

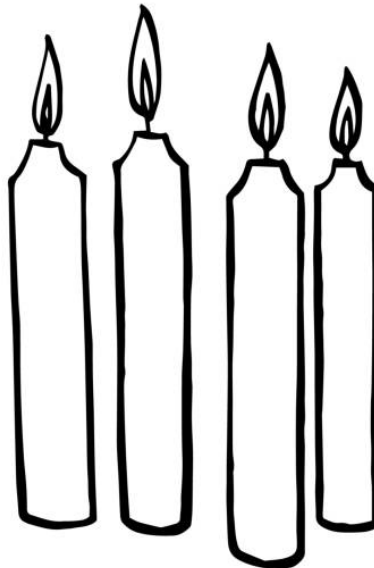
O Come!

**Brief Reflections and
Questions for the Days of
Advent**

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Advent 1 Sunday

“the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Pet. 3:10)

Surprise! God shows up, God with us, even when it seems impossible. But sometimes you need to have your eyes open to see what’s happening. We may discover God active in our lives from the beginning and inviting us always closer. Suddenly we may recognize God with us, closer to us than we are to ourselves.

How is God active in your life? How does God show up for you?
Are you ready for surprise in this Advent?

Advent 1 Monday

“My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody. Awake my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.” (Psalm 108:1-2)

Wake up! Jesus comes to us and invites our best response. Eyes open. Fully alive. Hearts open. Don't miss this. Don't sleep through it. Sing your best song. Don't be shy. It's a new day, a new morning. Wake up!

Where do you see God today? How do you respond? What will you give back? What will you create? How can you share what you have received?

Advent 1 Tuesday

“In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; early in the morning I make my appeal and watch for you.” (Psalm 5:3)

“First light” comes before dawn, the first hint of light in the dark night sky. Advent comes to us as the very beginning of Jesus’ approach, the first light to dispel the darkness. Dawn is wonderful to see. The darkness may seem endless but suddenly there’s a quiver of light and new hope. A new day is dawning, a new light in our hearts, possibilities before us, our Lord comes to us this morning.

What do you discover in this new day? What is possible?

Advent 1 Wednesday

“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1)

Jesus comes to save us. He comes to bring what we need. He is water for the thirsty, food for the hungry, relief for the hurting, healing for the broken, guidance for the lost, love for us all. He’s the answer to prayer. He’s the prayer in our hearts. And he’s coming closer. He invites us to drink the water that quenches our thirst. He invites us to be satisfied.

What do you need? What can you share? How do you know God present?

Advent 1 Thursday

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.” (Isaiah 9:2)

These are dark days, the shortest days of the year in terms of sunlight. These are dark days, with no shortage of threats and worries in every news cycle and in our lives. We yearn for light. New light is entering our world. It’s just beginning. Sometimes we must look for it. Sometimes we need to look hard. Sometimes we find the light already in us, and we can share it.

What do you see? When are your darkest times? How do you find the light of Christ?

Advent 1 Friday

“The one who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the Lord is his name.” (Amos 5:8)

This is a new beginning, a time of creation. God makes new things in a new time, and God makes us new. This is a time of creation. Do you see it? It's love writ large. The maker of heaven and earth makes us and renews us. God creates a new heart in us. God makes us a new people and invites us into creation. We can share his work of creation in this place.

How do you see God in the world around us? Do you find God revealed in nature? How do you witness God's creation? Do you experience creation in your own life?

Advent 1 Saturday

**“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”
(Isaiah 40:3)**

God is coming to us in all kinds of times. God comes with love, hope, salvation—but never by force. Love invites welcome and a choice to accept love. God comes with power but never overpowers. In this season God comes to us new, as if for the first time. It’s a new year, a new beginning. There’s light in the darkness, warmth in the cold. God’s invitation is for us, calling us to wake up, stand up, and welcome. Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight a highway that leads to our heart.

What are the paths that lead you to God? How do you find them? How do you know them? How do you travel them? Are there obstacles for you to remove on your path to God?

Advent 2 Sunday

“We wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.” (2 Peter 3:13)

God is with us and comes to us for transformation of our world. Our Lord is no escape hatch or other-worldly diversion. We pray for God’s kingdom to come on earth as in heaven. We pray for God’s kingdom of justice, righteousness, and mercy. We celebrate God’s gift. We pray for a place where people are treated fairly and included with love. God’s love changes everything. God is coming for righteousness. God is coming for us.

How can we offer God’s righteousness a home? What can we do that makes a difference for others? How does God inspire us to share our gifts?

