

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



ADVENT

A S E A S O N O F

hope love joy peace

ORILLIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

November 24 — The Promise of a Counsellor

Isaiah 9:2, 6 NLT

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.
For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will
shine... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.
The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will
be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

When Isaiah wrote these words, the world was cloaked in despair. Darkness covered the land, and fear shaped people's future. Yet God promised light—a child who would bring wisdom and healing into confusion. The Wonderful Counsellor wasn't coming with a plan but with presence.

Every one of us knows what it feels like to be lost—unsure which way to turn, carrying questions that don't have easy answers. But Christmas reminds us that God doesn't leave us guessing. In Jesus, He draws near to guide us. The Wonderful Counsellor speaks truth that pierces our confusion, and His words bring comfort, conviction, and direction.

Reflect: Where are you seeking guidance right now? What would it look like to listen for His counsel instead of relying on your own understanding?

Pray: Lord, thank You for being my Wonderful Counsellor. Teach me to trust Your wisdom more than my own.

November 25 — Wisdom From Above

James 1:5 NLT

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

Wisdom isn't something we achieve—it's something we receive. James says that if we lack wisdom, we can ask God, who gives generously without finding fault. Jesus, the Wonderful Counsellor, doesn't just offer good advice—He offers Himself.

In a world full of noise, His voice is quiet but sure. He won't shout over the chaos; He invites us to draw near. When we do, He shapes how we think, choose, and live. True wisdom doesn't just solve problems; it forms our hearts to love what God loves.

Reflect: What decisions or desires in your life most need His wisdom right now? Have you asked Him—or are you still trying to figure it out on your own?

Pray: Lord, I need Your wisdom today. Give me a heart that listens and a mind that follows Your way.

November 26 — Jesus the Teacher

Matthew 5:3–6 NLT

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

The crowds gathered around Jesus because He spoke like no one else. His words were simple but life-changing. The Beatitudes—His opening lines in the Sermon on the Mount—flip the world’s values upside down. He calls the poor blessed, the meek strong, the merciful victorious.

That’s what the Wonderful Counsellor does. He shows us that the way up is down, and that the blessed life is the surrendered life. His teaching isn’t a list of rules; it’s an invitation into a new way of being—one shaped by the heart of God.

Reflect: Which of Jesus’ words from the Beatitudes challenge or comfort you the most?

Pray: Jesus, Wonderful Counsellor, reshape my thinking. Help me see the world as You see it—and live with Your wisdom.

November 27 — The Word Made Flesh

John 1:14 NLT

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

The Wonderful Counsellor didn't stay distant. The Word — God's perfect communication — became flesh and lived among us. Jesus didn't just tell us about God's love; He embodied it. He didn't merely describe truth; He **was** truth.

When life feels confusing or faith feels dry, the answer isn't more information—it's more of Him. The Word made flesh still speaks through Scripture, by His Spirit, and through His people. When you open His Word, you meet the living Christ—the One whose wisdom leads to life.

Reflect: What's one way you can make space this week to listen more attentively to God's Word?

Pray: Lord Jesus, You are the Word of life. Speak clearly to me today, and help me to live in the truth You reveal.

November 28 — The Spirit of Counsel

Isaiah 11:2 NLT

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah paints a picture of the coming Messiah filled with “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding... of counsel and might.” Jesus was completely led by the Spirit, and now that same Spirit lives in those who belong to Him.

That means we are never without counsel. The Spirit who guided Jesus through temptation, opposition, and suffering now guides us too. He doesn’t always give us every detail, but He always leads toward truth, love, and obedience.

When you feel uncertain or afraid, you can lean into the quiet assurance that God’s Spirit is with you. He will not lead you astray.

Reflect: In what part of your life do you most need to be reminded that God’s Spirit is guiding you?

Pray: Holy Spirit, fill me with Your counsel and wisdom. Help me follow Your voice with courage and peace.

December 1 — The Strength of God Revealed

Exodus 15:2 NLT

The Lord is my strength and my song; He has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise Him—my father's God, and I will exalt Him!

When the Israelites stood on the far shore of the Red Sea, their feet still damp from crossing on dry land, they burst into song. For the first time, a people who had been slaves could finally declare, “The Lord is my strength.” Their story reminds us: God’s might is not distant or abstract—it’s personal, active, and saving.

In Jesus, the Mighty God stepped into human weakness to display divine power. He didn’t just show His strength through miracles or storms calmed but through His patient endurance, His mercy toward sinners, and His triumph over death itself.

Reflect: How has God shown His strength in your life? In what weakness might He want to display His power today?

Pray: Lord, You are mighty to save. Show Your strength in my weakness so that Your glory is seen in my life.

