

Great Thanksgiving
(*Getting Ready*)

Christ is coming!

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

Let us make the ways easy.

Let us make a way straight into our lives.

Christ is already here.

Let us enter the Divine Presence with thanksgiving and praise.

You are in the world,

and the world the reverberates with Your creative Word,
yet we don't seem to notice.

You reside with us in this world,

but we ignore You and pretend that we are still waiting.

The season is ripe.

The harvest is ready.

And You wonder what we are waiting for.

Behold You are standing at the door,

You keep knocking,

but we are afraid to fully open the door and allow You free access to our lives.

You keep trying to intruded into our plans.

But we make entry complicated.

We make our relationship with You rough and add a few more twists and turns.

Yet You are, as You have always been, persistent.

You never go away.

You never leave.

And You await our acceptance of Your invitation to full salvation.

As we listen, we can hear the carols already starting.

All through the earth we find expressions of Your expectant joy.

No matter how hard we try to ignore it, we want to sing along.

Your celestial choir is too glorious for our cold hearts to ignore:

We prepare the way:

A knowledge of salvation,

Forgiveness of sins,

God's heartfelt mercy,

Through which Love touches us all,

Giving light to all

To those in darkness

caught in the shadow of death

The way to God's peace. (Luke 1:76-79)

You have prepared us for the way.

The coming of Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and Life itself.
Jesus has never left us and promises to be with us until the very end.
Jesus comes to us every single day,
Christ's own people, but fails to find acceptance even in us.
But when we do recognize the divine presence
we embrace the opportunity of being the children of God,
as our lives reflect this belief in the ever present Jesus.
Today when You are thirsty, we refresh You with water.
Today when You are hungry we set before You a banqueting table.
Today when You are homeless we open our door and give You a place to rest Your head.
Today when You are rejected, vulnerable and all alone,
we choose to be Your supportive community.
Prepare us for your coming.

Prepare us for when tired dirty feet
come into our lives, so we will be ready
to join You by leaving our places of honor,
and take the position of servanthood.
Prepare us to care for those who will betray us.
Prepare us to care for those who deny us on our day of need.
Prepare us to care for those who turn their backs on us and walk away.
We want to be aware of Your holy presence.

Prepare us to become bread for the world
as we remember how You took unleavened bread,
the bread of refugees fleeing for freedom,
and blessed it with prayer. How You broke the bread proclaiming:
"Take and eat, this is my body broken and given for you."
We want to be aware of Your holy presence.

Prepare our lives to be poured out for the world
as we remember how You took the cup of wine,
the wine used to commemorate the gift of salvation,
and blessed it with prayer. How You shared it proclaiming:
"Everyone drink with me, this is the cup of my blood
poured out with faith in God's eternal covenant of grace,
granting you the forgiveness of your sins and the sins of all creation."
We want to be aware of your holy presence.

We want to be prepared:
prepared for Your call to follow,
prepared for Your invitation to take up our cross,
prepared to enter into the divine mystery which is Jesus Christ
as we always remember:

Jesus is Immanuel: God with us.

Jesus is with us always even to the end of the age.

Jesus is coming soon. Amen; come, Lord Jesus!

The One who is, was, and is to come, the Almighty.
Prepare these gifts of bread and wine,
to become for us the body and blood of Christ,
the sacred presence.

The One who is, was, and is to come, the Almighty.
Prepare these gifts of our hearts, our minds, and our bodies,
to become for the world, Your church,
the body and bride of Christ,
the sacred presence.

The One who is, was and is to come, the Almighty.
Prepare us for the coming of Christ:
into the center of our being, into the center of this church,
and into the very center of our world.
Take away our reluctance.
Take away our resistance.
Take away our rebellion,
so we might meet with You daily in the lives of those around us.

**We receive Your presence, Jesus.
We are filled with Your presence, Sweet, sweet Spirit.
We are inspired and with awe join in the worship around Your throne,
Great Imaginative Creator.
Accept our worship, our praise, and our devotion, now and always.
Amen.**

As continue to prepare our lives for Christ, let us pray with Jesus, saying:
**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those we trespass against.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

**Thank You for sharing with us this holy mystery revealed in Jesus.
You have prepared our hearts. You have prepared our lives. Now send us out with Christ
to care for a world in need. May the grace we have received, now plant seeds with the
promise of a rich harvest of joy and peace in the lives of others. May all we do and say
prepare others to receive Christ too. Amen.**