

# Awaiting the Manger



Advent Sermon Series Guide



# **Awaiting The Manger**

## **Whispers of Advent in the Old Testament**

### **Sermon Series and Devotional**

### **November 30 - December 28, 2028**

November 30, 2025: A Wake-up Call

December 7, 2025: Pointing to Jesus

December 14, 2025: Living in the Now and the Not Yet

December 21, 2025: A Meaning-Making Name

December 24, 2025: Glory Enough for Everyone

December 28, 2025: Joy and Sorrow at Christmas

Resource:

ELCA Lectionary Year A

Working Preacher

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## **November 30, 2025**

### **A Wake-up Call**

The visionary message presented in Isaiah 2:1-5 focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshipping community responds: "Let us walk in the light of that Lord now!"

**Opening Prayer:** Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 24:36-44 The sudden coming of the Son of Man

**Read:** Isaiah 2:1-5 Weapons of war transformed into instruments of justice and peace

**Question:**

1. How does the vision in these verses shape your hope for peace?
2. What is the significance of the transformation of the weapons of destruction?
3. How do these verses move you to practice peace?

**Devotional:** "Awaiting the Manger; Whispers of Advent in the Old Testament" by Ocieanna Fleiss  
Review the days of the devotional that you have read up to the date of your group meeting.

## December 7, 2025

### Pointing to Jesus

Isaiah describes the coming of a future, ideal ruler who will renew David's royal line (the stump of Jesse). Gifted by the spirit of God, this ruler will reign with perfect justice. Enmity and danger will be restored to harmony and peaceful coexistence.

**Opening Prayer:** Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever Amen

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 3:1-12 A voice cries: Prepare the way of the Lord

**Read:** Isaiah 11:1-10 From David's line, a ruler bringing justice and peace

**Questions:**

1. What do the stump and branch symbolize in Isaiah 11:1?
2. How do they connect to Jesus?
3. What do you find impactful about these verses?

**Devotional:** "Awaiting the Manger; Whispers of Advent in the Old Testament" by Ocieanna Fleiss  
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## **December 14, 2025**

### **Living in the Now and the Not Yet**

The prophet Isaiah describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

**Opening Prayer:** Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 11:2-11 The forerunner of Christ

**Read:** Isaiah 35:1-10 The desert blooms as God's people return from exile

**Questions:**

1. What does the imagery in verses 1-4 tell you about what is happening to "The desert and the parched land."
  
2. What will happen when God comes? (5-7)
  
3. How does the "Way of Holiness" remind you of the coming of Christ? (8-10)

**Devotional:** "Awaiting the Manger; Whispers of Advent in the Old Testament" by Ocieanna Fleiss  
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## December 21, 2025

### A Meaning-Making Name

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety; Immanuel, God is with us.

**Opening Prayer:** Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 1:18-25 A God near at Hand

**Read:** Isaiah 7:10-16 The sign of Immanuel

**Questions:**

1. What is making Ahaz resistant to trusting in God?
2. What makes it difficult for you to trust God when you are afraid or have your own plan?
3. Read verse 9. What does it say? How is this both a warning and a promise?

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## December 24, 2025

### Glory Enough For Everyone

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The seal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

#### **Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:1-14 [15-20] God with us

**Read:** Isaiah 9:2-7 Light shines: a child is born for us

#### **Questions:**

1. What do the darkness and light symbolize in verse 2?
2. What do verses 3-5 indicate is going to happen that will bring joy and the burning of the warrior's boots?
3. "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." How do these names for Jesus speak to you?

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## **December 28, 2025**

### **Joy and Sorrow at Christmas**

God does not delegate divine intervention to a messenger or an angel. God's own presence brings salvation. The prophet and all who read these words join in celebrating God's gracious deeds. God trusts that God's people will not act falsely.

**Opening Prayer:** O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Personal Reflection:** Where have you felt God's presence most strongly this week?

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 2:13-23 The slaughter of innocent children

**Read:** Isaiah 63:7-9 Israel saved by God's own presence

**Questions:**

1. What things might Isaiah be recalling that he considers "the many good things God has done for the house of Israel?"
2. What do these verses reflect about God's character?
3. Share the many good things God has done for you and what they reflect about God.

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