



## O Come, O Come

### The Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:14 (NIV)

Christmas is just a week away. Does that make your heart leap with joy, pound with panic, or perhaps do a little samba between the two? The date never changes, but somehow Christmas just sneaks up on us. And it seems that no matter how hard we try to prepare our lives and spirits, the holiday season bowls us over. Extra commitments—whether internally or externally imposed—pop up like mushrooms after a storm. I want to focus on Jesus. I want to make cookies for all my friends. I can do both, can't I? Sure, I can! And so we find ourselves scrambling, stretched, distracted.



When Advent began this year, I realized that I had signed up for four (count 'em FOUR) different daily Advent devotionals. They drop into my Inbox—so easy!—but most days I don't have time to read more than one. Then I feel bad that I'm not devoting more of my attention to the spiritual side of Advent. I don't think feeling guilty is what God had in mind for me.

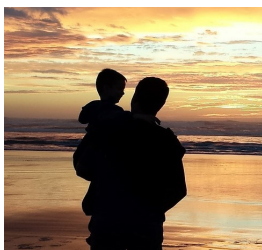
One of the last things Jesus said to His gathered disciples before His passion was “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.” (John 14:27a) The first thing he said when He saw them after His resurrection was “Peace be with you!” (John 19:20, 21, & 26) Are we seeing a theme here?

Peace can feel hard to come by, especially in a crazy busy season like this one. But even if we cut out all the extra commitments of the Christmas season, we may not have peace. Lack of activity is not the same thing as peace. I can veg out with a book or a film but not have peace. Calm is not the same thing as peace.

In Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, note that when the angel spoke to the shepherds, it didn't proclaim peace for everyone. It proclaimed, “peace to those on whom [God's] favor rests.”

Peace is the result of God's favor. We don't have peace just because we've cleared clutter from our schedules, nor because we've behaved ourselves. We can have peace because we are God's beloved children.

That's enough. In the midst of the busyness and craziness of life, peace comes with knowing who I am to God and who God is to me.



What things are disturbing my peace in these days?

What one thing can I do today to help me remember I am God's beloved child?

## Exercise:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”  
John 14:27 (NIV)

1. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Be sure your position will not cause you to get stiff or cramped.
2. Commit this time to the Lord, asking Him to quiet your mind and focus your heart on Him alone. (You may want to pray for God's protection on your mind and spirit during this time.)
3. Just for a few minutes, ponder the word *peace* and what God's peace means to you. (This isn't the time for a Bible study, just a few minutes to let your mind wander around the peace of God.)
4. Now set a timer for 10 minutes. Relax and breathe slowly. (Try not to fidget.)
5. Gently but firmly let go of concerns, words, and thoughts (even thoughts about God .
6. Silently repeat the word “peace” until you feel yourself becoming more still and peaceful. You may find it easier if you picture yourself resting in God's arms or silently repeat “peace” in rhythm with your breathing.
7. Distractions *will* arise; don't worry about them. When they come, imagine they are boats floating down a river. Don't follow the distractions. Just let them flow away and gently re-focus yourself, repeating “peace” until you return to inner quiet.
8. As you feel yourself enter into stillness, allow God to do whatever He chooses to do or not to do—let Him be in control. He may speak; He may not. You may feel God's love; you may not. The goal is not to have some takeaway, but simply to be present to God.
9. When your timer goes off, slowly let yourself come out of the quietness, praying a short prayer of thanks.
10. Journal, in whatever way works for you, about your time of silent prayer.