

Advent Meditation #1

By The Reverend Dr. Joanne Williams-Cooper

Matthew 25:15

"To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

Life is an exciting and wonderful journey! God provides whatever we need for our lives; whatever we need to fulfill our purpose. And He gave each of us a purpose, a job, when we were born! Now we can take a little time to renew our strength, to clarify purpose, or just to visit with God and get to know Him better.

God is inviting us on a journey with him over the next four weeks; an advent journey. We can prepare ourselves to meet Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus at the manger. This is a trip that may be familiar to you; hopefully you have made it before. To prepare for this journey, you may need to pack some dedicated time, patience, faith, hope, love, a heart willing to be cleansed, an open mind, a willing spirit, and a life willing to be transformed. You will need to be prepared to spend time talking to Him in prayer, and you would probably need your Bible to hear Him talking to you.

This promises to be an exciting time, and you don't need to be afraid; just hold on tightly to God's unchanging hand. He promised never to leave us nor forsake us, and He keeps his promises.

See you at the stable!

Prayer: God, we know that you love us, and we thank you for your love and for your provision. We love and praise and worship you, too. We ask that you give us whatever we need for this Advent Journey as we start on our way to see the Baby Jesus

JEWC

Advent Meditation #2

By The Reverend Marilyn Udeh

Scripture: Isaiah 55:8-9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

During this season of Advent, you must remember who God is and has been to you over the many years, and take time to praise God for his goodness upon your life. Marvel over the opportunity of being able to commune with the King of the universe.

Although I am vastly higher and greater than you, I am training you to think My thoughts. As you spend time in My Presence, My thoughts will gradually form in your mind. My Spirit is the Director of this process. I will enable you to hear Me speak directly to you just as I spoke to Samuel and he was able to hear Me speak. These means of communicating will strengthen you and prepare you for whatever is before you on life's journey. Take

time to listen to my voice. Speak to me Lord, for your servant is Listening. Through your sacrifice of precious time, I will bless you far more than you could ever imagine.

Devote time to pray starting today: Dear God, Help us to hear your voice as you speak to us. Do not let us become so distracted that we miss the call. Give us the ability and the courage to choose joy and peace. As we prepare for the coming of Christ, help us to have the patience to wait for your time. Prepare our hearts Oh, God to receive your blessed gift to the world. There will be so many distractions coming our way, until we ask you to help us to stay focus on the things that are eternal. During the Advent Season, help us to learn something new about you as we prepare for your son to come. Amen.

Advent Meditation #3 By The Reverend Dr. Jeffery B. Cooper

“The Door of Faith”

Acts 14:21-28

²¹After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. ²²There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, “It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.” ²³And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

²⁴Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. ²⁷**When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.** ²⁸And they stayed there with the disciples for some time. ¹

In response to the tragic loss of life on June 17, 2015 in Charleston, SC, at Emanuel AME Church, AME Bishop Adam J. Richardson wrote a moving litany entitled “The Doors of the Church are still open”. It was a beautiful blending of hope, faithfulness, and love in the face of challenge and hurt.

After a year of preaching, organizing, and encouraging persons to remain faithful in the face of persecution and challenge, Paul and Barnabus reported that God had opened the “door of faith” to the Gentiles. Beloved, this door of faith that was opened for the early church remains open today. This season of Advent provides new opportunity to experience God's "always open" door and to share it with others.

O God, thank you for providing humankind a path to thee. Help us to draw near to you during this Advent season and to never leave your presence. Amen

Rev. Dr. Jeffery B. Cooper
General Secretary/CIO
African Methodist Episcopal Church

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Ac 14:27–28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Advent Meditation #4

By Evangelist Betty Kenney

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters,

We have entered into the Advent Season, the beginning of the church year. Celebrated by Christians, a time of preparation, expectation, and celebration. What is the reason to celebrate Advent? As Christians, Advent sheds light on our Christian life.

How can we as Christians observe Advent?

We as Christians should take time to have a walk and a talk with Jesus. A time to consecrate ourselves. It is a time at the close of this year to evaluate ourselves, before we label and reject others. We will never see Jesus by the power of our might, but only the power of the Holy Ghost. We must come into The Now of Knowing who we are. We must let go of all things that beset us against what the Lord leading us to do. Do not forget to pray.

We must build in these last days a united church. Eph.4:16. One day the church will be no more, the Bibles will be closed, when Jesus comes.

Remember the love of God and remain obedient to His word. Love the Lord, and thy neighbor as He has commanded. God gives us visions, dreams and missions so that we will be able to *Define, Discover, Design, Develop and Deliver* as Jesus taught us. Be knowledgeable in your work, Tim.2:15. Live the Beatitudes and learn how to get along with difficult people. Prioritize and manage your time effectively. Conflict is on the rise, but we must maintain a peaceful resolution. Remember the harvest is still plentiful, and Jesus is still seeking laborers. Matt.9:35-38. Remember to spread the gospel, "Good News", that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This comes through testimonies.

Read John 17:1-19.

