



We celebrate many things at Christmastime. Fond memories, laced in nostalgia. Extended and focused time with loved ones. But more than anything, we celebrate the moment our broken and shadowy world was infiltrated by Divine Light. When God's very presence came to rest among us in the form of a humbled and hallowed baby. Here to set things right and make our hearts his home.

We pray that as you ponder these prayer stations that you would choose to welcome in this holy Stranger. Welcome him into your mess and your triumphs. Welcome him into your life and your very heart. We pray collectively, that we would welcome him into our world and allow him to transform the darkness and chaos around us into something beautiful...something that resembles His Kingdom, here on earth.



TEARS ARE FALLING,
HEARTS ARE BREAKING
HOW WE NEED TO HEAR FROM GOD
YOU'VE BEEN PROMISED,
WE'VE BEEN WAITING
WELCOME HOLY CHILD



These words are the first verse from “Welcome to Our World” by Chris Rice. This season we are using his words (and some original verses of our own) to guide us into a deeper understanding of Christmas and to draw us into a richer worship as we welcome this Holy Child into our world.

These words echo a timeless truth we all experience. Life is hard. Although peppered with moments of joy and laughter and the warmth of love, there’s no denying the fact that we all experience broken hearts, the sting of grief, and even despair. These moments even drive us to ask, “Where are you in all of this God?” Just as the Israelites longed for their coming Messiah, we long to hear from God in our age and in our suffering as well. That is actually what the season of Advent is all about. Waiting.

I know. Yuck. No one likes waiting. Especially for something as vital as relief from suffering and confusion. Yet, that is where we find ourselves. At Christmas we celebrate the arrival of this Divine Baby. The wait for the Messiah is over and, as Jesus proclaimed throughout his life, the Kingdom of Heaven is HERE. However, it has not come in all its fullness. And so we wait in this place of in-between. In the already and the not quite yet. Although, we don’t wait in insecurity but in trust and anticipation of that which is promised; a day when tears are no more, when we get to experience the totality of God’s presence, and with it fulfilled hope, complete peace, unending joy, and perfect love!



SO WRAP OUR INJURED
FLESH AROUND YOU
BREATHE OUR AIR & WALK OUR SOD
ROB OUR SINS AND MAKE US HOLY
PERFECT SON OF GOD
WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

JOHN 1:2-4

By far the greatest wonder in all of history is when God, the creator of the universe, the holder of the stars, decided to wrap his divinity and holiness in the flawed and inadequate flesh of a human babe.

What a miracle and mystery! Jesus, breathing our air and walking our ground! This is what we mean when we say “Emmanuel”...God WITH us!

Ultimately, He did this so we could be WITH him forever. He didn't stay a baby. He grew into a man, the perfect prototype of what humanity is supposed to be. He died on a cross to rob our sins and to make a way for us to be holy, as he is holy.

But it all was set in motion, on the night of Christmas Eve.



JESUS,

I revel in the mystery that the Divine was wrapped in flesh. That you humbled yourself to dwell among your people. It is for this reason that I trust that you see me and you know me. You understand the obstacles

I face, because you faced them too. And yet, you broke the bonds of each of those chains in order that I might experience the victory of your righteousness. I welcome you into my struggle today. Make me whole as you are whole.

AMEN

HOPE THAT YOU DON'T MIND OUR MANGER
HOW I WISH WE COULD HAVE KNOWN
BUT LONG-AWAITED HOLY STRANGER
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME
PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.



 HOPE 

So here is the majestic Son of God...lying in a dirty manger, surrounded by the filth of animals. Needless to say, the Messiah came in a manner that was very unexpected. No fanfare. No fireworks. No bull horns. Just a silent night and single bright star. Blink and you might miss it. Many did. This long-awaited Savior of God's people was nothing more than a stranger. And as he grew up, he became a man that continued to fall short of people's expectations. He wasn't a military genius like people hoped. He didn't overthrow the corrupt & oppressive government. In fact, he didn't seem to be interested in power at all. Instead, he hung out with "sinners" and favored the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

Boy, were people disappointed.

Have you ever been disappointed by Jesus? It's okay to admit that.

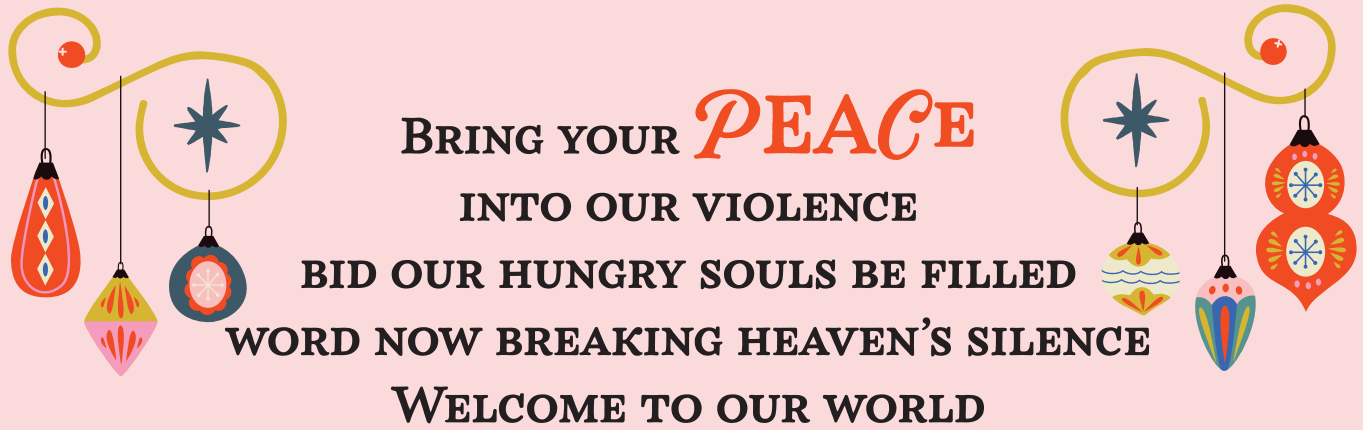
It's probably because He didn't meet your expectations how and when you wanted him too. The Israelites felt the same way. Their hopes were too small and their view was too narrow. Jesus set his sights on something bigger. The redemption of the whole world! This is where we find our hope in the waiting. Even when we can't see or understand, Jesus is working to renew, restore, and bring LIFE!



