

ADVENT: A GUIDE

BONUS CONTENT

Sneak Peek

MARY'S LULLABY

A mother's song

You are my son
Whom I love.

With you
I am well pleased.

Here in my arms,
You don't have to do anything,
But
Be.

My love for you
Is deeper than you can imagine
Wider than you can now fathom
It reaches high to the heavens
It surpasses my own understanding.

These are the days I will treasure
Forever
The moments I'll remember

The memories I'll ponder
The gifts I'll cherish
The magic and the wonder

That I alone
Am called to be
Your mother.

Today, I am yours
And you are mine.

My beloved one
My sweet child
My son.

READ

1 Samuel 2:1-10 & Luke 1:46-55



LOVE IS HERE

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

BY SARAH
BOURNS
CROSBY

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INTRODUCTION

Love Is Here

Have you ever felt that you've blown through yet another Christmas season without taking the time to seek the “withness” of the One who has promised His loving presence to all who seek Him?

It's all too easy to get sucked into the undertow of the mistletoe and miss the inspiration of the In- carnation. And even though we often heap guilt and shame on ourselves for getting too caught up in the trimmings, our Emmanuel continues to stand at the door eagerly awaiting our company— like a longing parent anticipating the return of a deeply missed child. And when we walk through the door, road weary, beaten down, and disoriented, we become entrenched in the undeniable reality that *Love Is Here*. This is where we long to be. This is where we find rest and restoration. This is where our hope is renewed. This is where we belong.

Sometimes all we need is a guiding hand to ease us back in. This is what Sarah Bourns Crosby offers us in this volume of Advent poems, passages, and prompts. Set aside some time each week to sit before your “God with you” as you reflect on these “withness” meditations. Resist the distractions. Resist the lies that tell you you may not be worthy to enter in. But don't resist the invitation back to where you truly belong.

Advent, from the Latin *adventus* meaning “coming,” represents the period of preparation for the birth of our Emmanuel at Christmas—and also of preparation for His imminent return at the end of the age. Meanwhile, dwelling here in the in-between, we are assured of His presence among us as we linger in His love and extend it to those longing to know that ***Love Is Here***.

Emmanuel. God be with you.

Sarah Bourns Crosby writes poetry around themes of hope, waiting, lament, love, and God's faithfulness. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her husband, Paul, and twin sons. You can read more of her work at sarahbournscrosby.com.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Christian tradition of Advent is a season of both remembrance and looking ahead, of waiting and stillness. Advent spans the four weeks leading up to Christmas, and the passing of each week is represented by lighting a candle with a specific meaning each Sunday.

Week 1: Hope

Week 2: Peace

Week 3: Joy

Week 4: Love

A fifth and final candle—called the Christ candle—is lit on Christmas Eve. The light of these candles is symbolic of the light of Christ, which pushes back the darkness.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” –Isaiah 9:2, 6

Each devotional includes an Old Testament and New Testament reading along with a Psalm. Additional passages are included for Christmas Eve. Every Sunday during Advent, and on Christmas Eve, meditate on the passages listed, ponder the poem by Sarah, and discuss or pray through the prompt. Whether you use this devotional guide over the dinner table, with a small group, or individually, we pray it will enrich your life in Christ this Advent season. For those who wait, wander, and weep, for those experiencing loss, longing, and love this Christmas—may you come to know afresh that He is with you.



ADVENT WEEK ONE
THE CANDLE OF HOPE

READ

Genesis 18:9-15, 21:1; Luke 1:26-45;

Psalm 27

BLESSED IS SHE

A poem for those who wait

I am Sarah
Bitter and barren
Burnt out by this promise that never
came Worn out from waiting
Laughing to hide the aching
Longing for these empty arms to hold
a baby But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Tamar
Tired of trying so hard
Pushed away, cast aside
Left with no one to provide
Longing for these wrongs to be made
right But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Rahab
Used and abused
Body broken, soul bruised
Working late into the night

Weary, just trying to survive
Longing for some good to come from this
tattered life But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Ruth
Grieved and alone
Left with nothing, far from home
Back, breaking
Heart, aching
Leaving so much behind
Longing to start a new life
But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Bathsheba
Angry and ashamed
It was never supposed to be this way
Years of resentment
Tears of regret
Longing for this story to be redeemed
But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Elizabeth
Washed up and nearing the end
Disappointed, again and again and again
Wanting things to finally change
Wondering if it's just too late
Longing for faith to still believe
But oh . . .
How could that be?

I am Mary
Overwhelmed and afraid
Young and small and anything but brave
I had plans, I had dreams,
But now everything has changed
And I don't know if I'll have what it takes

But I do know I'll trust you anyway.

Oh Abba,
Why me?
Oh Abba,
How will this be?

The Holy Spirit will come upon you
And the power of the Most High will
overshadow you So this child to be born of
you
Will be the Savior of the world.