December 2 — The Word of His Power

Colossians 1:16–17 NLT

For through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see... Everything was created through Him and for Him. He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together.

Every sunrise, every heartbeat, every spinning galaxy is held together by Jesus Christ. The same hands that healed the sick and broke bread now sustain the entire universe. When Isaiah called Him “Mighty God,” he wasn’t exaggerating—he was naming the One who holds all things by the word of His power.

When life feels chaotic, remember that Christ’s grip on the universe includes you. Nothing slips through His hands—not your pain, not your questions, not your story.

Reflect: What changes when you remember that the One who rules galaxies also holds your life together?

Pray: Jesus, Mighty God, thank You for holding me in Your care. Help me trust that nothing is beyond Your control.

December 3 — Victory Over Evil

Mark 5:8–9, 15 NLT

For Jesus had already said to the spirit, ‘Come out of the man, you evil spirit.’ Then Jesus demanded, ‘What is your name?’ And he replied, ‘My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man.’... A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane.

When Jesus met the man tormented by a legion of demons, no one else could help him. People had chained him, restrained him, and given up on him. But in one word, Jesus set him free. That’s the authority of the Mighty God—no evil can stand against Him.

The same power that liberated that man is still at work today. Jesus breaks the chains of sin, addiction, and despair. His strength restores what’s been shattered.

Reflect: What “chains” has Christ broken in your life—or what ones do you need Him to break?

Pray: Mighty God, thank You that Your power sets captives free. Bring Your freedom to every place where darkness still lingers.

December 4 — The Cross: Power Perfected in Weakness

1 Corinthians 1:18 NLT

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.

If power were defined by force, the cross would look like defeat. Rome's empire thought it had won. Yet what looked like weakness was actually the turning point of history. On that hill, the Mighty God was revealing a power deeper than muscle or might — the power of self-giving love.

The cross shows that God's strength doesn't crush; it carries. He wins not by taking life but by laying down His own. Every scar, every nail, every cry of "It is finished" was heaven's declaration that love has triumphed over sin.

When we feel small or unseen, the cross whispers, *My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.* Our failures don't disqualify us; they become the very places where His strength shows up most clearly.

Reflect: How does Christ's surrender redefine your idea of what strength looks like?

Pray: Jesus, teach me the strength of surrender. Let Your cross reshape my pride into love and my weakness into worship.

December 5 — The Risen King

Revelation 1:17–18 NLT

Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.

When John saw the glorified Jesus, he fell at His feet in awe. The same Jesus who once hung on a cross now stood radiant and alive, holding the keys of death itself. The Mighty God reigns—not in theory, but in resurrection reality.

This is the One we worship at Christmas: the baby in the manger who is also the Lord of all creation, the conqueror of sin and death. His might gives us courage in fear, hope in sorrow, and assurance that death doesn't have the final word.

Reflect: How does knowing Jesus has conquered death shape your courage and hope today?

Pray: Risen Lord, You are the Mighty God who holds the keys of life and death. Help me live in the strength of Your victory.

December 8 — The Father's Heart

Psalm 103:13–14 NLT

The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

There's a difference between knowing God as "a" Father and knowing Him as "your" Father. Many of us carry wounds from human relationships—fathers who were absent, harsh, or distant. But the Everlasting Father reveals a heart unlike any we've known: tender, compassionate, and endlessly patient.

He doesn't expect perfection; He remembers our frailty. He knows every fear that keeps you awake at night and every moment you've tried to hide in shame. And still—He loves you. Jesus shows us the Father's heart in action: embracing prodigals, restoring the broken, and never growing weary of His children.

Reflect: What parts of your story need to be reparented by God's love?

Pray: Father, thank You for knowing me fully and loving me completely. Teach me to rest in Your compassion.

December 9 — The Shepherd Who Knows His Sheep

John 10:14–15 NLT

I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.

The Everlasting Father is not distant—He's deeply personal. Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd who knows every one of His sheep by name. That's not a metaphor of control; it's a picture of intimacy and care.

The same voice that spoke galaxies into being knows your story and speaks peace into your heart. The Shepherd's care isn't abstract—it's costly. He laid down His life for you. That's the heart of the Father revealed: knowing, protecting, and sacrificing for His children.

Reflect: How might your relationship with Jesus change if you truly believed He knows you—fully, yet still delights in you?

Pray: Good Shepherd, thank You for knowing me by name. Help me to follow Your voice with trust and peace.

December 10 — Everlasting Love

Jeremiah 31:3 NLT

Long ago the Lord said to Israel: 'I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.'

We live in a world where almost everything expires — subscriptions, phone contracts, even relationships. But God's love never runs out or needs renewal. It doesn't waver when we fail or fade when we forget Him. It's eternal, anchored in His unchanging character.

