

JOHN PIPER

The

Dawning

of

Indestructible

JOY

DAILY READINGS FOR ADVENT

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JOHN PIPER

 **CROSSWAY**
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The Dawning of Indestructible Joy: Daily Readings for Advent

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To Sam Storms,
comrade in Christian Hedonism,
precious friend for indestructible joy.

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DECEMBER 3

Draw Near to the Savior

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

HEBREWS 13:20-21

One of the things pleasing in God's sight is that his people keep on drawing near to him forever and ever. And so he is working in us this very thing.

Hebrews 13:21 says he is doing this "*through Jesus Christ,*" which means, at least, that Jesus has purchased this grace for us by his death and that Jesus prays and asks the Father for it on the basis of that death.

In other words, when the writer of Hebrews tells us that drawing near to God is what qualifies us for the eternal saving work of our High Priest, he doesn't mean to say that our High Priest leaves us alone in our sinful bent and natural resistance,

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as if we could draw near to God on our own. Rather, our High Priest intercedes for us and asks the Father to do just what Hebrews 13:21 says he will do—work in us what is pleasing in his sight—“through Jesus Christ.”

Let me illustrate this by the way it looked when our High Priest was on the earth. In Luke 22:31–32 Jesus says to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” So already Jesus was interceding for his own when he was on the earth. And he was praying that Peter’s faith—*that his faith—our faith—not fail*.

Moreover, he was so confident in his prayer for Peter that he said, “*When* you have turned again,” not, “*If* you turn again.” So even though Peter stumbled in denial, his faith did not fail utterly. That is what the Lord prays for us. This is one more piece of our great security and hope in this great epistle of assurance.

Is it not a wonderful thing this Advent season to know that God bids us come? That this great, holy God of righteousness and wrath says, “Draw near to me through my Son, your High Priest. Draw near to me. *Draw near to me*”?

This is his invitation in these Advent readings: “Draw near to me through your High Priest. Draw near to me in confession and prayer and meditation and trust and praise. Come. I will not cast you out.” For Christ “is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

DECEMBER 11

The Celebration of God's Love

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

In John 3:16, Jesus teaches us that the God who exists loves. Let that sink in. The God who absolutely is. Loves. *He loves.* Of all the things you might say about God, be sure to say this: he loves.

The same writer of John 3:16 says in 1 John 4:8, “God is love.” Which I take to mean at least this: giving what’s good and serving the benefit of others is closer to the essence of God than getting and being served. God *is* without needs. God inclines to meet needs. God *is* a giver. God is love.

So Jesus tells us more specifically what he means by love in John 3:16. “God so loved . . .” The “so” here doesn’t mean an amount of love, but a way of loving. He doesn’t mean, *God*

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loved so much, but *God loved this way*. “God so loved” means “God thus loved.”

How? What is the way God loved? He loved such “that he gave his only Son.” And we know that this giving was a giving up to rejection and death. “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11). Instead they killed him. And Jesus said of all this, “I glorified you [Father] on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17:4). So when the Father gave his only begotten Son, he gave him to die.

That’s the kind of love the Father has. It is a giving love. It gives his most precious treasure—his Son.

Meditate on that this Advent. It was a very costly love. A very powerful love. A very rugged, painful love. The meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this love. “God so loved . . .” And wonder of wonders, God gives this costly love to an undeserving world of sinners, like us.

DECEMBER 13

Christmas Cut History in Half

All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.

ACTS 3:24

There is something tremendously important to get hold of here for understanding the biblical teaching about prophecy and fulfillment.

We often think of prophecy as relating to what is yet future or to what is now beginning to happen in the world. And we easily forget that what is *past* for us was *future* for the prophets.

What we need to remember is that with the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, the days of fulfillment, proclaimed by all the prophets, began. And ever since the first Christmas we have been living in those days. The “last days” foretold by the prophets are not the twenty-first century. The last days began in AD 1.

This is the uniform New Testament witness. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that the Old Testament events happened

December 13

“to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” For Paul, the end of the ages was not two thousand years later in the twenty-first century.

No. The beginning of the end was already present in the first century. The long-awaited Messiah had come. So the writer to the Hebrews (1:1–2) says, “At many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” When God sent his Son into the world, the last days began.

It is a great privilege to live in the last days because, Joel prophesied, “in the last days . . . God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28). All the prophets looked forward to the day when the Messiah, the Son of David, the King of Israel, would come, for that would be a day of great blessing for God’s people. And now he has come, his kingdom has been inaugurated, and we live in an age of fulfillment.

What we anticipate in the future at Christ’s second coming is not something *completely* new but rather the consummation of the blessings we already enjoy, because the promises have begun to be fulfilled in our lives.

