

Time for Peace



*An Advent devotional that invites you
to cultivate a moment each day for
peace and prayer.*



A Note from Pastor Nate

Advent is a season that invites us to explore a plethora of emotions and ideas. This time of preparation has long been considered one of the most holy times on the Christian Calendar.

This devotional book invites you on a journey through Advent and through its different themes. Each day you'll find a coloring page with an image that's connected to the theme of the day. You'll also find a short meditation, a scripture passage, and a short prayer, all connected to the day's theme.

The hope is that you'll carve out a moment for peace during this Advent season. Take time to slow down and to relax into the simple, childish process of coloring the page as you meditate on the scripture and reflection. You can also speak the words of the prayer repetitively as you color, as a way of further internalizing the prayer.

Above all, allow this creative, prayerful, pause in your day to connect you with the sense of peace that pervades this holy season, as we all prepare to share in the joy and wonder of Christ the newborn King.

Peace and Grace,

Pastor Nate

HOPE



Perhaps the greatest gift our faith offers us is a well of unending hope. We believe in a God who is beyond our comprehension and so that means that there is always hope for the future. God can make all things new. God can do the unexpected.

Scripture: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” - Jeremiah 29:11

Prayer: “Mighty God, you hold the future.”

JOURNEY



Our lives are journeys from location to location; experience to experience; one moment in time to the next. And our faith declares that we don't make this journey alone. God watches over us, Jesus encourages us, and the Holy Spirit guides us.

Scripture: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

Prayer: "As I go on my way, God be with me."

WAITING



Waiting is an act of trust. During the season of Advent, as we wait for the Christmas celebrations, we are encouraged to get in touch with this act of trusting in God. Just as we can be confident that the joy of Christmas will arrive, we can also trust that God will keep the promises that we wait for; promises of reconciliation, redemption, and resurrection.

Scripture: "I wait for the Lord; my soul waits, and in his word I hope"
- Psalm 130:5

Prayer: "Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart."

FEARS



The most common phrase in the Bible is simply: “Do not be afraid”. It seems that this message, more than anything else, is what God wanted to communicate to humanity. We have no reason to fear because we know that, in the end, everything will be drawn back into the loving reality that is God.

Scripture: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

-John 14:27

Prayer: “God, dispel my fear, and center me in your presence.”

WISDOM



God desires for us to live abundant lives; to appreciate the fullness of the human experience. That is why God's Word is very focused on the importance of wisdom. God desires for us to not simply know "correct answers", God wants us to rely on wisdom that is born from the experience of others. God wants us to wisely follow the path of faith, which at times may seem counter-intuitive, but which is the path to a full and abundant life.

Scripture: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." - Proverbs 2:6

Prayer: "Grant me the wisdom to follow your ways."

SLOWING DOWN



Busyness is perhaps one of the largest obstacles keeping us from recognizing the presence of God. Many spiritual practices are simply invitations to slowing down and becoming mindful of the present moment. God is always with us and present in every moment and so, when we can intentionally be here, in the present moment, we discover our God who is always waiting for us.

Scripture: “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” - Matthew 11:28

Prayer: “Help me to slow down and see your presence in this moment.”

PEACE



God is like a loving parent, longing for us to know that we are safe and loved—always. There is great peace in allowing this reality to rest upon our hearts and minds. There is nothing we need to accomplish or achieve, there is only the freely given grace of God. And so we find peace in simply accepting the acceptance that God offers.

Scripture: “in you alone God, I dwell safely.” - Psalm 4:8

CARE



The care we receive from God is meant to fill us with peace and hope for the future. But it is also meant to inspire us to care for others in this type of life-giving way. What we have received from God, we joyfully share with those whom God has placed into our life. In this way, the world really can be changed by God's love for the better.

Scripture: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you." - Ephesians 4:32

Prayer: "Teach me to love others as you love me."

