

“The world is always ending somewhere.” – Jan Richardson

It’s always beginning somewhere, too...perhaps right in the same place.

This is a truth that thumps like a heartbeat beneath the rhythms of the Advent season. In early November, our lectionary readings begin to speak openly of a world that ends. The lectionary year itself dies a few weeks later, only to begin again on the same topic: endings, and the new beginnings that they create.

Many of our readings over these weeks belong to a scriptural genre called “apocalyptic.” It’s a good word, despite its tendency to evoke the imagery of a cataclysmic Second Coming. That’s not this one word’s fault: “Apocalypse” merely means “revelation.” Much of apocalyptic literature isn’t at all concerned with forecasting a final judgment. Rather, it’s obsessed with telling us the truth about what happens when God reveals Godself: the world as we know it ends.

When God’s nature, God’s truth, God’s will are unveiled, these are the kinds of things that end: power structures that oppress the marginalized; social sins that have gone unchallenged for too long; our untroubled, everyday existences. And because God has drawn near, and Divinity is unveiled, our distance from God ends too.

Apocalypse happens whenever and wherever *what is* dies in order to make room for *what is God*.

What do we do in the face of such revelation, the kind that ends old worlds and begins new ones all around us, every day, wherever God’s reign breaks into our lives?

Scripture offers one particular answer again and again: *we shall sing*.

Nighttime Prayer in Advent

My Heart Shall Sing

Our Advent worship relies on scripture, stillness, and song – we hear and rest in God’s promises, and we sing. Songs have a way of finding us in the dark, giving words to our prayer, and helping the words of God’s promise move from our heads to our hearts.

As you prepare for worship, consider preparing your space as well – find some quiet, lower the lights to allow the darkness to help you be still, have a candle to light. If you have a household Advent wreath, consider adding two candles alongside, for our extended Advent, and light one more candle each week.

SONG *Come to us, O God*

*Come to us, O God. Be the hope within our longing.
Dwell within us, O Light, of the world:
O God with us, Emmanuel.*

*Stay with us, O Lord, for the day will soon be
over. Stay within us, O Light, O Light of the world:
when you are near, the night becomes day.*

DIALOG

Almighty God grant us a quiet night and peace at the last.

Amen.

By day, O God,

you grant your steadfast love,

and at night your song is with me,

a prayer to the God of my life.

SONG

Kindle a Flame (sung 4x)

Musical notation for the first line of the song. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: Kin - dle a flame to light - en the dark and

Musical notation for the second line of the song. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: take all fear a - way.

Text and music: John L. Bell

Text and music © 1987 Iona Community, admin. GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.
Used by permission.

PRAYER

Merciful God, in the stillness of our souls we listen for your voice to know again that you are God. Quiet our restless hearts with the knowledge that you stand within the shadows, keeping watch over your own. Rekindle our faith and light the lamp of hope within our hearts. Then deal with us as seems best to you, for where you lead we can confidently go with Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Each week as we approach the Advent of our Savior Jesus Christ on Christmas, we acknowledge what God's people have always known:
Even as God is active in this world, hope is still a work in progress.

Each candle reminds us of a person or a place or a moment in time that still awaits God's goodness.

Yet we are witnesses to God's work in this world. Just as a small spark can give new life to a dead wick, we trust the fire of God's presence can ignite God's purpose in this place.

God, through your love,

a familiar light

can banish the fear of the other;

Through your love,
**the warmth of good cheer
can extinguish cold-hearted injustice.**

Through your love,
**the song of faith
can rekindle hope for the hopeless.**

We light this candle as a small act of our great anticipation.

The candles are lit.

SONG *Come Now, O Prince of Peace*



O - so - sǎ o - so - sǎ, pyong - hwa - ŭi - im - gŭm
1 Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
2 Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.
3 Come now and set us free, O God, our Sav - ior.
4 Come, Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y.



u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sǎ.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.

Text: Geonyong Lee, b. 1947; tr. Marion Pope
Music: OSOSO, Geonyong Lee, b. 1947
Text and music © Geonyong Lee

READING

The reading is followed by silence.

SONG***Nothing Can Trouble (sung 4x)***

Na - da te tur - be, na - da te_es - pan - te.
Noth - ing can trou - ble, noth - ing can fright - en.

Quien a Dios tie - ne na-da le fal - ta. Na - da te tur - be,
Those who seek God shall nev - er go want - ing. Noth - ing can trou - ble,

na - da te_es - pan - te. So - lo Dios bas - ta.
noth - ing can fright - en. God a - lone fills us.

Text: Teresa of Avila, 1515–1582; adapt. Taizé Community

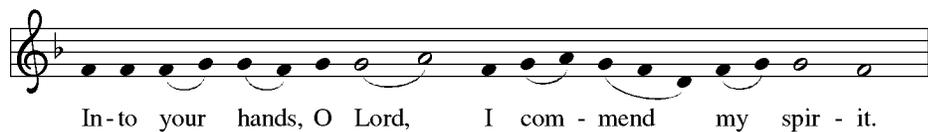
Music: NADA TE TURBE, Jacques Berthier, 1923–1994

Text and music © 1986, 1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, admin. GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

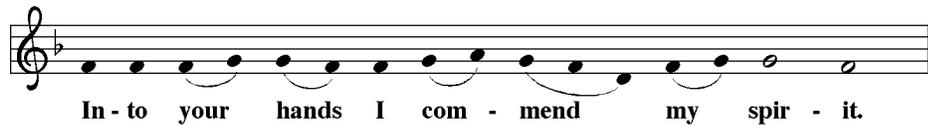
READING

The reading is followed by silence.