Christmas cut history into two ages: the age of promise and the age of fulfillment. So when Peter says in Acts 3:24, “All the prophets . . . proclaimed these days,” we see that he means “these last days” (Heb. 1:2), in which God has spoken to us in his Son, the days from the first Christmas to the time of consummation yet to come.

This is where we live. The *already* of fulfillment is massive—

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incarnation, crucifixion, atonement, propitiation, resurrection, ascension, heavenly reign, intercession, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, global missions, ingathering of the nations, church, New Testament Scriptures, prayer in Jesus's name, joy unspeakable, and purchased certainty.

But the *not yet* is real and wonderful and waiting for its time: the second coming, the resurrection of the dead, new and glorious bodies, the end of sinning, glorification, judgment on all unbelief, rewards, entrance into the Master's joy, new heavens and new earth, Jesus present among his people face-to-face, no more misery, pleasures forevermore.

Christmas split history. Foretastes of the future abound. Drink deeply on what he achieved for us. And be filled with hope for all that is coming.

DECEMBER 16

Freed to Be Part of God's Family

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and
to give his life as a ransom for many.

MARK 10:45

The reason we need a ransom to be paid for us is that we have sold ourselves into sin and have been alienated from a holy God. When Jesus gave his life as a ransom, our slave masters, sin and death and the Devil, had to give up their claim on us. And the result was that we could be adopted into the family of God.

Paul put it like this in Galatians 4:4–5: “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” In other words, the redemption, or the ransom, frees us to be a part of God's family. We had run away and sold ourselves into slavery. But God pays a ransom and redeems us out of slavery into the Father's house.

December 16

To do that, God's Son had to become human so that he could suffer and die in our place to pay the ransom. That is the meaning of Christmas. Hebrews 2:14 puts it like this: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death."

In other words, the reason Christ took on our full humanity was so that he could die and in dying pay a ransom and free us from the power of death. And free us to be included in his own family. The ransom is ultimately about relationship. Yours to God, your merciful Father.

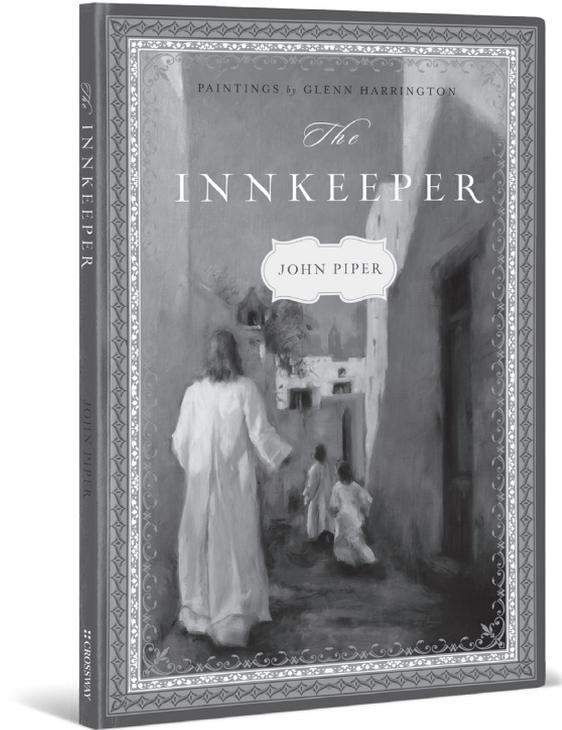


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John Piper's Classic Christmas Poem

The classic poem about the innkeeper who provided the stable for Jesus's birth has been redesigned. This beautiful book will help you celebrate Christ's birth and the power of his death and resurrection.

For more information, visit crossway.org.

Advent is for adoring Jesus.

The Christmas season is one of the busiest times of the year. But it is also a season of reflection and preparation for that special day when we mark Immanuel's coming—the arrival of our eternal God in our own frail humanity.

This is the greatest of history's many wonders, something too stupendous to celebrate just on one day. Advent is a way of lengthening and intensifying the joy of Christmas.

These 25 brief devotional readings from John Piper begin on December 1 and carry us to Christmas Day. Our hope is that God would use these meditations to deepen and sweeten your adoration of Jesus and help you keep him at the center of your Christmas season.

This is my prayer for you this Christmas—

that you would experience the fullness of Christ;
that you would know in your heart the outpouring of grace upon grace;
that the glory of the only Son from the Father would shine into your hearts;
that you would be amazed that Christ can be so real to you.

—*from the Introduction*

JOHN PIPER is teacher and founder of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary. He is the author of more than 50 books, including *Desiring God*, *Don't Waste Your Life*, and *When I Don't Desire God*.

ADVENT