WILDERNESS

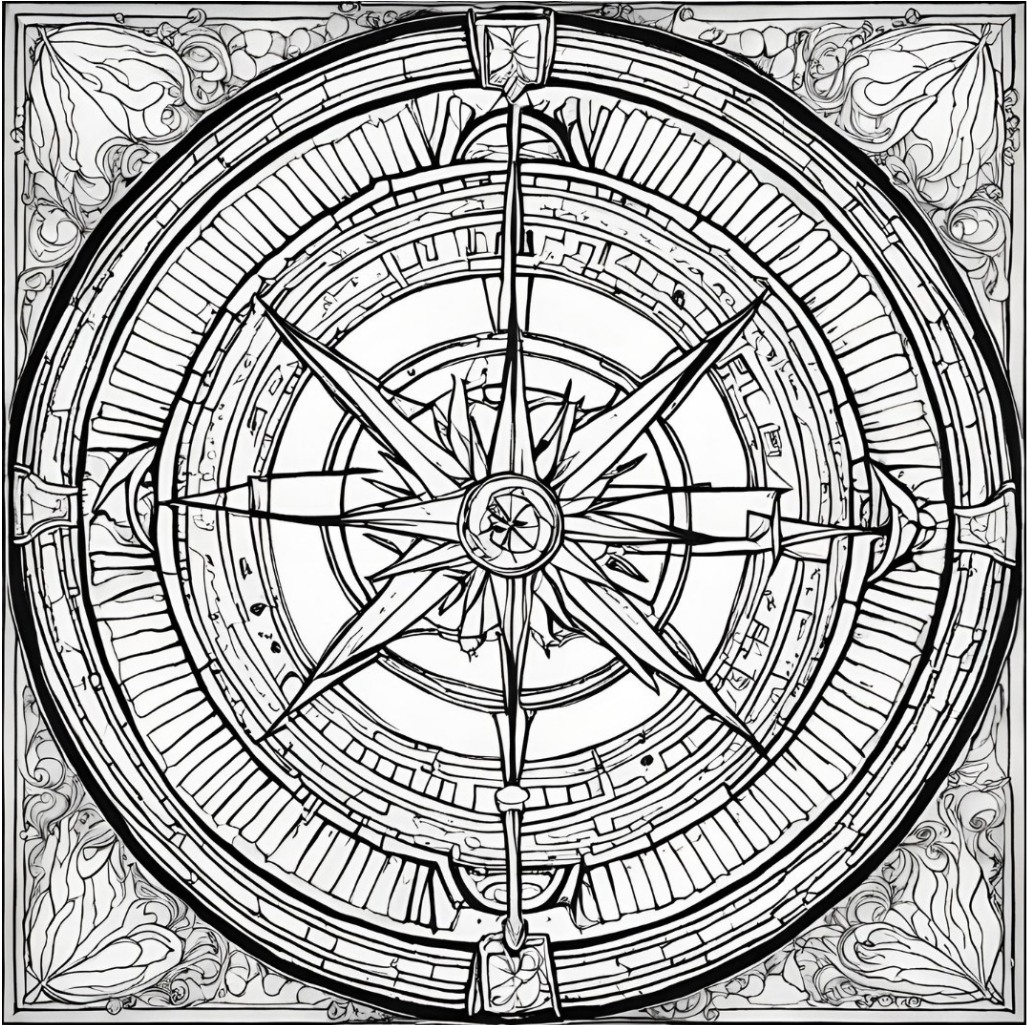


We can experience wilderness moments in our life. Times when our faith feels dried up and the pathway forward seems desolate and uncertain. But the scripture is filled with stories of God showing up in the wilderness. These stories can serve as reminders to us of God's history. We know that God has appeared in the wilderness before and so we can have faith that God will also appear in the wildernesses of our lives.

Scripture: "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

Prayer: "When the path seems lost, O God, be our guide."

GUIDANCE



Life often presents hard decisions and the process of weighing one's options can be stressful and uncertain. But, as people of faith, we can bring our concerns before God through prayer. God is always willing to guide those who are willing to trust in God.

Scripture: "And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"
-Isaiah 30:21

Prayer: "God, show me your will and your way."

PREPARATION



This time of year there are so many preparations to undertake. We decorate our houses, we bake all sorts of Christmas goodies, we write and send Christmas cards and, of course, we shop for the perfect gifts. But Advent also invites us to prepare our hearts; to take time to till the soil of our souls. We do not jump directly to Christmas, instead we are invited to allow the early days of December to prepare us for the Christmas celebration with renewed joy.

Scripture: “Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

- Luke 21:36

Prayer: “When the path seems lost, O God, be our guide.”