Through prophets and promises, God kept saying to His people, **I have loved you with an everlasting love.** They wandered; He pursued. They doubted; He stayed. The cross would become the ultimate proof of that unfailing affection — a love so constant it stretched from eternity past into eternity future.

When you're tempted to measure God's love by your circumstances, remember this verse. His love isn't a reaction; it's a reality. He loved you before you knew Him and He'll love you long after every earthly thing has passed away.

Reflect: Where do you need to stop questioning and start resting in His unbreakable love?

Pray: Everlasting Father, thank You for a love that doesn't quit. Teach me to live from security, not striving.

December 11 — The Father of the Prodigal

Luke 15:20 NLT

So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

When Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son, He was describing the heart of the Everlasting Father. The story isn't about the son's rebellion or return—it's about the Father's relentless compassion.

While the son rehearsed his apology, the Father was already running. That's how God moves toward us. He meets us not with condemnation but with celebration. He doesn't just forgive—He restores.

If you've wandered, the Father is watching the horizon for you. His arms are still open.

Reflect: Where have you sensed God running toward you in grace?

Pray: Father, thank You for Your mercy that meets me before I even speak. Help me to live as Your beloved child.

December 12 — A Home That Lasts Forever

John 14:2–3 NLT

There is more than enough room in my Father's home. ... I am going to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

Jesus spoke these words on the night before the cross. The disciples were anxious and confused, but He pointed them forward—to a forever home. His promise wasn't just about heaven someday; it was about belonging now.

We all ache for a place where we are fully known and still fully loved. Earthly homes change, children grow, people move, seasons end. Yet Jesus assures us that the truest home is with Him. Every room He prepares carries the warmth of His welcome.

Advent reminds us that the story doesn't stop at the manger or even at the cross—it ends in a house full of light and laughter where we'll be with Him forever. Until then, He invites us to live like citizens of that coming home.

Reflect: How does the promise of your eternal home bring peace to your present?

Pray: Lord, thank You for preparing a place for me. Help me to live today with my heart anchored in eternity.

December 15 — Peace Announced

Luke 2:13–14 NLT

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others —the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.

The first Christmas night was quiet until heaven couldn't hold its joy any longer. A sky full of angels broke the silence with a single word the world had longed to hear: *peace.*

But this peace wasn't a treaty or a pause between wars. It was reconciliation — God making things right from the inside out. The Prince of Peace didn't come to erase all struggle; He came to end the separation between God and humanity.

That announcement still rings true today. Peace isn't the absence of trouble; it's the presence of Christ. Wherever He is invited, peace takes root.

Reflect: Where might you need to invite Christ's peace to settle your heart this week?

Pray: Prince of Peace, fill my soul with Your presence. Let Your calm overrule my fear and overflow into those around me.

December 16 — Peace With God

Romans 5:1–2 NLT

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand.

Peace begins here: we were once separated from God, but through Christ we've been reconciled. This peace isn't just the absence of conflict—it's the restoration of relationship. The war between our sin and His holiness has been ended by grace.

The Prince of Peace stepped into the tension between justice and mercy and resolved it with His blood. Now we don't strive to earn His favour—we live from it.

Reflect: Do you believe that you already have peace with God through Christ, or are you still trying to earn it?

Pray: Jesus, thank You for making peace between me and the Father. Help me rest in what You've finished.

December 17 — Peace in the Storm

Mark 4:39–40 NLT

When Jesus woke up, He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Silence! Be still!’ Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then He asked them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’

It’s easy to believe Jesus is strong when the water’s smooth. But when waves rise and thunder echoes, fear tests our faith. The disciples had seen Jesus heal and teach, yet in the storm they forgot who was in their boat.

With three words—*“Silence. Be still.”*—Jesus revealed His authority over creation and the chaos in our hearts. The sea obeyed because its Maker had spoken.

We can’t control the storms of life—diagnoses, losses, disappointments—but the Prince of Peace can still quiet our anxiety. Sometimes He calms the storm; sometimes He calms His child. Either way, His presence is enough.

Reflect: What storm are you facing that you need to hand back to His control?

Pray: Lord, remind me You are stronger than the wind and waves. Help me rest in Your peace even when the storm still rages.

December 18 — Peacemakers in the World

Matthew 5:9 NLT

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

Peace begins in us but it's never meant to stop there. Those who follow the Prince of Peace become carriers of His character. Jesus blesses not the passive but the *peacemakers*—people who actively sow reconciliation where division once grew.

That might mean choosing forgiveness instead of resentment, speaking gently when the world shouts, or standing for justice with humility and grace. Peacemaking is hard; it costs something. But every time we build a bridge instead of a wall, the family resemblance to our Father becomes clearer.

