



# *Starmount*

## *2018 Advent*

### *Daily Devotionals*

**Week 3: December 14—20**

**Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**

**Reflections by Rev. Dr. Charlie Lee**

#### **Devotion 1: Advent & Exile**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* is perhaps one of the best known and most well-loved Advent hymns in our hymnal. The words are powerful, the music is moving, and the melody is one that embeds itself in your mind and heart for days following its singing. I also find that its meter and rhythm parallel our own journey through the Advent season. It begins slowly and then it builds into a powerful crescendo.

The first verse of this hymn begins not with the joyful words that we might expect during this time of year, rather it begins with words of painful longing.

*“O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.”*

This verse speaks of the exile of God's people who were broken and devastated when they were ripped away from their beloved homeland. They convey the same sentiment as the words of Psalm 137:

*By the rivers of Babylon— there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. <sup>2</sup>On the willows there we hung up our harps. <sup>3</sup>For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” <sup>4</sup>How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?*

Perhaps you too can relate to these words from our hymn and scripture. We too can feel like a people in exile, separated from our home. This season of the year can even amplify this feeling of separation or longing for a time, a place, or a people whom seem so far away.

The words of this hymn remind us that no matter where we find ourselves during this Advent season, Jesus Christ is coming, bringing hope, renewal, and transformation.

*“Rejoice, Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.”*

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**Devotion 2: Emmanuel**

*Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."  
-Matthew 1:23*

These are the words of an angel of the Lord that comes to Joseph in a dream to share with him what God was doing in the birth of Jesus. It is but just one of the places that we see the use of this word, "Emmanuel", in scripture. However, this verse also give us the definition of the word. Emmanuel means "God is with us."

Therefore, when we sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" we are longing for and inviting God's presence to dwell among us. In fact, verses 2 & 3 of this hymn give us two wonderful examples of God's presence among God's people.

*O come, O Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily;  
to us the path of knowledge show and teach us in her ways to go.*

*O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times did give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.*

Verse 2 speaks of "Wisdom" or the movement of the Holy Spirit that guides God's people providing presence and comfort. Verse 3 reminds us how God was present with Moses on Mt. Sinai and with all the people of Israel as they fled from bondage in Egypt towards the promise land.

These are powerful and dramatic examples of how God has been present with us throughout history. However, during this season of Advent, let us not miss out on some of the smaller opportunities we have to recognize the presence of God in our lives. May we be on the lookout for God's presences as it is expressed through the generosity of strangers, the joy of children, and the stirring within our own hearts during a song.

As we wait for Emmanuel to come, let us also be aware that God is already with us.

*"Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."*

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#### Devotion 3: Peaceable Kingdom

*"The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. <sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. <sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."*

*-Isaiah 11:6-9*

This section of scripture from Isaiah is often given the title, "The Peaceable Kingdom." It describes an image of the future where violence and conflict cease to exist. Where even the natural enemies found throughout creation coexist together in peace. It is with this same hope that our hymn concludes.

*O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind.  
Bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.*

As we look around our world, our community, and even in our own lives; there are times when it seems that peace is simply impossible. Divisions only seem to grow deeper, hatred only seems to grow stronger, and darkness only seems to be spreading. However, Advent is a season that is filled with hope. Hope that even the impossible might somehow be possible. Therefore, as we await the birth of Christ, we do not do so as ones who are lost in their despair. Instead, we hold fast to the hope that God can make a way, even when there seems to be no way, and that God's peaceable kingdom might be established both in our hearts and in our land.

*"Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."*