



Make Ready for Holy Disruption

Introduction

Advent carries two simultaneous visions of our expectations: we await yet again the birth of the babe in the manger, and we also await Christ's coming again to fulfill all things. We often prepare for Advent by "getting ready": planning, organizing, and ordering supplies for various gatherings and worship services. Yet preparing for the coming of Christ is not a matter of having everything under control. Christ's arrival disrupts—disrupts injustice, sin, and brokenness in a society in which we are deeply embedded. A prayer for Christ to come to us is a prayer for a holy disruption of our lives that we cannot control and that we might struggle to accept.

This midweek Advent series based on the Service of Word and Prayer in All Creation Sings (pp. 42–45) is built around four steps to help us recognize our resistance to God's inbreaking and prepare for God's holy disruption: breathing, releasing, receiving, and rejoicing. Each week's liturgy will focus on one step. Although worshipers can benefit from each service individually, each step builds upon the ones preceding. Together they form a spiritual discipline that reminds us (as does the liturgical year itself) that discipleship is always a process requiring intentional practice. Advent, the first season of the church year, reminds us to return to our sense of longing for and expectation of God's coming into our world. In this worship series we pay attention to opening ourselves to the holy disruption of God's inbreaking promise.

Week Three: Receiving

Greeting

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
the love of Christ that guards our hearts and minds,
and the joy and consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Opening Prayer

Generous God, you provide all that we need. We thank you that you do not give us what we want, but what you, in your wisdom, desire for us. Open us to the miracles surrounding us every moment, and teach us to expect your coming throughout each day. Pour out upon us your overflowing mercy, justice, and peace. Teach us to trust your abundance so thoroughly that we share all that we have received from you, for the healing of the world and the proclamation of your name. In the name of the Holy One who was, is, and is to come. **Amen.**

Silence

Word

Psalm 42:1-8

¹As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

³My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

⁴These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng
and led them in procession to the house of God,

with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help ⁶ and my God.

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

⁷Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your torrents;
all your waves and your billows have gone over me.

⁸By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Ezekiel 47:1-12

Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there water was flowing from below the entryway of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east), and the water was flowing down from below the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east,^[a] and the water was trickling out on the south side.

³ Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits and then led me through the water, and it was ankle-deep. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand and led me through the water, and it was up to the waist. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, “Mortal, have you seen this?”

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. ⁷ As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. ⁹ Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰ People will stand fishing beside the sea^[c] from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹² On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”

Galatians 4:4-7

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God.

John 1:1-23

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in

him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²² Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

Silence

Reflection

Prayer

In Romans Paul tells us, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (8:26-27).

*Prayers reflect the wideness of God's mercy for the whole world—
for the church universal, its ministry, and the mission of the gospel;
for the well-being of creation;
for peace and justice in the world, the nations and those in authority, the
community;
for the poor, oppressed, sick, bereaved, lonely;
for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;
for the congregation, and for special concerns.*

Savior, we wait for you; **hear us as we pray.**”

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus, for whom we wait.

Amen.