

Advent Daily Office
Week of December 20

Morning

Intro

Welcome to the practice of the Daily Office. In this practice we are seeking to ground our lives more deeply in God's presence as we pause each morning, mid-day, and evening for silence, scripture, and prayer. This is the season of Advent. On the church calendar these four weeks are a time of preparation for Christmas. It is a time to get in touch with our deepest desires and the expectations we place on God. What do you desire this year; what are you longing for today? Advent is a time on the church calendar to get in touch with these desires and to wait expectantly for God to meet the deepest of our desires, the fruit of a life lived in the presence of Jesus.

Will you join us in this journey?

Silence

Let's begin in silence. Silence helps us to settle the internal and external noise and distractions that so often stand in the way of our ability to hear the Lord.

Take a deep breath.

Remember, right now, that God is personally present with you. The coming of Jesus, his incarnation, is a sign of God's incredible desire to be with us. Have you ever considered this? God wants so badly to be with you, that Jesus emptied himself and became one of us.

Take another deep breath. Remember that even now, scripture teaches, God is with you.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

Scripture

This morning, we will enter into the story of Jesus's birth. The church has a long tradition of reading the Gospels in such a way that we see ourselves in the story. The purpose of this prayer is to meet Jesus face-to-face.

This morning, let's imagine ourselves in the place of the shepherds. Holy Spirit guide our hearts and

Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

Imagine now that you are one of the shepherds on the hillside that night. Place yourself in the scene. Look around. What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you feel and smell?

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

How do you respond to the sudden and startling appearance of this messenger of God? What emotions are rising in you?

The angel continues...

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

Imagine this sight, the armies of heaven singing and praising God. What do you notice? What is stirred within you?

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

Imagine yourself following the shepherds down the hill and through the streets of Bethlehem.

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

Take in the scene. Notice Mary and Joseph. Now turn your attention to Jesus, the savior of the world, lying in a manger. Take in the sight of him.

Now imagine he looks at you, look him in the eye. Linger in this moment, you and Jesus.

Glory be to the Father, and to the son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mid-day

We pause now in mid-day. How have you expected Jesus to be present today? How have you waited on the Lord?

Silence

Let's allow the hurry, anxiety, and distractions of the day to settle now as we let go and entrust it all to the one who is with us and loves us more than we can possibly understand.

Take a deep breath. Madeline L'Engle wrote, "There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation." This means that Jesus is present in all of life, and he is present with you now.

Take another deep breath.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

Prayer

Will you join me in praying the lyrics of O Come, Emmanuel?

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel.
O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel.
O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Amen

Evening

Silence

Tonight, we pause to rest in humble expectation for the Lord to come.

Let us first pause in silence, so the busyness of our day might settle and allow us to become more aware of our desires.

Take a deep breath.

Remember Jesus not only *is* with you, but Jesus *wants* to be with you.

Take another deep breath.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

Prayer

In this season of expectation and waiting, we are coming to grips with the truth that our deepest desires are for love and joy and peace, but we cannot produce this fruit on our own. It is the fruit of the Spirit after all, not the fruit of our strength and will. Our desires are only fulfilled in the presence of Jesus.

Throughout this Advent season, our evening prayer will be the same, a simple prayer of reflection. Let's examine our day and notice when we waiting on the presence of the Lord and when we moved through the day in our own strength and will.

But let's begin by reviewing our day in gratitude. As you look back on the events of the day, for what are you grateful. Take a moment now and name your gratitude in the presence of Jesus

Now examine your day. When were you waiting on the presence of Jesus? How did you notice that God was with you as you went about the ordinary tasks of life? How did you trust God to meet your deepest desires?

As you continue examining your day, how did you move through the day in your own strength and will? When did you feel God was absent from your ordinary life? How did you try to bring about your deepest desires on your own?

Now choose one moment from your day and talk to the Lord about it. It may be a moment when you waiting on Jesus or one in which you worked alone, but take this time to have a conversation with God.

Finally, let's look ahead to tomorrow. How might God be inviting you to walk more fully with Jesus tomorrow?

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.