

DETAILS



Advent *The Season of Hope*

August 29, 2023 | \$20, 128 pages, casebound | 978-1-5140-0018-2

One of the six books offered within the Fullness of Time series. Each book within the series, edited by theologian Esau McCaulley, offers Christians of all traditions a renewed appreciation for key events throughout the Christian calendar.

The Third Book Within the Fullness of Time Series

As more and more churches mark several different seasons throughout the church year in their preaching and teaching, the Fullness of Time series provides resources that help readers live fully into both the theology and spiritual practices of each significant date on the Christian calendar. Six books in total offer reflections on how the church is forming all of us into the likeness of Christ throughout each season.

- Released Winter 2023: *Lent* written by Esau McCaulley, priest, scholar, and author of *Reading While Black*
- Releasing Spring 2023: *Pentecost* written by Emilio Alvarez, founding pastor and rector of The Gathering Place
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Advent* written by Tish Harrison Warren, Anglican priest and award-winning author
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Christmas* written by Emily Hunter McGowin, assistant professor of theology at Wheaton College
- Releasing Fall 2023: *Epiphany* written by Fleming Rutledge, Episcopal priest and author of many books
- Releasing Winter 2024: *Easter* written by Wesley Hill, associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry

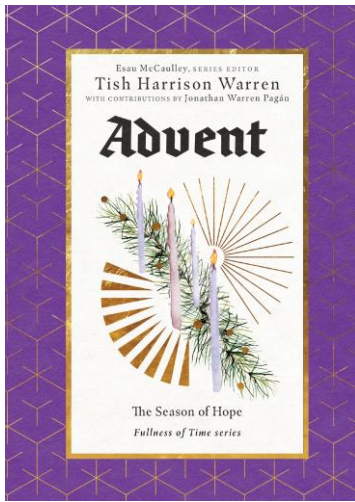
Series editor Esau McCaulley says of this work, "These books are written from the perspective of those who have lived through the seasons many times, and we'll use personal stories and experiences to explain different aspects of the season that are meaningful to us. In what follows, do not look for the comments of historians pointing out minutia. Instead, look for fellow believers and evangelists using the tool of the church year to preach the gospel and to point Christians toward discipleship and spiritual formation. We pray that these books will be useful to individuals, families, and churches seeking a deeper walk with Jesus."



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In this short volume, priest and writer Tish Harrison Warren explores the three “comings” of Christ that Advent is about: the first coming of Christ at his incarnation, the second coming at the last day, and the coming of Christ to meet us in the present moment, to make us holy by his Word and Sacrament.

Entering into the Eternal Story of God

As the calendar year winds down, as the days darken and grow short, as Christmas songs spill from crowded stores and children set about making wish lists for Santa, the church’s year dawns. On the fourth Sunday before Christmas, Advent begins. The first day of Advent is our Christian New Year’s Day. It kicks off the entire cycle of the liturgical calendar, which through each passing week will slowly unfurl the story of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit.

We begin our Christian year in waiting. We do not begin with our own frenetic effort or energy. We do not begin with the merriment of Christmas or the triumph of Easter. We do not begin with the work of the church or the mandate of the Great Commission. Instead, we begin in a place of yearning. We wait for our king to come.

The word *advent* derives from the Latin *adventus*, which means “coming.” The liturgical season of Advent is the time in which we prepare for and look forward to the coming of Christ.

Christians, of course, believe that Christ has already come. Jesus has already brought the kingdom of God near. He has already stretched out his hands to heal and to bless. He has already been broken on the cross and defeated death. He has already poured out his Spirit. So why do we reenter a season of waiting each year? What are we waiting for?

We Christians believe, however, not just in one coming of Christ but in three: the coming of Christ in the incarnation (theologians have sometimes called this the *adventus redemptionis*, the coming of redemption), the coming of Christ in what Scripture terms “the last days” (the *adventus glorificamus*, the coming in glory), and the coming of Christ in our present moment, through the Holy Spirit’s work and through Word and sacrament (the *adventus sanctificationis*, the coming of holy things or holiness) (Rutledge, 2018). Advent celebrates and holds together all three “comings” of Christ. It is a deeply paradoxical season, at once past, present, and future. Ancient yet urgent.

When we enter into the waiting of Advent, we do so not primarily as individuals but with all people of faith throughout time and around the globe. When we worship together each week, we join our voices, as the Anglican liturgy says, “with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven.” Because of this, the church calendar as a whole—and Advent specifically—is a way to reach toward timelessness through time itself. It is a season out of time. It is a season marked by days and weeks, yet through it we enter into the eternal story of God and God’s work on earth.

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN THE PRESENT

In Advent we take time to reflect on how Jesus, whom the people of Israel longed for, meets us today. We look at the places in our own lives where we yearn for Christ to come, places where we need hope, encouragement, help, and deliverance.



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Tish Harrison Warren is a priest in the Anglican Church in North America. She writes a weekly newsletter for the *New York Times* and is a columnist for *Christianity Today*. She is also the author of *Prayer in the Night* and *Liturgy of the Ordinary*. She lives with her husband, Jonathan, and their three children in the Austin, Texas, area.

In Advent we also notice how Christ continues his work in the world. In years that feel full of turmoil—times where political strife, war, and global suffering dominate the news—I find myself hungry for Advent. In 2020, during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, I could not wait for Advent to begin. I needed it. I needed a time when we as a church could grieve the pain and sin in the world and together wait for Christ to come, even now.

Advent is the season when we practice watching for grace. It is a time when we pay extra attention to how Christ continues to come, how he enters into the darkest corners of humanity and of our own lives. It is a time when we invite Christ to meet us and, in the words of Rich Mullins, to “shake us forward and shake us free.”

Advent is also the time when we recall that Christ comes to us actually and tangibly through the means of grace: through the Scriptures, through baptism, and through the Lord’s Supper (or the Eucharist). That these are called the *means* of grace reminds us that grace is not a free-floating force, much less a warm, spiritual feeling, untethered from the earth and human history. Instead, grace is the reality that God is at work. And his work is most often through earthy things. These means of grace are the reliable ways in which we know Christ in the present. They are sturdy crags, handholds that allow us to continue in the way of Christ and offer us the presence of Christ, week in and week out.

Christ came to us in the incarnation, and he keeps coming to us through the Spirit. We are buried with him and raised with him in baptism (see Romans 6:3-4), washed in the water of regeneration (see Titus 3:5). We are given bread from heaven (see John 6:32) and his body and blood through the Eucharist (see 1 Corinthians 10:16). We receive the Word through his word, read and preached in the church.

We begin our year not only by waiting but by readying ourselves to receive the gifts of repentance, healing, and restoration that God gives by grace. We come to God openhanded, holding our imperfect and incomplete lives before him. We need him to come to us, to rescue and restore us, even today, in our everyday lives.

—adaptation from chapter one, “Yearning: Three Advents of Christ”



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