Advent 2 Monday

“For God alone my soul in silence waits; from him comes my salvation.” (Psalm 62:1)

This is the hardest time of the year to slow down, to “take time,” to wait. There are wonderful things for us to see in this new year, but we may miss them if we hurry. We need to make room for God’s approach. The Lord may surprise us at an unexpected time. Our attention reflects our love. We offer back our patience, and our willingness to wait. Nothing on our agenda is more important.

What will God show us today? What will we hear? What do we discover when we wait? Have you been surprised by God?

Advent 2 Tuesday

“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isaiah 40:9)

God comes to us with good news, glad tidings of hope and comfort and love. The Advent of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, is good news. The light of Christ casts out darkness and brings new clarity. The hope of Christ breaks through despair. Christ’s presence invites us to an adventure of faith with possibilities beyond our imaginings. The love of Christ overcomes fear. Together in Christ we discover freedom to live fully the gift we receive and share with others.

Does love overcome fear in your life? Have you known Christ present in difficult times? What is your good news today? Does this season bring new hope for you?

Advent 2 Wednesday

**“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I send me!’”
(Isaiah 6:8)**

Jesus is born into our world for us and our salvation. Jesus comes in love because that's who God is. God loves us and seeks to share divine life with us. God's love is free. We don't have to qualify for it or earn it. But we're called to receive God's love and share it. Praying, growing in faith, knowing God - changes us. If we engage God's generosity we can grow in giving. If we receive God's forgiveness we can discover more heart to forgive others. If we know God's love we can love abundantly. We listen for God's approach with patience and quiet and may find ourselves called to action when the time is right. Our quiet in this season is rich soil and fertile for what comes next in living faith.

How does God send you today? What is God's surprise for you? Do you see a new direction?

Advent 2 Thursday

**“As the deer longs for the water-brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God. My soul is athirst for God, athirst for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?
(Psalm 42:1-2)**

Eagerly we look for God’s approach in our life. Without God we’re dry, parched, empty. Our Lord comes to us in our darkness and confusion and we begin to see light. God comes to us with healing love when we are in pain. Our Lord invites us to drink deep from the well of grace and know a love that makes us alive. God will not leave us thirsty. We yearn for this touch, this appearing. God shows up in our lives, constantly. We need to see our Lord. We need to discover what God reveals.

What does God show you today? How do you discover God’s presence? What do you need from God? How does God surprise you?

Advent 2 Friday

“Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:4-5)

Are you ready? Are you prepared for God coming to you? We don't have to make it happen. Grace is free. God will find us. But the barriers between us and God can obstruct. We can get in the way of our own salvation. Advent is a good time to remove the obstacles and stumbling-blocks to faith. Preparing the way for God's approach may have little to do with changing the landscape or geography and everything to do with change in us. We can prepare our hearts. We can begin to remove the barriers between us and God. We can allow time to slow down, listen, pray. We can hear God's call and discover new possibilities to share God's love with others. We can reflect God's light in a darkening world. The new landscape can be in us to welcome God's advent.

How do you prepare for God's coming? Does anything obstruct God's approach for you? Do you need to make any changes? What do you hope for in this season?

Advent 2 Saturday

“Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling.” (Psalm 43:3)

Do you ever feel alone? Unsure of your direction? The light of Christ enters the world for guidance. Christ comes to us for love and our salvation. We're free to choose our path, but not abandoned. Christ comes to bring us home. The light of Christ penetrates our darkness and whatever obscures our hope. Christ is our pioneer, our leader, the one who goes before and shows us the way. We know him with each step.

Where do you find Christ in your life? Where does he lead you today? Does Christ offer you a new path?

Advent 3 Sunday

“And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’” (Revelation 21:5)

“Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things.” (Psalm 98:1)

We are made new in God. Our Lord comes to us as we are, but will not leave us as we were. The old wounds, the broken pieces of our lives, are bound up and made whole in Christ. We make a new start. This is a season of new beginnings, a clean slate prepared by our creator, a time to start fresh. A new day is breaking, and we may be surprised to see ourselves in its light. We're not alone. Love finds us, and love draws us together. Christ comes for love, saving us, inviting us to respond. We can offer ourselves. We can sing his praises, share his love, invite others to share, and be made new.

How is God making your life new? How are the pieces of your life made whole in Christ? How can you offer yourself? How can you sing God's praises (with or without music, with or without words)?

Advent 3 Monday

“Put your trust in God; for I will yet give thanks to him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God.” (Psalm 43:6)

Jesus comes to us in the midst of our darkness, mistrust, and confusion. It may be hard to trust if we've been hurt by betrayal in the past. We may be reluctant to surrender control or put ourselves at risk to move forward in faith. Trust is at the heart of faith. We trust God's love and invitation for us. Like the fishermen who left their nets to follow Jesus, we may have no idea where we're going or what will happen. But we trust our Lord will be with us on a journey that saves. Knowing Jesus, trusting him, makes it possible for us to move past our old habits and distractions to follow him.