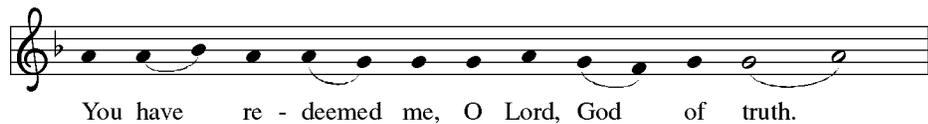
The silence concludes with the following sung responsory and gospel canticle :



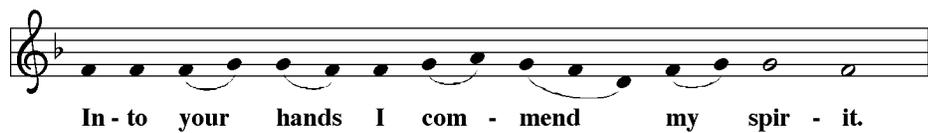
In-to your hands, O Lord, I com - mend my spir - it.



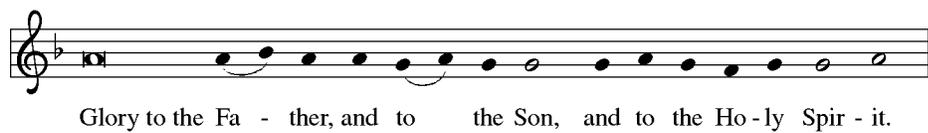
In - to your hands I com - mend my spir - it.



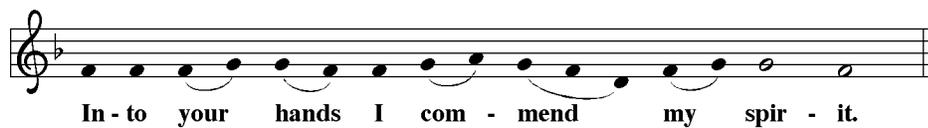
You have re - deemed me, O Lord, God of truth.



In - to your hands I com - mend my spir - it.



Glory to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Spir - it.



In - to your hands I com - mend my spir - it.

Leader



Guide us wak - ing, O Lord, and guard us sleep - ing;



that a-wake we may watch with Christ and a-sleep we may rest in peace.

All



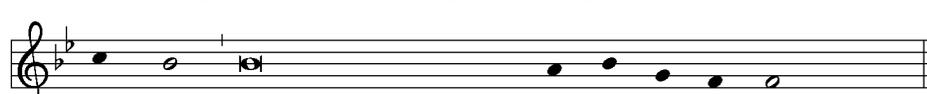
Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: your word has been ful-filled.



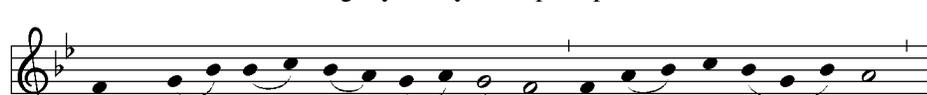
My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have prepared



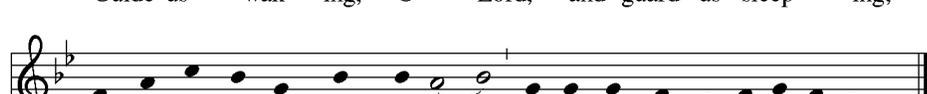
in the sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: a light to reveal you to the



na - tions and the glory of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Guide us wak - ing, O Lord, and guard us sleep - ing;



that a-wake we may watch with Christ and a-sleep we may rest in peace.

PRAYERS

Hear my prayer, O Lord;

listen to my cry.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;

hide me in the shadow of your wings.

In righteousness I shall see you;

when I awake, your presence will give me joy.

Extended silence is kept for individual prayer - beginning and ending with the sound of a bell.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake.

Amen.

Be present, merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of life may find our rest in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

As our time of prayer concludes, we pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Fa - ther in heav - en, ho - ly be your name.

Your King - dom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heav - en.

Give us to - day our dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins

as we for - give those who sin a - gainst us.

Keep us from temp - ta - tion, and de - liv - er us from e - vil.

For the King - dom, the pow - er and the glo - ry are yours,

now and for - ev - er. A - men.

SENDING AND BLESSING

Each candle we light is a sign: in a world so thirsty for mercy,
God's love spreads like fire.

Each unlit candle reminds us that God's healing has not yet fully spread
throughout the earth. How long must this world wait to see God's glory?

You are God's people, called to serve this world and to let your light shine.
Let the fire of justice burn in your heart, for the dead still cry for the flicker of new life we carry.

Now in peace I will lie down and sleep;
you alone, O God, make me secure.
Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Almighty and merciful God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless, preserve, and keep us, this night and forevermore.
Amen.

SONG #905

We Are Waiting for Jesus



1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Text: John Helgen, b. 1957
Music: JESUS BRINGS PEACE, John Helgen
Text and music © 2013 Augsburg Fortress

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #26201. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress. Portions printed under OneLicense.net License # A-711129. Portions of the Liturgy are adapted from "My Heart Shall Sing" by Barn Geese Worship, license under CC BY-NC 4.0. Jan Richardson, "[Blessing When the World Is Ending](https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/07/18/blessing-when-the-world-is-ending/)," *The Painted Prayerbook*. July 18, 2016. <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/07/18/blessing-when-the-world-is-ending/>