



WEEKLY STUDY

Come and Adore - Week One

We are in the season of Advent (latin for *arrival*). It's a season of 4 weeks that marks our waiting for the arrival of Jesus. God shows up through angels on a few occasions in the story leading up to Christmas. So while you wait for Christmas, may you also see God showing up every day.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone in your life who is needing God to show up in a powerful and obvious way. Pray that angels would usher in good news.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.5-20 (NIV)

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸ Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹ The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

- Zechariah was already in a heightened state as he was chosen to enter into the temple and burn incense. It was a high honor and holy duty to approach the altar of incense and lift up the prayers of the people in the very presence of God. This wasn't an average walk around the church building. Zechariah was hyper-aware of what was going on around him, and, like always, he carried his own prayers with him. He and his wife had hoped for a child. The angel appeared to him, met him in his fear, and gave him words of hope and encouragement. If you could picture yourself in the role of priest in the temple, what prayers would you carry in your heart? Have you ever experienced the real presence of God? How do you respond to his (sometimes unbelievable) promises?
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- **Prayer Prompt: God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13.5)**
- God, I have read about the ways you show up in peoples' lives. Would you show up in mine and help me to see that it is you who have sent messengers of hope and encouragement. Amen.

TUESDAY: GENESIS 16.7-11 (NIV)

The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

⁸ And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

⁹ Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰ The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

¹¹ The angel of the LORD also said to her:

*“You are now pregnant
and you will give birth to a son.*

- Hagar had been treated horribly by Abraham and Sarah. She had been used as property and as a surrogate so that they may have a child. She had no agency or future of her own. And yet God sent an angel who found her. She was found near a spring in the desert, and given words of hope. Even though she was told to go back to the difficult situation from which she was running, she was also given her own story, she too would have numerous descendants. Is there a sense that just being seen and known by God can get you through difficult times? When have you felt seen by God?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails. (Proverbs 19.21)**
- *God, I thank you for not only seeing me in my troubling times of distress, but also for meeting me there. Come and tell me of the future you have for me. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 8.26-28 (NIV)

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

- You might remember this story as we studied it recently. It is interesting that, after a period of years when God seemed to say very little to his people, angels started showing up at the beginning of the Christmas story and these visits carried through into the early church. Philip was given some pretty specific but unusual instructions by an angel of the Lord to find a man traveling down a road. We know that this instruction from the angel led to the man’s baptism. Have you ever seen how following God’s direction has led to another person’s life being changed?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6.8)**
- *God, if you choose, I will go where you send me. I will go to whom you send me. Amen.*

THURSDAY: GENESIS 2.7 (NIV)

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

- As we examine ways that God shows up in the lives of characters in the Bible, we recognize that he might show up in our lives as well. When we consider the account creation, we come face to face with the fact that our very breath was initiated from the mouth of God. His breath is in us! Are you feeling far away from God right now? Whenever you have that sense, take a deep breath and receive the gift of God's nearness. How does it make you feel to know that the breath of life in you comes from that first breath of life given to Adam?
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- **Prayer Prompt: 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' (Acts 17:28)**
- *Lord God, I sit before you in this moment and consider the gift of the breath in my lungs. Fill me with your Spirit and remind me of your nearness. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 10.1-8 (NIV)

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

⁴ *Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.*

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷ *When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.*

- I love that Cornelius "distinctly" saw an angel of God. We don't hear that language all too often when it comes to God's visible or audible presence. It's often a little fuzzy and we might need the affirmation of someone else. "Did you see that? Did I hear that right?" It may have to do with that fear-response Pastor Jacob taught about in his message. Maybe God shows up distinctly all the time, and we view him with half-opened eyes for fear of what might happen if we fully saw him. Consider how fear might factor into your response to God.
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- **Prayer Prompt: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**
 - *God, I am fearfully and wonderfully made by your very hand. Strengthen my faith in moments of timidity. Give me grace to remain in your presence. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 12.6-7 (NIV)

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

- Once again, we saw an angel in the Book of Acts. It’s like when God is ready to move the story of salvation along to new heights, he chooses to send an angel. He chooses to show up! When or where have you seen an acceleration of the movement of God? What kind of freedom have you experienced through God showing up?
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- **Prayer Prompt: The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. (Genesis 12.1)**
- *God, I pray for another season of the acceleration of your salvation story. Break away the chains of fear and doubt and free me to serve you well. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

These are notes from Jacob’s sermon on Sunday outlining the pattern of God showing up in our lives. Consider where you are in the story.

1. GOD SHOWS UP: Are you in the God-Showing-up-Stage? You know, God is showing up in your life?
2. IT IS SPECIFIC: Is the showing-up clearly for you, and on purpose?
3. THE RESPONSE IS FEAR: Are you in fear-response?
4. THE DIVINE PROMISE IS GIVEN: Are you being given a promise, a calling, an answer, an invitation to deeper trust?
5. AN OBJECTION: Are you objecting? And if you are objecting, the objecting usually sounds something like, “God if you really knew who I was, you wouldn’t be choosing me.” Well, God knows who you really are and he is still choosing you.
6. A SIGN TO GUARANTEE: is God giving you a sign that what he promised is true?