STILLNESS

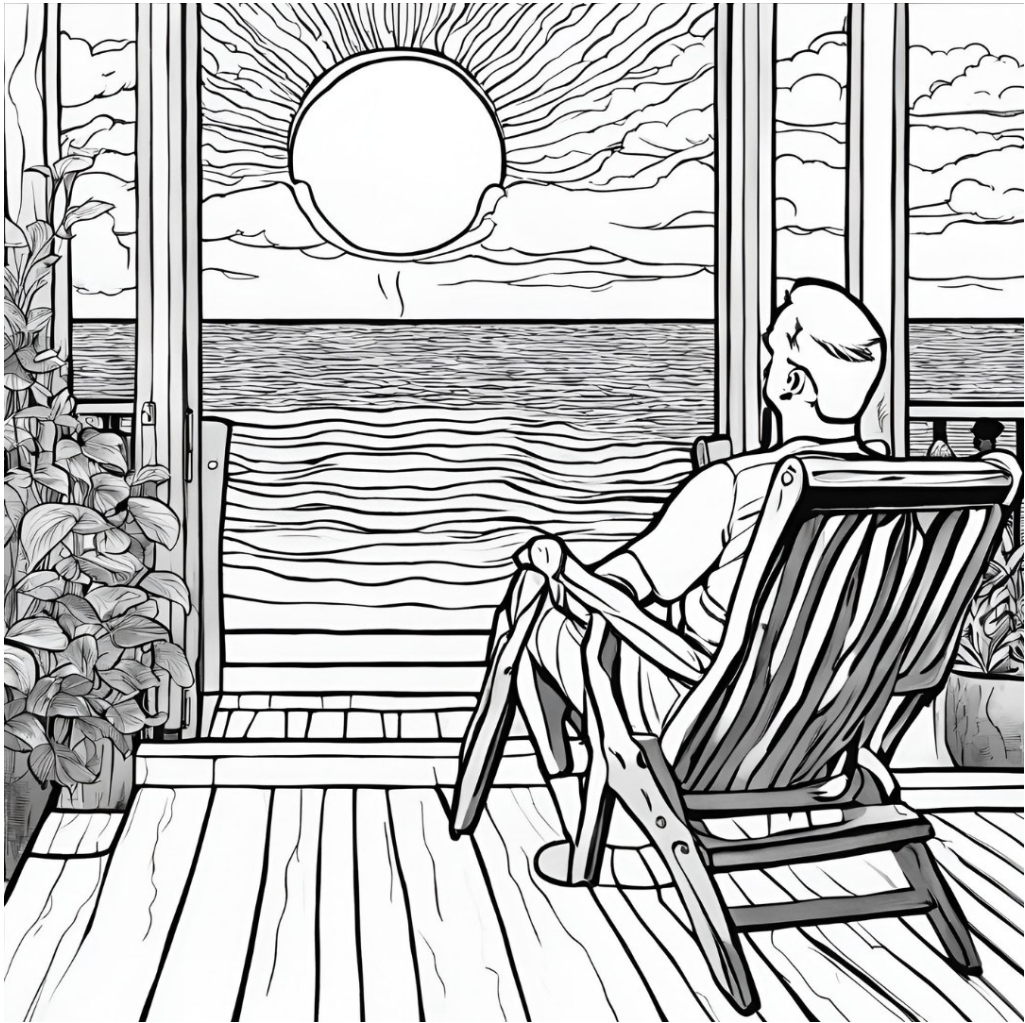


When God created the heavens and the earth, God worked for six days and then rested on the seventh. Later on, when the Israelite people were given the 10 commandments, God established the seventh day as a day for rest. In our fast-paced world, it can be hard to embrace the idea of sabbath and stillness, yet this is what God commands us to do. Taking time to be still is a gift that God longs for us to discover and accept.

Scripture: "Be still and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

Prayer: "God, grant me the courage to be."

WATCHING



There are many points throughout the Bible where people are instructed to "keep watch". This simple instruction is a powerful invitation for us to embrace. When we keep watch, we approach our present reality expecting God to appear. We take note of the small and big ways that God is truly present in each passing moment. Advent in particular, is a time when we are invited to cultivate this type of attentiveness to the ordinary movements of God.

Scripture "Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." - Matthew 26:41

Prayer: "Give me eyes to see the ways you are God."

JOY



Joy is something different than happiness. It's not just a fleeting emotion of delight. It's an enduring, deeper, soul-level sense of contentment. Joy is what a life of faith has to offer us. When we follow Jesus and live in the ways that he taught, we discover a way of life that is more abundant and more joyful than anything else the world has to offer. This is because Jesus' path of love, compassion, and humility is the way God always intended for us to live-- and so that is where true joy is also found.

Scripture: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! - Philippians 4:4

Prayer: "God, help me to find the joy in this day."

