

Spiritual Life: A Prayer for Advent December 2014

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.”

We are Israel, God’s people, and we are captive: captive to sin, fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, selfishness – the list goes on and on. We need to be ransomed, rescued, redeemed. And we are painfully aware that we cannot save ourselves.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” It is this rescue that we long for most, in the darkening days of winter, in the dark, frightened – and occasionally cruel – corners of our own hearts. Like a child who has become separated from her mom, we cry out, “Come and find me, I’m lost.”

Lord, we know we will spend way too much money and time on “stuff” this holiday season. Our closets and cupboards will fill up even more; there will be more to maintain, clean and find room for. And before long, the new will become old and we’ll be out shopping again.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” Rescue us from mindless consumerism and fill our hearts and homes with that which truly does satisfy – your love and grace. Your life within ours. Teach us to steward our time and money for Kingdom purposes.

God of all, we live so divided from one another – even those of us who call ourselves “Christian” can’t agree on what that means. And so we bicker, and criticize and climb up our high horses, from where we look down on those who aren’t as “enlightened” as we think we are.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” Ransom us from our prisons of judgmentalism. Teach us to love others, and to leave the judging to you. Give us courage to reach across the divides and unite us in serving your Incarnate Son.

Jesus, Friend of Children, there are poor and hungry children here, in our community, in our nation, in our world. They are so often hidden and ashamed, which helps us pretend they aren’t there when we fill our tables and bellies with abundance.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” Rescue us from indifference. Open our eyes and hearts and fill us with your compassion. Grant that we might be generous with what we have, and work for justice and peace.

Eternal and timeless God, our lives come at us so fast these days. Our attention is pulled a thousand directions and in the midst of all that, we often forget you, the very Source of Life. We lose track of the fact that we are your beloved children, and we end up serving lesser gods.

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” Redeem us from our busyness and restore us to our true identity. Remind us that it is in you that we find meaning, purpose and joy.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel has come to you, O Israel!”

Thanks be to God! Our redeemer has come - once, to a stable in Bethlehem. And forever, day by day, in the hearts of those who love him. May Christ come to rescue you, again and again and again. Blessed Advent! Pastor Susan