your last day on earth.

**Remember:** to use the spiritual practice from Saturday/Sunday at the end of your day.

### **Dec 6 – Friday – It Could Happen Soon**

**Begin:** with the opening prayer for the week. Then read today's Scripture:

*<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you <sup>10</sup> not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>11</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. <sup>12</sup> Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>13</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>14</sup> But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. – 2 Peter 3:9-13*

**Ponder:** Peter says that the heavens and the earth will pass away and be dissolved in fire. Therefore, we should live lives focused on the things that will last into eternity. This means you ought to be leading lives of holiness.

1. What do you think it would have been like to have been in the twin towers on 9/11 or on board the Titanic? What regrets might those who died have had?
2. If today was the end of the world or the end of your life, what regrets would you have?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit within to help you live today and each day in such a way that if it was your last you would have no regrets.

**Close:** Thank God today that even if it is the last day, we need not fear, because of the work of Jesus Christ in saving us.

**Remember:** to use the spiritual practice from Saturday/Sunday at the end of your day.