**Advent Reading #1: Coming to …. Redeem**

Heavenly Father,

When the time was right,

And we least expected it

When the days and the seasons and the years

Had reached their fullness,

When the darkness was as dark as it ever would get

And certainly no darker or lighter than it is today

When everything was waiting, and longing and ready

Though none really knew what it was we were waiting for

When the time was right

And we least expected it

You sent Jesus

God come in the Flesh

To redeem us

[*light first candle*]

Heavenly Father,

By Your Spirit, send him into our hearts, our lives, our homes, our church today.

For we need redemption as much today as we ever did.

Amen.

**Advent Reading #2: Coming to ... Rescue**

These candles remind us of the four R’s of Advent. The first, that Jesus is coming to “redeem”

[*light first candle*]

The second candle reminds us that Jesus is coming to “rescue.”

Heavenly Father,

When your angel came to Joseph in a dream,

After he had learned that Mary was with child

And the baby was not his own,

You told him: Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife

For the Child in her is conceived of the Holy Spirit

And you will call him: Jesus. Which means, “The Lord Saves.”

Even in the name you gave to our saviour, God,

You remind us that you are a rescuing God,

And that, even when sin and hurt and darkness and despair

Seems overwhelming, God, even then

You rescue all who turn to you.

“He will save his people from their sins”

Is how you said it to Joseph when you gave the baby Jesus his name.

“He will have pity on the needy and the weak,

And will save the needy from death.”

Is how you said it in the Psalms

“Be strong and do not fear,”

Is how you said it through your prophet Isaiah,

“Your God will come,

He will come with divine retribution,

He will come to save you.”

[*light second candle*]

So God, on this second week of Advent,

As we count down the days till the celebration

Of the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,

As we wait for that day,

Help us to wait, too,

patiently and expectantly

In whatever situation we may be in

That we need “rescue” from

Help us to wait there for him to come

And save us.

**Advent Reading #3: Coming to ... Reign**

These candles remind us of the four R’s of Advent. The first, that Jesus is coming to “redeem”

[*light first candle*]

The second candle reminds us that Jesus is coming to “rescue.”

[*light the second candle*]

But Heavenly Father,

It is not enough that we be redeemed and rescued from our selves.

Unless we have someone, too, to guide us

And direct us, to lead us in paths of righteousness

And govern us with your wisdom and your grace—

Unless we have someone to reign *over us* like that, God,

We’d only slip back into those situations and ways of being that

You rescued us from in the first place.

So on this third week of Advent,

We remember it and celebrate it, God

That you sent your Son to be our King, or Messiah,

Our Heavenly Ruler,

To *reign over* those he had redeemed.

[*light third candle*]

Thank you, God for Jesus

We ask that anything going on

In our hearts, in our lives, in our homes, in our world

That is contrary to the reign of Christ,

Anything that stands against his reign

Or keeps us from experiencing it fully,

We ask that you would remove those things

May he come and take his rightful place

As Lord our lives today.

 Amen.

**Advent Reading #4: Coming to ... Reveal**

These candles remind us of the four R’s of Advent. The first, that Jesus is coming to “redeem”

[*light first candle*]

The second that Jesus is coming to “rescue.”

[*light the second candle*]

And the third that He is coming to Reign.

[*light third candle*]

The fourth candle reminds that Jesus has come, also, to reveal God to us.

Heavenly Father

You Word proclaims a mystery to us:

That Your Son Jesus Christ,

Who is the radiance of your glory

And the exact representation of your being

Light of light, very God of Very God

Together with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God Now and Forevermore,

That *this* Jesus

Became a man.

He dwelt among us,

To reveal to us just exactly what you are like

And just exactly what life with you was meant to be.

In one place he himself said it like this:

“If you have seen me,

You have seen the Father.”

[*light the fourth candle*]

God, because we want to see you,

We want to see him today:

Worshipped and glorified in our midst

As we count wait with eager anticipation

To celebrate that moment in space and time

When you came to us in him,

To take us, through him, to yourself.

Open our eyes, let us see. Amen.

**Christmas Eve Lighting:**

The word Advent means “coming,” and the Advent Season is the time when we prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming—both the celebration of his first coming, when he arrived so long ago, born of a Virgin and laid in a manger, and also his Second Coming, which he promised to us when he ascended into heaven: that he would return to us in the same way we saw him go.

So Advent is a season where we remind ourselves of what Christ’s coming to us meant, and means for us, and will mean for us, when he comes again in all his glory.

Our Advent theme this year was “the four R’s of Advent.”

**Reader #1:** The first Candle was for Redemption, and it reminded us that Christ came to redeem.

Like it says in Galatians: “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive the full rights as children of God.”

[*light first candle*]

**Reader #2:** The second Candle was for Rescue, and it reminds us that Christ came to rescue us from the reality and consequences on our sins.

In Matthew, the angel tells Joseph, “Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will rescue his people from their sins.”

[*light second candle*]

**Reader #3:** The third Candle was for “Reigning,” and it reminds us that Christ came to reign as God’s chosen King.

This is how the prophet Isaiah described his reign: “He will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, and he will reign on David’s throne forever.”

[*light third candle*]

**Reader #4:** The fourth Candle was for “Revealing,” and it reminds us that Christ came to reveal God to us.

In the book of John it says, “The Word became flesh and came to dwell among us ... no one has seen God at anytime, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him to us.”

[*light fourth candle*]

Father in Heaven, you sent Jesus to redeem and rescue and reveal and reign—you sent him to free us from anything that held us back from you, to save us from sin, to show us just exactly what you’re like, and to be our Lord and King.

May he be and do all those things in this place tonight as we celebrate his birth: our redeemer, our rescuer, our reigning lord, and the revelation of your beauty and love for us.

Be glorified by us in him tonight we pray. Amen.

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

Lord Jesus we needed redemption,

And rescue. We needed a Saviour to reign over us. We needed someone to reveal to us just exactly what you’re like.

And because we needed—because we *need* all this, and more—you gave us Jesus.

Right from the beginning of creation you have been moving things and guiding things and making things ready for Him, and through the steps and mis-steps of your people throughout history, you never turned your back on us but kept the story moving—until—

That night, when those incredulous Shepherds heard a Choir of Angels singing praise to make their hair stand on end for the beauty of it—that night—when your light broke into the darkness of this world, once and for all, in the birth of a little baby lying in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger—that night—when Christ was born—

We received the redemption of God, we received the rescue of God, we received the reign of God over us, we received the revelation of God to us—in the newborn face of that peasant King.

Help us to receive him here, today. Amen.