



New
Personalist
Movement

season of hope

readings for advent

“and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts...

for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1:19 + 21



a note for co-conspirators:

Season of hope takes place in two parts: the first, a set of readings, is delivered to the group by individuals, from a place set apart. The second is a vespers prayed as a group, seated together. If possible, each reading should be given by a different person, (ideally a balance of genders, backgrounds, accents, etc); it's not a problem if everyone in the group reads. There are six reading parts, including the opening of the Magnificat, + an option for a short reflection between the fourth + fifth of these. If you're giving a reflection, conclude with the fifth reading; otherwise, the fourth reader continues to the fifth, after an appropriate pause.

The service should take place after sunset, with participants holding candles: if possible, two larger candles should flank the place readings are given. We recommend sharing table fellowship in a common meal beforehand: the agape meal was central to early Christianity; "continuing daily of one accord....they ate their food with gladness" [Acts 2:46]. This means everyone who prays together will know the name and voice of the one behind them, and so in this be "of one heart and one soul," [Acts 4:32] just as the first Christians: "filled with the holy spirit + speaking boldly the Word of God" [Acts 4:31].



a note for readers

Readers should announce the title (in bold) before beginning. If you're reading, take your time; you're almost certainly speaking faster than you think. Leave room between sections, or even verses; take time to speak carefully and clearly; leave time to hear and understand.

Ordinarily, words are something we act with; the Word of God acts on us. Consider the images of the Word we're given in the bible: a torch to guide our path [Psalm 119], a hammer that breaks stone [Jeremiah 23], a sword which enters us [Hebrews 4]; a seed which grows if received with joy [Matthew 13]: something we look into [James 1], we eat [Jeremiah 15], live upon it [Matthew 4]: it is alive [Hebrews 4:12]; it is from God; it is God [John 1].

Consider also how the prophets received the Word: Isaiah speaks of a burning coal, placed in his mouth [Isaiah 6]; Ezekiel of a scroll he eats [Ezekiel 2]; Jeremiah of God stretching out His hand, placing a finger on His mouth [Jeremiah 1]. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus speaks of Isaiah's prophecy being "fulfilled". The Greek word used, *plēroō*, means to fill up abundantly, to capacity; as wind fills a ship's sails [2 Peter]; as the fragrance of perfume fills a room [12 John]; as a traveller equips themselves for a long journey ahead [Romans 13].

Christ's fulfilment of the prophets isn't, in this sense, an ending but a beginning. We still live in prophetic time. The prophets speak to us and through us; the day of their fulfilment are all the days of our lives. Their promises of justice and liberation, of righteousness and peace, are made to each one of us. Advent is a reminder that the realisation of those promises is not a question for the future, but the present. Our hope is a living hope. The Word was made flesh.

Unto us a child is born.

i. a message from the Prophet Abraham

The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”



So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring^lI will give this land.”

So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

[announced] **another message from the Prophet Abraham:**

The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,
your very great reward.[†]

²But Abram said, “LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to him:

“This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring^lbe.”

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

He also said to him: “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

But Abram said, “Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

So the LORD said to him: “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

Then the LORD said to him:

“Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.

But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.

[ANNOUNCED] a third message from the Prophet Abraham

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^l caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide.

And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said:

“I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

and through your offspring

all nations on earth

will be blessed.”



ii. a message from the Prophet Isaiah [Isaiah 6]

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ² Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ The pivots^[a] on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ The seraph^[b] touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” ⁸ 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!” ⁹ And he said, “Go and say to this people:

‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand.’

¹⁰ Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;

¹² until the LORD sends everyone far away,
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

¹³ Even if a tenth part remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled.”^[c]

The holy seed is its stump.” [CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[ANNOUNCE] another message from the Prophet Isaiah *[Isaiah 11-10]*

“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall 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.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴but with righteousness
he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity
for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth
with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips
he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be
the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness
the belt around his loins.

⁶The 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.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play
over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child
shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹They 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.



iii. a message from the Prophet Zechariah [Zechariah 3]

7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.

² Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favor of the LORD, ³ and to ask the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, “Should I mourn and practice abstinence in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me:

⁵ Say to all the people of the land and the priests:

When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?

⁶ And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink only for yourselves?

⁷ Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around it, and when the Negeb and the Shephelah were inhabited?

⁸ The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying:

⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; ¹

⁰ do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

¹¹ But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear.

They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

Just as, when I called, they would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts,

and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

[ANNOUNCED] He continues:

The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: ²

Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

³ Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. ⁴

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. ⁵ And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. ⁶

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the LORD of hosts? ⁷

Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; ⁸ and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the LORD of hosts.

¹⁰ For before those days there were no wages for people or for animals, nor was there any safety from the foe for those who went out or came in, and I set them all against one another.

¹¹ But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of hosts. ¹

² For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things...

...Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; ²¹ the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going."

Another message from the Prophet Zechariah:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River^[b] to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;

even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you. [END OF SECTION]



iv. a message from the Prophet Malachi

I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD Almighty.⁵

“My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name.

⁶True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

⁷“For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth.

⁸But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the LORD Almighty.

⁹“So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law...

...You have wearied the LORD with your words.

“How have we wearied him?” you ask.

By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”

³“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

²But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.

³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

⁵“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.

[END OF SECTION]



[at this point, a participant can offer a short reflection grounding the readings in our own context; if not, continue to the last reading and the Magnificat which opens second vespers]

v. a message from an Angel:

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

[NOT ANNOUNCED] Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

[READER ALONE]

My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God, my
Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her
lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me
blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for
me.
Holy his name!

[TOGETHER WITH GROUP]

His mercy is from age to age
On those who hear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
And scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts down the mighty from their thrones
And raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised
to our fathers,
for Abraham
and his sons
forever