Peace and Love to all,

Ev. BETTY M. Kenney

Advent Meditation #5

By The Reverend John Feagin

The Awesomeness of God

[PSALM 68:35](#)

"O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!" (New King James Version)

The awesomeness of God can be witnessed by the celebration and tradition of the advent season. During Advent we begin to celebrate the anticipated arrival of the Christ all four Sundays before Christmas through Christmas Eve. It is during this season some Christians fast and pray because God is so awesome. However, some Christians continue to celebrate from sundown December 24 (Christmas Eve) to January 6th which is

called the epiphany of the Lord. The more popular term for this tradition is called the twelve days of Christmas which some Christians practice because God is truly that awesome.

Growing up some of us may have heard someone say how they would love to celebrate the twelve days of Christmas. Which in society's eye this simply means receiving a different gift each of the twelve days leading up to Christmas Day. However, I admonish you during this advent season to truly take time to focus on the awesomeness of God who gave us the ultimate gift Jesus Christ. And it is through this *gift that keeps on giving* we receive power and strength to love our neighbors and enemies, to be prosperous and get wealth, and also experience the fruit of the spirit.

Moreover, take a road trip through God's beautiful mountainous landscape and allow the utter volume and height of these natural sculptures wow you as Gods awesomeness is revealed. Consider the moon that is so large and illuminating that one may feel it is possible reach up and touch it although it is millions of miles away – God is awesome.

Therefore, rather you are fasting or praying; or even observing the twelve days of Christmas. During this Advent season in anticipation for the arrival of Christ take time to reflect on the pure awesomeness of God.

Prayer: Thank you God for you are truly awesome. It is because of you through your Son Jesus Christ we are able to receive power and strength so that we might experience you and the fullness of life. In addition, to celebrating advent by reflecting on your awesomeness. Amen!

JWF

Advent Meditation #6 By The Reverend Dr. Jeffery Cooper

Promise Keeper

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹ They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him. *Luke 1:59-66(NRSV)*

Luke's record of the birth, circumcision, and naming of John reminds us that these events fulfill the promises of God as announced by an Angel to Zechariah. By the power of God, a once barren Elizabeth brings forth a son. By the power of God, the child is presented for circumcision and named John. That name is translated to mean "God shows favor" or God has been Gracious". Advent is a wonderful time to be reminded of God's faithfulness toward us and the graciousness of a God who gave His son to be born in Bethlehem for all humankind. God is a promise keeper!

Dear Lord,

Thank You for Your abiding faithfulness and Your unmerited favor extended to Your children. Help us to be faithful and to be filled with praise as we celebrate this season of Prophecy, Hope, Love, and Joy. Amen

Rev. Dr. Jeffery B. Cooper
General Secretary/CIO
African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Reverend Dr. Jeffery B. Cooper is the General Secretary/CIO of the AME Church. He holds a BA degree in Political Science and a MPA from the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. He also holds an MA degree in Practical Theology from Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, Virginia and a Doctor of Ministry from Graduate Theological Seminary in South Bend, Indiana.

Dr. Cooper has pastored at Siloam AME Church, Siloam, Georgia; St. Luke/Nimno AME Church in Athens, Georgia; and Greater Bethel AME Church, Athens, Georgia. In June of 1988, he was assigned to Trinity AME Church in Atlanta, Georgia. During his 24-year tenure, the church property was renovated, a one million dollar state of the art Day care center was built and a house was purchased and converted into an enrichment center for the church and Community.

He is also the author of the book, *A Financial Management Primer for the AME Church*, which is used in the training of ministers by the AME Board of Examiners.

Advent Meditation #7 **By The Reverend Dr. Joanne Williams-Cooper**

Wise Men Still Seek Him

Jer 29:13 And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Everyone in this life is looking for something, or someone; wealth, love, fame, material things. The older you get, the more you may find yourself spending time, searching and looking for misplaced items, than you did in your youth. But regardless of age, it is worthwhile for us to spend time every day, to devote some energy, to seeking God. Unlike the children's popular game, "Hide and Seek," God does not hide from us, although many of us may try to hide from Him.

Wise men, still seek Him

Even though we are a society that values material things, we do still place some value on wisdom. We tend to associate being wise with being old, but we know, deep down, that the being old does not always bring wisdom, nor is it impossible for a young person to have wisdom. Wisdom is a good thing.

When we see new babies, we praise their alertness, eyes open wide, listening, looking, touching and feeling, taking in their surroundings. We value the spirit of curiosity, the one who questions, the child who wants to read and learn more. As this continues into adulthood, we are still looking. Looking for answers to more difficult questions, solutions to complex situations, cures for medical illnesses. Those who are rooted and grounded in the God will look to Him for the solutions, for the key, for the answers. We recognize that our help truly does come from the Lord. So, if we are wise, then we will look for God; if we seek Him, then we are wise. We recognize, acknowledge and are thankful that, "All things come from God." Wise men still seek, Him.

Wise men, still, seek Him

Still: always, yet, never giving up, even so. Even in frustrating, dire, bleak, difficult situations, wise men are reminded to press on, to continue, to always, never give up looking for or recognizing God in every situation. Push on, press on, dig deeper, until you find God's hand in what is going on in your life. I was given a bookmark as a teen: In all difficult circumstances, say, it is the Lord, and He will help.