For behold,
She who was said to be barren has conceived
And she who nearly lost hope still believed
And she who was worn out from waiting, held
a baby And she who was grieved, her story
was redeemed And she who was broken, was
honored and healed.

For nothing
Is impossible
With God.

Blessed is she
Who believed
That there would
be A fulfillment
Of the promise
Yet to be seen.

*(And,
Blessed are you
Who still believe
That there will be
A fulfillment
Of the promise
Yet to be seen).*

A PROMPT

What are you currently longing and trusting for with radical hope? What are you believing that you have yet to see? About what have you found yourself saying, "How could that be?"

Would you now speak, out loud, over your disbelief, doubt, or fear the same words Mary said, "May it be to me **just as You say**" . . . even if it comes in a very unexpected way?



GET THE FULL DEVOTIONAL:

SarahBournsCrosby.com/Advent-Guide



ADVENT PILGRIMAGE

An Advent Sermon Series

BY SARAH
BOURNS
CROSBY

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Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem

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- 11** **Advent Week Four:**
A Journey of LOVE
The Messiah's journey to dwell with us

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INTRODUCTION

OVERALL CONCEPT

We are keenly aware that things are not as they are “supposed to be” or as we wish they would be. The advent season carries the expectation of joy and peace, amidst the ongoing reality of loss and heartache and deep disappointment. We live in a **liminal space**. We hold the reality of what is true **now**, and we hold onto the hope for what is **not yet**. We experience the ever present **both/and**.

Those who experienced the very first Christmas must have known this **tension** too. Nothing was quite as the ancient people thought it would be. Every element of the events around Christ’s birth were surprising or confusing or opposite and upside down from what they “should” have been. The juxtaposition of a king in a stable, of shepherds as heralds, the poverty of Mary and Joseph, foreign non-Jews being the primary worshippers, a refugee Savior, the insignificant town of Bethlehem etc... It all makes for a very disorienting setting. A perfect introduction for **Christ’s pilgrimage on earth**-- the ultimate “now and not yet” journey, a true liminal space.

Enter the idea of **pilgrimage**. A pilgrimage is a sacred journey for spiritual transformation. The purpose is less about the destination and more about the actual walk itself. On the way, **pilgrims are transformed BY their journey**. As disciples of Christ, we are pilgrims “along the Way of Jesus,” living our earthly lives in the continual liminality of “**now and not yet**” as we travel with Jesus and are transformed in the process.

That first Christmas, there were **4 “pilgrimages”**-- Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem (representing the entire Israelite history toward the Messiah), the Magi’s long journey from the East, the Shepherds traveling from the fields to the foot of the manger, and Christ’s own pilgrimage to dwell with us on earth.

INTRODUCTION

We can imagine these travelers were changed along the way, that during their journeys there was a soul transformation. They were walking toward a new way of living and seeing the world. In their time of "liminality" they carried with them "the hopes and fears of all the years," the waiting and longing and anticipation, before turning the page and entering a new era of eternal history.

We'll pair each of those pilgrimages with the four candles of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. **We'll use these journeys as a framework for understanding our own in-between place.** As we hold both disappointment and hope, unrest and peace, loss and joy, fear and love, may we move more and more toward the latter. We will incorporate the BOTH/AND theme throughout.

KEY IDEAS / PHRASES:

- Pilgrims/Sojourners
- A sacred journey
- Walking the way of Jesus
- Now and not yet
- Paradox
- Liminality, Liminal space
- Waiting, Anticipation, Expectation
- BOTH/AND
- This is not our home
- Pilgrimage as a life-long journey
- Pilgrimage vs tourism or travel
- Foreigners in a far country
- Pilgrim practices, "along the way"



ADVENT WEEK ONE A JOURNEY OF HOPE

A JOURNEY OF HOPE:

Mary and Joseph's pilgrimage to Bethlehem (representing the history of the Israelite people waiting for the Messiah)

FOCUS:

Introduction to the series (explain both pilgrimage and advent, and how they go together) HOPE usually involves waiting, perseverance, and surrender

*See sample message by Sarah <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-nrLonj7aQ>

POSSIBLE PASSAGES:

Isaiah 9:2 (and other prophecies of the Messiah)

Exodus (wandering of the people of God in the wilderness, waiting)

Matthew 1 (genealogy of Jesus, stories of ancestors who hoped but didn't see fulfillment)

Hebrews 11 (those who waited in hope)

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2 (Mary and Joseph's unique journeys)

KEY IDEAS:

Mary/Joseph carried with them “the hopes and fears of all the years...” from Israel's long history.

The long-awaited Savior came so differently than they imagined, his way is upside down.

A 90-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem (5-7 days of walking). What was their experience along the way?

Mary and Joseph held both surrender and hope—great expectation and suffering

God simultaneously met and shattered their expectations.

***We see how God fulfills promises while also acknowledging that they might be really different than we wanted or hoped.**

***How can we hold onto hope and yet release our own expectations and surrender to God's ways?**

POSSIBLE POEMS:

Blessed Is She

For Those Who Wait

Advent Is



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