



Celebrate

First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2023

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40-55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

O that you would tear open the
heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake
at your presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your
adversaries,

so that the nations might tremble
at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that
we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains
quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for
him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your
ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we
transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is
unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are
like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind,
take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your
name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face
from us,
and have delivered us into the
hand of our iniquity.

continued



Let your face shine up - on us and



we shall be saved, and we shall be saved.

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph ¹ like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- ¹ on the cherubim.

²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, ¹ and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and ¹ come to help us.

³Restore ¹ us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

⁴O LORD ¹ God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your ¹ people pray? **R**

⁵You have fed them with the ¹ bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹ tears to drink.

⁶You have made us the derision ¹ of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹ us to scorn.

⁷Restore us, O ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at ¹ your right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹ for yourself. **R**

¹⁸And so will we never turn a- ¹ way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- ¹ on your name.

¹⁹Restore us, O LORD ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved. **R**

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our
potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹Do not be exceedingly angry,
O LORD,

and do not remember iniquity
forever.
Now consider, we are all your
people.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

Grace to you and peace from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for
you because of the grace of God that
has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for
in every way you have been enriched in
him, in speech and knowledge of every
kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ

has been strengthened among you—
⁷so that you are not lacking in any
spiritual gift as you wait for the reveal-
ing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will
also strengthen you to the end, so that
you may be blameless on the day of our
Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by
him you were called into the fellowship
of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel

Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] “In those days, after that
suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give
its light,
²⁵and the stars will be falling
from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens
will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man
coming in clouds’ with great power
and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the
angels, and gather his elect from the
four winds, from the ends of the earth
to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson:
as soon as its branch becomes tender
and puts forth its leaves, you know
that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when
you see these things taking place, you
know that he is near, at the very gates.

³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will
not pass away until all these things
have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth
will pass away, but my words will not
pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no
one knows, neither the angels in heav-
en, nor the Son, but only the Father.
³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not
know when the time will come. ³⁴It is
like a man going on a journey, when
he leaves home and puts his slaves in
charge, each with his work, and com-
mands the doorkeeper to be on the
watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for
you do not know when the master of
the house will come, in the evening,
or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at
dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep
when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I
say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

A brief silence.

Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring

stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Enrich the spirits of all who feel hopeless, fearful, or despairing. Stay close to those who await healing or relief (*especially*). Deliver all in any need. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You have sent out your angels and gathered your faithful people from every time and place, calling them into one fellowship of saints. Bless the witness of those who dwell in your eternal presence (*especially Francis Xavier, whom we commemorate today*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, c. 749) Psalm 79. **Tuesday** Revelation 18:1-10. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 342) Micah 5:1-5a. **Thursday** (commemoration of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 397) Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13. **Friday** Jeremiah 1:4-10. **Saturday** Ezekiel 36:24-28. **Second Sunday of Advent** Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8.

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