COMPASSION



The word Compassion means "to suffer with". I believe that understanding this definition provides a new insight into Jesus' death. There has always been a great deal of focus on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as being a moment where Jesus suffered for the sins of the world. But we might also say, that Jesus' death reveals a God who will always suffer with us. Whatever heartache, pain, doubt, or suffering we face, we know that we do not face it alone, for we believe in a God willing to go to the cross so that the entire world might understand the fullness of God's love.

Scripture: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Prayer: "God, help me to care for others, just as you have cared for me."

GENEROSITY



The days that lead up to Christmas are strongly focused on giving. The giving of gifts, the giving of time, the year end charitable giving that comes every December. I think this is more than appropriate because Christmas is ultimately about a gift. God gives Godself to us. God exits the heavenly, infinite realm and becomes a finite human being. God leaves behind power and glory and might to be born as an innocent and fragile baby. What a gift we have been given: that our God would be willing to become this vulnerable. God gave up so much in order to be in relationship with us. What a gift.

Scripture: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Prayer: "Teach me to share what I have been given."

UPLIFTING THE LOWLY



God becomes lowly for our sake. First by coming down from heaven and entering the world as a tiny baby. But then again, Jesus gives up his very life for the sake of all humanity. Throughout the scriptures we see this same theme play out. God is constantly caring for those who are vulnerable and lowly. Whether it was the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt, or the outcasts of society in Galilee, the Bible tells a story of a God who works to compassionately connect with the vulnerable and to uplift the lowly.

Scripture: "God has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the lowly." - Luke 1:51-52

Prayer: "Give me the courage to care for those in need."

ANTICIPATION



Anticipation is usually viewed as a positive experience. We look towards the future with excitement, anticipating events that are to come with hope. However, anticipation has a close cousin -- anxiety. Sometimes, when we look towards the future our mind wanders into anxious thoughts about negative consequences that might await us. The human body doesn't know the difference between the two. If you are excited, your pupils dilate, your heart rate quickens, and you may start to sweat. In the same way, when you are nervous about the future, your pupils dilate, your heart rate quickens, and you may start to sweat. The subtle difference between excitement and fear is simply our mindset. As people of faith, we have been given thousands of reasons to anticipate a hopeful future. Our mindset can be one of excitement because we know that the future is in God's hands and that in the end all of creation will be reconciled back to God.

Scripture: " Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." - Hebrews 11:1

Prayer: "As I wait, I trust in you O God."

LIGHT



During biblical times, there was no electricity. This meant that once the sun went down, everyone had to rest from their labors. It also was a dangerous time when criminals could more easily steal or harm others under the cover of darkness. During the winter months, as days grew shorter and shorter, people would sometimes grow worried and superstitious, fearing that the sun might go down one night and never return. These realities are the very reason that the celebration of Christ's birth was established during the very dead of winter. Christmas falls immediately after the shortest day of the year and so is aligned with the returning of the light. Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the one who guides us through long nights, protects us from harm, and dispels our fears.

Scripture: "In The Word was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."
- John 1:4

Prayer: "Christ, be my light, scatter my fear and worry."

SHALOM



The word shalom appears throughout the scriptures and in English we translate this word to mean "peace". However, God's Shalom is actually something so much larger than peace. Shalom is the deep peace that God promises to continue to work for in all of creation. Shalom is a reality where justice and righteousness create quietness and confidence in all people and all nations, forever. When we understand the enormity of what shalom entails, it can fill us with a deep sense of gratitude for what God is trying to give to us all. God is longing for us all to join in bringing about a world like this, where God's Shalom can rest upon everyone.

Scripture: " The Lord's justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever." - Isaiah 32:16-17

Prayer: "May your shalom rest upon my heart, soul, and mind."

LOVE



The plethora of holiday movies that appear in theaters and on streaming services this time of year often communicate a message of love. The secular side of Christmas spreads messages of showing your love through gift giving or being with the ones you love for the holiday celebration. While we often like to draw clear distinctions between the Christian message and the secular Christmas message, the truth is that love lives at the heart of both. Christmas really is about being with the ones that you love, because the true message of Christmas is about a God who loved creation so much that God chose to come down from heaven in order to be closer to the ones God loved. While the movies might put the focus on more material themes, the message of being with the ones you love truly lives at the heart of this season.

Scripture: "For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another." - 1 John 3:11

Prayer: "Help me to love, as you love."

GLORY



We are called to give to God the highest of praise. The season of Advent and Christmas is filled with beautiful songs and festivals and worship services that all aim to glorify God for sending to us the gift of Jesus. God is mighty and glorious and beyond our comprehension and so there can be real power in emptying ourselves of any pride to simply glorify God. We give glory to God and we allow our worries, our doubts, our egos to take a back seat as we consider the vastness of God's blessings and the overwhelming gift that Jesus is to our lives.