This Advent, as you remember Christ's peace, ask where you can bring His presence into conflict, anxiety, or brokenness around you. The world doesn't need more opinions—it needs more peace.

Reflect: Who in your life might need you to take the first step toward peace?

Pray: Father, make me an instrument of Your peace. Let reconciliation begin with me.

December 19 — The Kingdom of Peace

Revelation 21:3–4 NLT

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

Advent ends where eternity begins—with perfect peace. The story that started in a manger will end in a kingdom where every wrong is made right. No more distance, no more division, no more despair.

The Prince of Peace will reign forever, and His people will live in unbroken joy. Every longing, every ache, every tear finds its answer in Him. That’s the hope we carry—not just at Christmas, but every day until He comes again.

Reflect: How does the promise of eternal peace shape the way you live in the present?

Pray: Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Let Your peace fill the earth—and start with my heart.

December 22 — The Waiting King

Micah 5:2 NLT

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.

God's promises often begin in places that look too small to matter. Bethlehem was a forgotten dot on the map — a shepherd's town with little power or prestige. Yet God chose it as the birthplace of His Son. The Savior of the world would enter not through a throne room but a stable.

It's easy to look for God's work in the spectacular. But His glory often hides in humility — a quiet act of kindness, a small prayer whispered in faith, a simple "yes" to obedience. Bethlehem reminds us that God's strength shows up in smallness. His plans don't depend on our prominence but on His purpose.

If you've been waiting on God and wondering if He's forgotten you, this story says otherwise. The King is coming — maybe not in the way you expected, but right on time.

Reflect: What parts of your life feel too small or unseen for God to use?

Pray: Lord, thank You that You delight to work through small and humble places. Help me trust that You're writing a bigger story than I can see.

December 23 — The Word Became Human

John 1:9, 14 NLT

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world... So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.

The wonder of Christmas isn't just that God sent His Son — it's that He *came Himself*. The Word became flesh. The Creator stepped into His own creation, trading heavenly glory for human frailty.

Think about that: the infinite became an infant. The One who spoke light into existence lay under the flicker of a lantern. The One who sustains the universe was sustained by Mary's arms. This isn't distant theology — it's breathtaking intimacy.

Jesus didn't come to impress; He came to identify. He walked dusty roads, wept beside graves, and felt hunger, loneliness, and pain. He came close so we would never again wonder whether God understands us.

At Christmas, we don't just remember that He came; we remember *why* He came — to reveal the Father's heart and rescue us through love that put on skin.

Reflect: Where in your life do you need to be reminded that God truly understands what you're walking through?

Pray: Lord Jesus, You are the Word made flesh. Thank You for coming close. Let Your light and love dwell in me today.

December 24 — Joy to the World

Luke 2:10–11 NLT

But the angel reassured them, ‘Don’t be afraid! ... I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem!’

The announcement came not to rulers or scholars but to shepherds—ordinary people doing ordinary work on an ordinary night. Heaven didn’t choose the impressive; it chose the available. The good news that would bring “great joy to all people” began with a handful of people no one expected.

Joy doesn’t depend on your setting; it depends on your Savior. The shepherds’ joy wasn’t rooted in circumstance—it was rooted in the presence of Christ. They hurried to find Him, and when they did, they couldn’t help but share what they’d seen.

Real joy doesn’t stay quiet. It moves us to gratitude, generosity, and praise. Even when life feels heavy, the gospel reminds us that joy is not gone—it’s just waiting to be remembered.

So tonight, as you prepare for Christmas Eve, pause and listen for the angel’s echo: Don’t be afraid. The Savior has been born for you.

Reflect: What does “good news of great joy” look like in your life right now?

Pray: Lord, renew my joy in You. Let my heart overflow with praise that others might see and rejoice too.

December 25 — Immanuel: God With Us

Matthew 1:22–23 NLT

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through His prophet: 'Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.

Christmas morning is the exclamation point of Advent—the day when hope takes form, love wears a face, and heaven touches earth. The miracle of “Immanuel” means we are never alone again.

The same God who flung stars into space wrapped Himself in swaddling cloth. He entered our story not as a distant observer but as a present Savior. Every other religion points to humanity reaching up to God; the gospel is God reaching down to us.

That changes everything. Whatever you face—sorrow, uncertainty, loss—He is with you in it. The manger is proof that presence is God's answer to our pain. The Prince of Peace has come, and He will never leave you.

Reflect: How might the truth “God is with us” bring peace and courage to your life today?

Pray: Immanuel, You are with me—here, now, and forever. Let Your presence fill my home, my heart, and my world this Christmas.