



===== PARACLETE PRESS =====



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★ INTRODUCTION ★

ADVENT

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
—Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916, translator



The season of Advent marks a turning from ordinary time to sacred time. In the Northern Hemisphere it comes when the hours of sunlight grow shorter and nights grow colder. The harvest has been gathered in, and a season of waiting begins.

The human mind resists waiting. We think in *Chronos* time—clock time, minute by minute, hour by hour. We order a meal from a restaurant window and expect it to be handed to us through another window only moments later. We want instant return on investments. And we expect leaders to speak in sound bites and offer quick solutions to large problems.

But God works in *Kairos* time. In God's view, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). Past, present, and future are all rolled into one. So Advent breaks into the pell-mell rush of our lives and bids us to stop, look, and listen. It bids us to break free of *Chronos* time and enter *Kairos* time. It bids us to quieten our frenetic pace and perhaps linger awhile over classic words of wisdom, both ancient and new.

CHRISTMAS

The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.

—*Phillips Brooks, 1868*



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As the ancients awaited a Savior who would throw off the iron yoke of oppressive world systems, “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4). Not as a conquering king did the Savior come, but as a tiny baby born in a stable to a poverty-stricken, humble mother.

But this child was destined to fulfill Isaiah’s promise (66:1),
The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Some of the world’s great literature celebrates the birth of this child named Jesus, the one who is called *Emmanuel*, meaning “God with us.”

Think of it! *God* with us. Not dwelling in some distant heaven or in a pagan temple.

God *with* us. Not reigning from an imperial throne, but come to live with us and walk alongside us throughout every ebb and flow of our lives.

God with *us*! Whoever we are, wherever we are, no matter what continent we live on or our station in life or the color of our skin, *God* has come to be *with us*.



The Nativity, Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556/57)



As you ponder this selection of classic stories, poems, prayers, and reproductions of beautiful artwork, we invite you to step away for a moment from the rush and stress of this season and enter *Kairos* time. Let the stories touch you with their wisdom and the artworks with their beauty.



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And may you experience a blessed Advent and a joy-filled Christmas!

—THE EDITORS OF PARACLETE PRESS





ADVENT

O COME, EMMANUEL



★ O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL ★

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 Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
And drive away the shades of night
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!

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 once gave the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

—SEVENTH-CENTURY LATIN HYMN,
translation by John Mason Neale (1818–1866)





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God as Architect of the World, From: The Frontispiece of Bible Moralisée Codex Vindobonensis 2554 (French, ca. 1250), in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

★ THE “O” IN HOPE ★

Hope has this lovely vowel at its throat.
Think how we cry “Oh!” as the sun’s circle
clears the ridge above us on the hill.
O is the shape of a mouth singing, and of
a cherry as it lends its sweetness
to the tongue. “Oh!” say the open eyes at
unexpected beauty and then, “Wow!”
O is endless as a wedding ring, a round
pool, the shape of a drop’s widening on
the water’s surface. O is the center of love,
and O was in the invention of the wheel.
It multiplies in the zoo, doubles in a door
that opens, grows in the heart of a green wood,
in the moon, and in the endless looping
circuit of the planets. Mood carries it,
and books and holy fools, cotton, a useful tool
and knitting wool. I love the doubled O
in good and cosmos, and how O revolves,
solves, is in itself complete, unbroken,
a circle enclosing us, holding us all together,
every thing both in center and circumference
zeroing in on the Omega that finds
its ultimate center in the name of God.

—LUCI SHAW (1928–), *The Generosity*





The Annunciation, Alexander Ivanov (1806–1858)