Scripture: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all."

- 1 Chronicles 29:11

Prayer: "May my life bring glory to your name, O God."

NEW LIFE



During Advent we prepare and look ahead towards Christmas day when Jesus is born. We are waiting for new life to come into the world. And in the same vein, we are invited to always look toward the future, hoping for the new life of Christ to take root in us. Our faith is based on this idea of transformation. God can take what is old within us and make it new. God can take what is sinful or wrong or out of place and, through God's loving compassion, we can be made new each and every day. Advent invites us to connect with this sense of hope; with this eternal promise of New Life in Christ.

Scripture: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Prayer: "God of resurrection, create new life in me and through me today."

HUMILITY



So much of Jesus' message and ministry seems to be built around the theme of humility. Christ is the King of Kings, and yet he never pursued power or fame.

Christ is the Lord of Lords and yet he gave up his life on a cross. Christ reigns eternally in heaven and yet he entered the world as a lowly, fragile, child, born in a manger to unwed parents. The life of Jesus Christ reveals to us a downward path of humility that runs completely counter to the dominant messages of our world. However, it is a message that Jesus longs for us to receive and internalize. We are called to humbly move through this life. As John the Baptist said, we must decrease so that Christ can increase.

Scripture: "Humble yourself before the Lord, and God will lift you up."
- James 4:10

Prayer: "God, show me how to decrease, so that you might increase."

FAMILY



There's so much focus this time of year on being together with family for the holidays. And at the same time, there can also be a lot of sadness as we consider those who are not sitting with us around the Christmas dinner table. Family is an important part of so many people's lives and the Christmas story also carries these themes. Joseph traveled to the town of Bethlehem because it was the town of his family-- he was returning home. When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem their family began with the birth of Jesus. And when we consider the birth of Jesus from a theological lens we also see that it is the story of humanity becoming a part of God's family. By becoming a human person, God chose to become like us; to be with us in a clear and real way. We are all part of the human family and, through the birth of Jesus, so is God.

Scripture: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; in Jerusalem you will be comforted." - Isaiah 66:13

Prayer: "Thank you God for making me a part of your family."

PRAISE



Christmas Eve is the night of the year when nearly every church sees its largest attendance. Even as our society moves away from religion, something about this season and the story of Jesus' birth moves the hearts of millions to respond with praise. At Christmas we give ourselves over to the songs of Christmas, and we joyfully celebrate the themes of this season; themes of love, new life, family, and hope. Allowing ourselves to truly praise God, all the blessings of Christmas can change us and our perspective on the world. Praise isn't just something we do for God, it is something that reorients us in the midst of a world that is often far too focused on the negative.

Scripture: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." - Psalm 150:6

Prayer: "Let there be praise and joy in my heart."

EXCITEMENT



Our faith can guide us through difficult patches of life. There's great comfort in knowing that God is with us in our pain and suffering. But our faith also gives us so many reasons to approach each day with joy and excitement. The mysterious and whimsical ways of God invite us to be surprised, again and again, by the unexpected movements of God's grace. During these final days before Christmas, excitement is often at an all-time high, amongst children and adult alike, as we anticipate the approaching holiday. But what if we carried this type of excitement with us throughout the year? What if we could trust God enough to approach each day with a sense of joy and wonder as we discover again God's grace in our lives.

Scripture: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." - Nehemiah 8:10

Prayer: "Gracious God, fill me with excitement for the gift of this day."

INCARNATION



Christmas is the celebration of God becoming human. The fancy word that gets used is "The Incarnation" -- God becomes incarnate; God becomes flesh and lives as we live. This is such a radical claim because God is often thought of as a being that is completely other. God is vastly different than us, so far beyond our understanding and comprehension. And yet, Christians make the bold claim every Christmas, that this same God willingly left heaven and became human. The incarnation is God revealing to us the sheer depth of God's compassion, humility, and love for us. Not only that, but the incarnation reveals that God is deeply relational, longing to be close to us; longing to understand us; longing to be in relationship with us. Through this devotional journey to this day, we have cultivated times of peace and connection through these pages. I pray that these reflections have provided you with a sense of closeness to God. Remember that this connection to God not only can fill your heart with peace and hope, but know that this connection is something that God desires more than anything.

Scripture: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

Prayer: "God, you are with me, now and always."



May God's peace and hope
be with you, this Advent season.