What does trust in God mean for you? How do you experience trust in God? What makes trust difficult for you? What helps? Where is God leading you today? What's changing for you?

Advent 3 Tuesday

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.” (Isaiah 9:2-4)

God comes into our world to deliver us from sin and death, fear and hopelessness, isolation and hurt. The light we begin to see in Advent is our invitation to live, to heal, to come together. God delivers us from everything that separates us from loving God and each other. God delivers us from everything that separates us from ourselves. God delivers us from every diversion and distraction, every idol and deception that makes us less than we're called to be. This is God's grace, a gift of divine love, but also an invitation for our response. God sets us free to live but we must choose it. God offers us love without end but we must receive it. We may know God's love as we accept it, allowing love to shape us, sharing love with others. That's our deliverance from every obstacle, every hindrance to life that saves.

Do you face obstacles to God's love that you would like to remove? How do you say yes to God? How will you share God's love?

Advent 3 Wednesday

“As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” (Mark 1:2)

Have you heard a lonely voice? Have you been a lonely voice? Sometimes it can feel that we're not being heard. Sometimes we forget to listen. We may find ourselves in a wilderness of confusion, doubt, and conflict. But we're not alone. We may see first light, the newly breaking day. We may begin to hear a call to prepare and make ready. We can let God in. We may be surprised by discoveries of God with us in daily life. It helps if we're watching, listening.

Has God found you when you felt alone? Have you been surprised by God? When has God found you in the wilderness?

Advent 3 Thursday

“I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” (Psalm 130:4-5)

Waiting isn't easy. We're out of control. Things aren't happening on schedule. There may be no end in sight. We just have to wait. Waiting for God means we focus on our Lord instead of ourselves. We pause our impatience and agenda. We may watch for some time without a glimpse of what we seek. It's worth the wait. The first signs of light can bring joy in the morning. We'll see more clearly as the new day comes. We can be patient to wait and eager to see. We may not be expecting what awaits us.

What do you hope for? When have you waited for it? How do you know it when it appears? How does it change you?

Advent 3 Friday

“How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.” (Psalm 84:1-2)

Where do you belong? In our lives we may live in many houses, we may call many places our home. Like soldiers returning home from conflict, we may find ourselves homeward bound, seeking a place of rest that’s our own. We seek our true home. Christ brings us home, and we find our true home with him and each other in his name. We long for that place and we desire to share it. Advent comes with a challenge and an invitation to see our true home in Christ, surrounded by love.

Where is your home in Christ? How do you find it? How do you know it? How can you share it?

Advent 3 Saturday

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)(KJV)

We yearn for the completion of God’s love in our lives. Today we can know God’s presence in our lives but not yet in fullness. As we come to know God we want to see even more clearly. We want to know God without interruption, without obstacle, without distraction. We express this yearning, this longing for the fullness of God in Advent. It’s a new beginning, the dawning of a new day, the start of a new life. It’s so wonderful, and yet it’s a beginning that makes us feel our need for completion even more sharply. We want to see God face to face and we cry out for more: Oh, Come, Emmanuel! God be with us!

How do you see God with you today? Has God surprised you? What do you hope to see? What gets in the way?

Advent 4 Sunday

“See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.” (Isaiah 40:10-11)

God comes in power; God comes in love. God’s advent changes everything for the sake of love. In love we see with new eyes. In love we find new capacity to give and receive. In love we welcome each new approach of God to be with us. We know God’s love even more deeply as we share the gift with others. Our Lord gathers us together and gently leads us. God takes us beyond ourselves and our limitations.

How does God come to you? How have you been changed in love with God? What have you given and received with God’s help? How does God change your heart?

Robert Boak Slocum is the author, editor, or co-editor of fourteen books, including *The Anglican Imagination: Portraits and Sketches of Modern Anglican Theologians* and *Seeing and Believing, A Journal of Devotion*. He received his doctorate in theology at Marquette University, and taught as a lecturer and visiting assistant professor in the Theology Department at Marquette. He later served at St. Catharine College in Kentucky as dean of the School of Arts & Sciences. He taught courses in religious studies and ethics as a professor at St. Catharine College. He was the president of the Society of Anglican and Lutheran Theologians, and the co-convenor of the Society for the Study of Anglicanism. He served on the board of the Anglican Theological Review. He is an Episcopal priest, and he has served congregations in the dioceses of Louisiana, Milwaukee, and Lexington. He was ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Lexington. He lives in Danville, Kentucky, with his wife, Victoria, and currently serves as the Associate Dean for Virtual and On-line Formation at All Saints' Cathedral, Milwaukee. He has three grown children, Claire, Rebecca, and Jacob.