

Advent Devotional Guide —Prepare the Way

Theme: *Comfort Is Overrated — Prepare the Way!*

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

As we quiet our hearts before You, we ask for the grace to be attentive to Your voice.

You who meet Your people in the wilderness, meet us here and now—strip away the noise, the distractions, and the comforts that dull our spirits.

By Your Spirit, prepare the way in our hearts for Christ's coming.

Wake us, shape us, and draw us deeper into Your life-giving presence.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Read the Scriptures

Isaiah 11:1–10

Matthew 3:1–12

Take a moment to read these passages slowly.

If you are in a group, consider reading them aloud twice—perhaps in two different translations.

Summary of the Scriptures

Isaiah 11:1–10

Isaiah offers a vision of hope rising from what looks dead: a shoot growing from the stump of Jesse. This promise points toward a Spirit-anointed King who will rule with justice, righteousness, and compassion. Under His reign, even creation itself is transformed—a world where

wolves live with lambs, conflict becomes peace, and all is filled with the knowledge of God.

Matthew 3:1–12

John the Baptist appears in the wilderness calling people to **repent** because God's kingdom is drawing near. Crowds flock to him—confessing sins, longing for renewal, recognising that God often begins His saving work in wilderness places. Yet John challenges religious complacency: true repentance must produce real fruit, real change. John prepares the way for Christ, the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Recap of the Sermon: “Comfort Is Overrated — Prepare the Way!”

Advent is full of lovely traditions—candles, carols, community, preparations—and these are good gifts. But John the Baptist reminds us that Advent is also a season of **awakening**, not comfort.

John's message was not cosy—it was **convicting**. He called people out to the wilderness, the place where human strength ends and God's mercy begins. Throughout Scripture, the wilderness is where people become attentive again: Moses, Elijah, Hagar, Israel—all met God there.

In our modern world, comfort can become a spiritual handicap. When life is too padded, too controlled, we stop noticing God. We insulate ourselves from the Spirit's disruption, from the call to repentance, from the miracles that surround us.

John's warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees still rings true: religious heritage, tradition, or busyness cannot replace a heart turned toward

God. Repentance is not shame—it is reorientation, a turning back toward the One who makes us new.

Advent invites us to honesty. To humility. To readiness. To step out of comfort, and into deeper dependence on Christ.

The wilderness—our struggles, losses, uncertainties—might be uncomfortable, but it is often where God speaks most clearly.

Advent whispers:

Don't get too comfortable. God is moving. Prepare the way.

Discussion Questions

Engaging the Scriptures

1. What image or phrase from Isaiah 11:1–10 speaks most to you today? Why?
2. Why do you think so many people were drawn to John the Baptist in the wilderness?
3. How would you describe “fruit in keeping with repentance” in your own words?

Exploring the Sermon's Themes

4. Where are the “wilderness places” in your own life—those uncomfortable spaces where you may be more open to God?
5. How have comfort or self-sufficiency sometimes dulled your awareness of God?
6. Can you think of a time when discomfort or difficulty led to spiritual growth?

Living It Out

What might it look like for you (or your group) to “prepare the way for the Lord” this Advent beyond the usual traditions?

What “layers of self-protection” might God be inviting you to peel back this season?

Where do you long to see God bring new life out of something that feels like a “stump”?

Action Section — Practicing Readiness

Choose one or more practices for this week:

1. The Wilderness Walk

Take a 10–15 minute walk alone—no phone, no music.

Ask: *Lord, what are You revealing in my wilderness? What are You preparing in me?*

2. A Repentance Prayer

Each day, pray a simple prayer of honest turning:

Lord, show me where I need to turn back toward You today. Create in me a clean heart.

3. The Comfort Fast

Give up one small comfort this week—social media scrolling, unnecessary spending, a particular food or treat—and use the space to pay attention to God.

4. Fruit of Repentance Practice

Do one tangible act of kindness or justice this week that reflects a turning toward God:

- encouraging someone lonely
- forgiving someone
- giving generously
- serving someone without being asked

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You are the One for whom we are preparing.

Turn our hearts back toward You where they have drifted.

Awaken us where we have become numb.

Give us courage to step beyond comfort and into Your transforming presence.

As we wait for Your coming, shape in us the fruit of genuine repentance—

justice, mercy, humility, and love.

Go with us into this week, and make us ready for You.

Amen.