**A REFLECTION FOR ADVENT SUNDAY**

Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name. Make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; Tell of all His wonderful acts. Glory in His Holy Name; Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

**Come, Thou Redeemer of the earth,**
**And manifest Thy virgin birth:
Let every age adoring fall;
Such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will,
But of the Spirit, Thou art still
The Word of God in flesh arrayed,
The promised Fruit to man displayed.
 From God the Father He proceeds,
To God the Father back He speeds;
His course He runs to death and hell,
Returning on God's throne to dwell.**

**O equal to the Father, Thou!
Gird on Thy fleshly mantle now;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.
 Forth from His chamber goeth He,
That royal home of purity,
A giant in twofold substance one,
Rejoicing now His course to run.

All laud to God the Father be,
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee;
All glory, as is ever meet,
To God the Holy Paraclete.**

**God calls a prophet to speak in His Name:**

ISAIAH 6 1-8  In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in His hand, which He had taken with tongs from the altar. With it He touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” 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 proclaims comfort and hope to God’s people:**

ISAIAH 35

The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;
say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
He will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
He will come to save you.”

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.
The burning sand will become a pool,
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay,
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way.
The unclean will not journey on it;
wicked fools will not go about on it.

No lion will be there,
nor any ravenous beast;
they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there,
and those the LORD has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away

**Preparing the way**

MALACHI 3 1-4,12, 4 1-2

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.

**Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding.
"Christ is nigh," it seems to say;
"Cast away the works of darkness,
O ye children of the day."**

**Wakened by the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all sloth dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies.**

**Lo! the Lamb, so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven let us all, with tears of sorrow,
pray that we may be forgiven;**

**That when next He comes with glory,
and the world is wrapped in fear,
with His mercy He may shield us,
and with words of love draw near.**

**Honour, glory, might, and blessing
to the Father and the Son,
with the everlasting Spirit,
while eternal ages run.**

**Isaiah speaks of the coming King**

Isaiah 9 2, 6-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
And He will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

**Mary responds to the call to be the mother of Jesus:**

Luke 1 26 – 38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; His kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

**Zechariah prophesies of the coming Saviour:**

Luke 1 67-79

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because He has come to His people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of His servant David
(as He said through His holy prophets of long ago),
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—
to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember His holy covenant,
the oath He swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve Him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him,
to give His people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

**O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

 **O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did'st give the Law,
In cloud, and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel**

**Paul writes of Jesus’ humility:**

Phillipians 2 6-11

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage;
rather, He made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place
and gave Him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

**Paul’s exhortation for the present time**

Romans 13 11-14

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

**The Lord is coming soon:**

Revelation 1 5-8

To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father—to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

“Look, He is coming with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see Him,
even those who pierced Him”;
and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of Him.”
So shall it be! Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty.”

**Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.**

**Every eye shall now behold Him
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.**

**Every island, sea, and mountain,
Heav’n and earth, shall flee away;
All who hate Him must, confounded,
Hear the trump proclaim the day:
Come to judgment! Come to judgment!
Come to judgment! Come away!**

**Now redemption, long expected,
See in solemn pomp appear;
All His saints, by man rejected,
Now shall meet Him in the air:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
See the day of God appear!
Answer Thine own bride and Spirit,
Hasten, Lord, the general doom!
The new Heaven and earth inherit,
Take Thy pining exiles home:
All creation, all creation,
Travails! groans! and bids Thee come!**

**The dear tokens of His passion
Still His dazzling body bears;
Cause of endless exultation
To His ransomed worshippers;
With what rapture, with what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!**

**Yea, Amen! let all adore Thee,
High on Thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
Claim the kingdom for Thine own;
O come quickly! O come quickly!
Everlasting God, come down!**