JESUS,

I admit that I've felt let down by you in my life. You haven't fixed things or worked how I've wanted or envisioned. However, I recognize that you are bigger than my expectations, wider than what I can see before me. This is where I choose to place my hope. I trust in your goodness, believing you are FOR me. I earnestly wait for you!

AMEN



I don't need to spend a single minute convincing you that our world is full of violence, oppression, retaliation, and fear. Often, we don't even need to look outside our own homes to be confronted with the world's brokenness. Sometimes heaven still seems so silent.

However, when Jesus entered the scene, he himself said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is HERE." Jesus brought with him the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. ***"He will be called: Prince of Peace, His government and its peace will never end."***

While we have yet to see this kingdom in its complete fullness, we do see glimpses...signposts of where the kingdom of heaven is breaking through on earth. We just need eyes to see and ears to hear Heaven's whispers.

May it start with us. May we refuse to give in to the fear and animosity we see around us. May we learn to be a calm presence in an anxious world. This is only possible by inviting the Holy Spirit into our chaos and allowing Him to make peace. For when we carry the Holy Spirit, we carry the very Kingdom of God, full of peace and goodness, with us wherever we go.

JESUS,

These lyrics are my earnest prayer! Bring your peace into our violence. Bid MY hungry soul be filled. I long for the peace that you've promised. I'm often restless and dissatisfied. Always chasing, chasing, chasing. May your presence quench my anxious mind and soothe my troubled heart. Help me to be an agent of peace in my world.

AMEN



LAUGHTER'S ECHO,
 CALLS TO MEMORY
 HOW WE REST IN HOLY GRACE
 PROMISED **JOY** TO
 THOSE WHO SIMPLY
 LONG TO SEE YOUR FACE
 WE LONG TO SEE YOUR FACE



JESUS,

I long to see your face.
 Grant me the **JOY** of
 your presence. I want a
 taste of this eternal joy
 that isn't based on my
 circumstances, my bank
 account, or even my
 relationships. I want the
 type of joy that permeates...
 that unremitting,
 relentless, enduring joy.
 The type of joy only found
 in you. Grant me a glimpse
 of your face, that I might
 rest content in holy grace.

AMEN

**JOY to the world,
 the Lord has come!**

Even the aisles of Walmart
 declare this truth this time of year.
 And isn't that what our soul longs
 after? Joy? Real, lasting, unending
JOY!

While we are constantly chasing
 happiness, even Dr. Seuss knows,
 "It comes without ribbons! It comes
 without tags! It comes without
 packages, boxes or bags!" As children,
 every Christmas movie with an
 ounce of morals tried to teach us
 that Christmas joy wasn't found in
 the stuff... So why are we still chasing
 temporal things of this world instead
 of that which will deliver what our
 soul truly desires? Perhaps we don't
 know where to look.

***You make known to me the path
 of life; in your presence there is
 fullness of joy; at your right hand
 are pleasures forevermore.***

PSALM 16:11

The joy we seek is only found in the
 presence of Jesus! And this is exactly
 what he promised. He didn't promise
 things would be easy, but he did
 promise to be with us.



GOD'S EMBRACE IN EVERY SEASON
BLESSED SAVIOR TO BE KNOWN
COME AWAKE THE **LOVE** INSIDE US,
MAKE OUR HEARTS YOUR HOME,
COME MAKE OUR HEARTS YOUR HOME.



We don't yet see things clearly.

We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist.

But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright!
We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him
directly just as he knows us!

But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to
do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope
unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12-13 (MSG)

God knows you. God sees you. And
God **LOVES** you.

Linger on these truths a moment.

In every season of your life, God has
been longing to embrace you with
the extravagance of his love. Yes, he
showed the world his great love on
the cross...but he also wants YOU to
know him as YOUR blessed Savior,
as the lover of your soul, as the One
who fights for your heart.

Until we can learn to rest in this type
of love offered to us, we will always
be a bit unsettled, wandering in
search of our home.

Jesus is your home. Take up
residency in his love. It's time to
come home for Christmas.



JESUS,

I want to make my home
in the warmth of your love.
Sometimes I feel like I'm
sleepwalking or squinting
through the fog. I want
to see you and know you
clearly, that I might truly
understand the depth
of your affection for me.
Awaken this love inside me.
May it flow out of me like a
flood to those around me!

AMEN

CHRISTMAS
EVE
at new life

sunday

9AM * 11AM * 1PM

december 24

