

Jesus, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace...



The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel - “God with us”

It is Advent again – for many of us it can be a time of great busyness, even of stress. For some, the joy of the season can be diminished by this busyness, or by loneliness, illness, or a sense of obligation in ‘doing’ all the things we associate with Christmas: shopping, presents, cooking, etc.

And for some, there might even be a sense of “Oh no, Christmas again!”

For many reasons, it can be easy to lose that sense of mystery that Mary experienced when the angel first spoke to her, to lose that wonder and awe that the Shepherds experienced in that field of glory, and to miss out on the sacred sense of worship the Wise Men experienced at the culmination of their journey.

Mystery...awe...wonder...sacred worship

Perhaps we can never truly experience the same mystery and wonder the first witnesses to the birth of Christ experienced.

But as we take time out during these next weeks to contemplate Christ, Jesus, the Son of God and all that he is, we may be able to capture some of the mystery and awe the Incarnation can awaken in us.

There is no one phrase, title, name or even experience that can come anywhere close to truly capturing all the mystery and wonder of the incarnate Jesus – so, let’s look at some several different ones.

And perhaps, as a way of marking the days in Advent this year, you can meditate each day on a different name of Jesus - and kneel in awe and wonder that he is who is, that he was, he came and he always will be.
(see below)

Link: <https://youtu.be/Ou8bELKjnBI>

Jesus: Emmanuel, Prince of Peace...



Call to presence

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light! Isaiah 9:2 (MSG)

Celebrate His light today!
Come into His presence with joy!

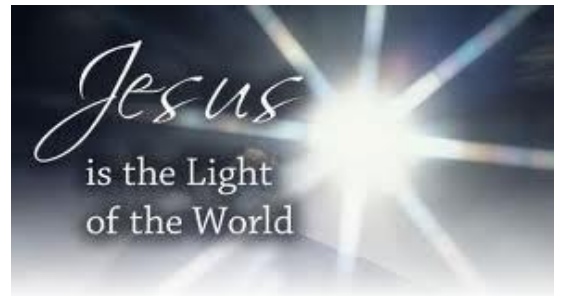
Prayer

O Christ, our Morning Star,
Splendour of Light Eternal,
shining with the glory of the rainbow,
come and waken us
from the greyness of our apathy
and renew in us your gift of hope.ⁱ

Scripture

For a child has been born—for us! The gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counsellor, Strong God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.

(Isaiah 9:6-7 MSG)



Song

What hope we hold this starlit night
A King is born in Bethlehem
Our journey long, we seek the light
That leads to the hallowed manger ground

What fear we felt in the silent age
Four hundred years can He be found
But broken by a baby's cry
Rejoice in the hallowed manger ground

The son of God, here, born to bleed
A crown of thorns would pierce His brow
And we beheld this offering
Exalted now the King of kings
Praise God for the hallowed manger ground

Emmanuel, Emmanuel
God incarnate here to dwell
Emmanuel, Emmanuel
Praise His name Emmanuel

Emmanuel, Emmanuel
God incarnate here to dwell
Emmanuel, Emmanuel
Praise His name Emmanuel
Praise His name Emmanuel
Oh, praise His name Emmanuel

Scripture

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"
(which means "God with us").

(Matthew 1:18-23)

Reflection

Which of these names or titles of Jesus speaks to you right now?

Who do you need him to be at this moment?

Choose a name and simply ponder what that name says to you about Jesus for this time in your life.

Offer your own prayer of thanksgiving and worship.



“Who is this...?”

*The Pharisees and teachers of the law asked this as Jesus forgave a man of his sins,
and then spoke words of healing over him. (Luke 5:22)*

The disciples asked this on a stormy night as Jesus stilled the wind and waves. (Mark 4:41)

*The guests at Simon’s dinner party asked this question
as Jesus forgave the sins of a weeping, worshipping woman. (Luke 7:49)*

*The Jewish leaders asked it of a man who had been miraculously healed by Jesus
after 38 years being an invalid. (John 5:12)*

*A puzzled crowd asked it of Jesus when he spoke mysteriously of being lifted up from the earth.
(John 12:34)*

*The whole city of Jerusalem was stirred and asked this question as Jesus rode into the city on a donkey.
(Matthew 21:0)*

Who is this...?

*Those who were closest to him and knew him best...
Those who opposed him and wanted to get rid of him...
Those who ate with him...*

And those who followed from afar or who just happened to hear his words...

They all questioned...and wondered...

Who is this?

He is...

Healer...Redeemer...Morning Star...Light of the world...Life...Truth...and so much more.

*Yet even we who follow him, who love him deeply and know him intimately
may occasionally be brought to ask, as Paul did (Acts 9:5)...*

Who are you, Lord?

*Sometimes he surprises us...shocks us...upends us and turns our world around and we feel we don’t know
him at all anymore.*

So we ask: who are you, Lord?

*He is mystery incarnate, eternal, and beyond description.
He is more than we can ever imagine.
He is who we need him to be right now.*

And he is here...holding us, loving us...

