

Advent and the GIFT OF TIME



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Advent, derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," marks the beginning of the liturgical year in many Christian traditions. It is a season of anticipation, reflection, and preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth and His eventual return. While Advent is often associated with candles, calendars, and carols, it is also an invitation to pause, reflect, and consider our many gifts and how we might share them with friends, family, and community.

In a world that prizes productivity, speed, and efficiency, time is often treated as a commodity to be spent, saved, or wasted.

***"How do you use your time?
Is it productive?"
Does it benefit only you or does it
benefit others?"***

Are you "killing time" on social media or the Internet simply waiting for the next interesting activity? Scripture reminds us that time is not merely a resource—it is a sacred gift. Psalm 90:12 asks God to, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Advent calls us to slow down and recognize that each moment is an opportunity to draw closer to God and to others.

Advent invites us to give our time to God in prayer, worship, and reflection. In Luke 10:38–42, we encounter the story of Martha and Mary. While Martha busily prepares for Jesus, Mary sits at His feet, listening. Jesus gently affirms Mary's choice, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." This passage reminds us that time spent in God's presence is never wasted—it is the "better part."

During Advent, we are called to emulate Mary's posture. Whether through daily devotions, lighting the Advent wreath, or simply praying silently, we offer God our time as an act of love and trust. In doing so, we prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew. Advent also challenges us to give our time to others. Freely giving others a precious and finite resource that everyone can give, regardless of social or economic status, is a wonderful way to help those in need while sharing the joy of the Advent season.

In Matthew 25:35–40, Jesus speaks of the final judgment, praising those who fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, and visited the sick and imprisoned. "Truly I tell you," He says, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for Me." Visiting a lonely neighbor, contacting distant friends and family

members, forgiving others who have done wrong to us, writing a heartfelt letter to someone who is lonely, or sharing a meal with someone in need are all ways we embody Christ's love.

Between semesters in college, I arranged and delivered flowers during the Advent season. My route included several nursing homes with many lonely people waiting for someone to visit them. Upon entering, ten, twenty or thirty residents would walk or roll their wheelchairs to me to inquire about the flowers and strike up a conversation about anything I wished to discuss. I politely replied that I was very busy with deliveries, but often relented and visited with the residents for a few minutes. I cannot remember what we discussed, but I can still see the smiles on their faces when I sat down to visit.

In a season often consumed by shopping, traveling, and family activities, the simple gift of my presence became an act of grace

that brought joy to the lonely. It was a difficult lesson for me to learn.

Advent also invites us to give time to ourselves—not in selfish indulgence, but to rest and contemplate the many gifts and joys in our lives. Waiting is a spiritual discipline that requires patience and trust. Advent encourages us to rest, reflect, and realign our priorities. It is a time to ask, "What truly matters? Where is God leading me?" How can I make space for joy, peace, and hope?

Time is fleeting. Advent reminds us of what is to come both at Christmas and in eternity. The Apostle Paul writes, "The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11). Advent is not just about remembering Christ's first coming—it is about preparing for His return.

As Paul exhorts, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, mak-

ing the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:15–16). In giving our time to God, to others, and to ourselves, we participate in the sacred rhythm of Advent. I encourage everyone to slow down and resist the temptation to rush through the season. Instead, let us embrace the gift of time—not as a burden, but as a blessing.



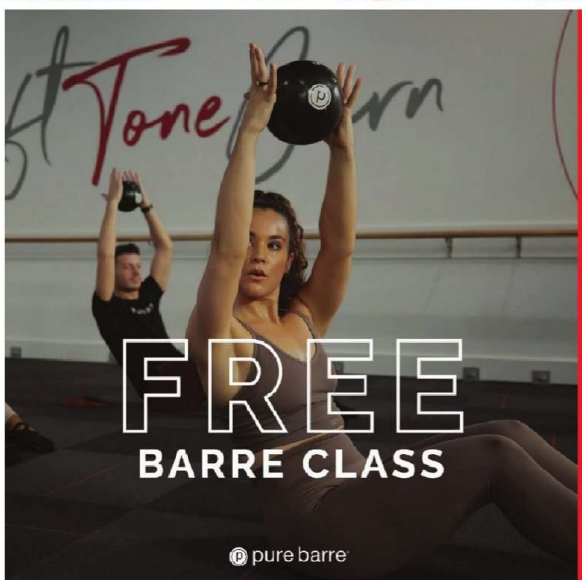
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