

# Jesus Is Coming for You — Sooner and Later

Advent reminds us that God comes to us—  
in Bethlehem, today and every day, at the end  
of our earthly life, and at the end of time.

by Robert E. Smith

**E**ven before children put on their costumes to go trick-or-treating, colored lights and hot, new toys already had appeared in stores from coast to coast. It seems the world can't wait as Christmas carols blare in the malls, Santa Claus invites children to sit on his lap, and catalogs, party invitations, Christmas cards, and gifts fill the mail.

But not too far below the surface of all the carols, colors, and cheer, the realities of everyday life still wait for us. Even at Christmas, friends and relatives grow ill and die. Broken marriages and broken homes leave many people alone in a season of togetherness. Disease cripples our elderly, leaving them in institutions away from their children and grandchildren.

If the sorrows of normal life are not bad enough, war and the threat of terrorism cast their shadows over our nation. Sometimes the season can help us forget, but not for long.

"Where is God?" we ask again and again.

Hidden in the glitter of the season, God replies, "I am coming soon!" All but forgotten in the rush of buying and celebrating, the season of Advent announces the Good News that He is watching us, not at a distance, but in our hearts.

Jesus first came to us in Bethlehem. Today, He comes to us in His Word and His Sacraments. Soon, He will come at the end of time. At the end of our lives, He comes to bring us home to heaven.

So, in the darkest month of the year, the season of Advent joyfully shouts out to us: "Rejoice ... your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation."

"Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance," Christians pray.

And Jesus does come.



## Jesus Is Coming Again

As the new millennium approached, many people expected Jesus to return. In preparing to meet Him, they sold property and gave the proceeds to the poor. They went on pilgrimages to holy places. Some were so convinced that the end of the world was coming, they decided to spend New Year's Eve with the pope. Some were so afraid that Jesus was returning as a judge, they died of fright. But when the New Year's Eve service came to an end and the bells of St. Peter's rang, the trumpet did not sound, the dead were not raised, and the relieved Christians greeted the *year 1000* with great joy and relief.

There's something terribly wrong with this picture.

For Christians, the return of Christ is not frighteningly *bad* news, but very *good* news. Jesus will come back to bring an end to sin, sorrow, grief, and death. The graves of all Christians will open. Everyone who died trusting in Him will rise to life again. All Christians will live with God forever. God will dry every tear from our eyes and turn our mourning into dancing.

Advent tells us to cheer up. God will restore all things, so we can live every day with hope, looking forward to eternity. After all, Jesus will return for us at any moment. It may be at the end of time itself or at the end of our days. One thing is certain. At a moment we least suspect, we will be at rest in His eternal kingdom.

## Jesus Comes Today

Jesus is not only a historical figure from the past and our hope for the future. He actually comes to us each and every day of our lives. Jesus was there when we were conceived in our mother's womb. God took us in His arms and made us His children in Holy Baptism.

Through parents and pastors, relatives, friends, teachers, and fellow Christians, He teaches us, cares for us, and helps us to grow. Through the preaching of God's Word, He causes faith to grow in our hearts. Countless times, He forgives our sins and feeds us with the body and blood of Jesus in His Supper. Every time we gather to worship, He meets us to give these good gifts.

In Advent, we remember that Jesus doesn't wait in heaven for us to seek Him, accept Him, repent, or do good works that please Him. As our Good Shepherd, He searches for us until He finds us. Jesus comes for us—here and now. He's by our side in the struggles of our lives with His good gifts and Spirit.





## Jesus Came

We can be confident that Jesus will come because He came for us before. Advent calls us to remember the real reason for the season. It prepares us to celebrate Christmas with joy by showing us what it really means for us. We all once were lost in our sinfulness, separated from God and condemned to hell forever. But God loved us; He was not willing to lose us forever. So Jesus put aside all His power and authority and became flesh for our sake. He lived a perfect life for us and died on the cross so that our sins may be forgiven and so that we may live with Him forever. He rose again so that we, too, would rise from the dead.

In Advent, we prepare with joy to meet Him. After all, He's coming not only to our house, but also to our hearts.

We hear again the voice of John the Baptist, who reminds us how to get ready for Him. What gift can you give to God, who has everything? What present can you give to the Child who is the greatest Gift we ever have received? With His help, we love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

## Twenty-First Century Advent

Advent calls us to slow down, even in our busy American holiday season. We desperately need to hear its message: Jesus is coming for you—sooner and later. Don't be discouraged; don't despair. Jesus is coming. In fact, He's already here. Rejoice! Your sins are forgiven. Your God will never forsake you! He is here with gifts to live with hope in the valley of the shadow of death. He will take you home when life is done, where He will dry every tear from our eyes.

Take a few moments to count the days and light the candles. Hear God in His own words as He repeats His promises to you. Come to His house and prepare for His coming. Listen to the soundtrack of the season. Can't you hear it? "Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, will come to Thee, O Israel!"; "Joy to the world! The Lord is come"; "Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!"

Then go to the manger with the Shepherd and see for yourself. It's true! God has come to you and will come to you again.



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