Prayer

Jesus! My Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King.
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.ⁱⁱ



Scripture

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Hebrews 1:3

Song

Good news of great joy
For every woman, every man
This will be a sign to you
A baby born in Bethlehem
Come and worship
Do not be afraid

A company of angels
Glory in the highest
And on the earth peace among
Those on whom His favour rests
Oh, come and worship
Do not be afraid, no, no

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord
My soul magnifies the Lord
He has done great things for me
Great things for me

Unto you a child is born
Unto us a Son is given
Let every heart prepare His throne
And every nation under Heaven
Come and worship
Do not be afraid, no, no

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord
My soul magnifies the Lord
He has done great things for me
Great things for me

My soul, my soul magnifies the Lord
My soul magnifies the Lord
He has done great things for me
Great things...

Scripture

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Colossians 1:16-18

Prayer

Jesus, Lord, we bow before you.
You are all we desire and all we need.
You are more than enough for us.

You are Immanuel – here with us now.
Fill us with an abiding sense of your presence.
May those around us become more aware of your presence through how we live our lives today.

You are Prince of Peace – you give us peace beyond the understanding of this world.
Speak your peace into our hearts when we become stressed, anxious and disturbed.
Let your peace flow out of us like a waterfall so that others too may be touched by the peace you bring.

Jesus, Immanuel, Prince of Peace.
Lord, Saviour, Son of God.
We acknowledge your deity, and rejoice in the Incarnation,
As we pray in the name of Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ



Benediction

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

In these days of Advent,
in moments of quietness and moments of busyness,
in action and in silence,

May we ever see his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
May we pause in awe and wonder, and bow in worship,
offering whatever is ours to give in order to bring him praise.

From John 1:14 NIV



An Advent Blessing:

Pray or meditate on a different name for Jesus each day through Advent.
Choose the one that stands out for you on that particular day.

Names of Jesus

Advocate - 1 John 2:1	Mighty God - Isaiah 9:6
Branch - Zechariah 3:8	Morning Star – Revel 22:16
Bread of Life - John 6:35,48	Passover Lamb – 1 Cor 5:7
Bridegroom - Matthew 9:15	Priest - Hebrews 4:15
Cornerstone - Eph 2:20	Prince of Peace - Isaiah 9:6
Deliverer - Romans 11:26	Redeemer - Isaiah 41:14
Emmanuel - Matthew 1:23	Resurrection - John 11:25
Friend of Sinners – Matt 11:19	Rose of Sharon – S of Sol 2:1
Gate for the Sheep – John 10:7	Saviour - 2 Sam 22:47; Lu 1:47
Good Shepherd - John 10:11	Son of David - Matt 15:22
High Priest - Hebrews 3:1	Son of the Most High – Luke 1:32
Horn of Salvation – Luke 1:69	Stone - Isaiah 28:16
King of Kings -Rev 19:16	Sun of Righteousness – Mal 4:2
Lamb of God - John 1:29	Truth - John 14:6
Life - John 11:25	Vine - John 15:1
Light of the World – John 8:12	Way - John 14:6
Lion of the Tribe of Judah – Revelation 5:5	Wonderful Counsellor – Is 9:6
Messiah - John 1:41	Word - John 1:1

GOING DEEPER

Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **The Bible** has many images that reveal something of Jesus to us. There are the Old Testament prophecies that give us glimpses into who he is and why he came. There are visions in both Old and New Testaments that portray his power and glory. There are amazing word pictures in the Gospels and throughout the entire Scripture. Each one captures just a part of who Jesus truly is. Think of a Bible passage that reveals something about Jesus. Spend some time reading it through and thinking about what God might be saying to you in it – and how he might be revealing himself to you right now.
- **Reflect** on your own favourite images of Jesus. What do these tell you about your relationship with him at this time?
- You could use one of the Bible passages, names of Jesus or one of the songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see page 8)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Bible passage that describes Jesus in some way (eg, some of the passages in Isaiah). Read it through slowly – all of it or some selected verses. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, think of a way you can depict who Jesus is. It could be focussing on one or several aspects of his character, or it might be a collage of a whole lot of different aspects of who he is. You can also draw, paint, use clay, write a poem or compose a song. Think about what he means to you and be creative.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you notice as you walk? What images remind you in some way of Jesus? (For example, you might notice a door, a vine, a road sign, a light, a bakery [bread of life], etc). Use your mobile phone/device to take a photo and reflect on why that image is meaningful to you. You might want to write your own psalm to go with it.
- **Remember** a time when Jesus may have revealed himself to you in a particular way, eg, as light, vine, etc. Relive that experience and take note of what it was like and how you responded to His presence. What does this tell you about him? What does it tell you about yourself?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS:

Emmanuel: Hallowed Manger Ground - Chris Tomlin (Glory in the Highest, 3)
My Soul magnifies the Lord ; Chris Tomlin (Glory in the Highest, 5)
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ⁱ (The Venerable Bede 671-735)

ⁱⁱ (John Newton 1725-1591)

ⁱⁱⁱ Jo-anne Brown