What are you looking for in this life? Be wise. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and everything else will come unto you. Finders keepers; losers, weepers.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for your abundant blessings. Thank you for the ability to make choices. Now help us to be wise enough to choose to keep you as the center of our lives; to seek you first, in all our searching, in Jesus's name. Amen

Advent Meditation #8 By Sister Cassie Marshall

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-5

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

During this season of Advent, we must understand that the Lord has a loving plan for each of us. The covenant between God and his people is the foundation for his works in his people, including judgement. Once God's purpose, through his direction is accomplished, negativity comes to an end. During this time we find comfort and encouragement.

Advent season can be a hard season for those who are in need of comfort. Let us take this season as the reason to be more like our Lord and help comfort those who are in need and encourage them to grow closer to Jesus. Jesus died for our sins. Jesus died so that we may not be punished for our sins but so that we can be forgiven. Ultimately, encouraging us that our best days are yet to come. During Advent, we need to take the time to acknowledge the good work of the Lord and encourage others to follow along this journey of finding comfort within Him and recognize the ways in which the Lord is directing us, as we prepare for the birth of His son, Jesus.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, thank you for all that you do and all that you continue to do. We know that through you all things are possible, even when the odds are against us. We thank you Lord for the blessed gift of your son Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, so that we find comfort in this world and become a living testimony to your word. All these things we proclaim in your precious Son's name.

AMEN

-Cassie Marshall

Advent Meditation #9 By The Reverend Dr. Joanne Williams-Cooper

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the word the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "Acts 20:35

From Halloween, until Dec 24th, we are bombarded with reminders that this is the season of giving and of exactly how many shopping days are left until Christmas. We are inundated with sales, specials, marketing gimmicks and ploys. The success of the holiday is measured by how much money is spent, especially on days like Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Some stores even open on Thanksgiving holiday, and they have added in more special days on which we can get 'real deals.'

It is so important that we give the perfect gift. We worry about the color, size, whether they will like it or not. Will they use it, return it, discard it or re-gift it?

In this season of giving and receiving, we are reminded that the Bible tells us that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In fact, it is in giving, that we receive.

We should take some pointers from the Master gift-giver. God gifts us every day – from waking us up to keeping us safe throughout the day and night. He provides for our daily needs. He gives us each at least one special gift at birth: a gift that we are supposed to use our entire lives; it looks good on us; it fits just right; and God wants us to give that gift back to Him.

Since we acknowledge that all things come from God, we're just here to pass them on. Gifts are not supposed to be packed up or hoarded away. Recognize your gifts and blessings. They were given to you to share and to use: from God, to me or through me, to you.

We need to be confident about sharing our gifts so that more can come. The more we give away, the more gifts and blessings God sends to us. We will have to make extra room for God's abundant blessings.

The most important, most meaningful gifts tend to cost no money: spending time with someone; making a special phone call; paying a compliment; encouraging someone; giving a hug; lending a listening ear; showing love.

"All good gifts around us were sent from heaven above, so thank the lord, yes thank the Lord, for all His Love." God cared enough to send the very best. He gave us his only begotten son, Jesus, to save us from our sins; from ourselves. Who's on your list and how can you give Jesus to them?

Prayer: Most Heavenly Father, we thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son, Jesus, to earth, to save us from our sins and from ourselves. Now please, we ask you, keep us ever mindful of the gifts that you have given us, and that you continue to give us, each and every day. Help show us ways to give the gift of Jesus to those we love. We thank you for your gifts and for being God; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Advent Meditation #10
By The Reverend John W. Feagin

Finding Jesus

Matthew 2:1-2

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. ² saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him.” (NKJV)

This advent season we must remember that Jesus is truly the reason for the season. As we see in our scripture text the wise men journeyed from Far East to see the baby Jesus in addition to presenting him gifts. They presented our King with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were very significant gifts especially in biblical days, however the wise men presented Jesus with one more thing and that was their worship. One can only image the emotions the wise men must have felt while celebrating their first Christmas with Jesus as they worshiped Him.

Moreover, the wise men realized that the star represented the presence of Jesus for the star stood over where Jesus was born. Therefore, if we take time to notice the star this Christmas we will also will find Jesus. One may not see a physical star shinning bright in the sky, nevertheless if you open your spiritual eyes one can see stars all around you representing the presence of Jesus. Take time this Advent season to look around you and notice the stars of peace, love, family, joy, health, strength and other blessings you are experiencing because they all represent the presence of Jesus in our lives. And just as the wise men did when the star revealed Jesus unto them we too must fall down and worship Him. We may not be able to present Jesus with expensive gifts but, we can present ourselves to Him during this Advent season through our worship.

Prayer:

Dear heavenly father thank you for sending us your son Jesus. During this Advent season help us to realize that you are blessing us beyond measure and your presence is all around us. For this I will give myself away unto you through my worship. It is in Jesus name that I pray. Amen.

JWF