

2024 ADVENT & CHRISTMAS  
DEVOTIONAL



MCLEAN  
PRESBYTERIAN



CAPITAL  
PRESBYTERIAN  
HERNDON





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DAILY DEVOTIONAL  
*Advent & Christmas 2024*

# WAITING WITH HOPE

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## WHAT IS ADVENT?

The great proclamation “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14) assures us that God has entered into human history through the incarnation of the Son. The season of Advent, a season of waiting, is designed to cultivate our awareness of God’s actions — past, present, and future. In Advent we hear the prophecies of the Messiah’s coming as addressed to us — people who wait for the second coming. In Advent we heighten our anticipation for the ultimate fulfillment of all Old Testament promises, when the wolf will lie down with the lamb, death will be swallowed up, and every tear will be wiped away. In this way, Advent highlights for us the larger story of God’s redemptive plan.

A deliberate tension must be built into our practice of the Advent season. Christ has come, and yet not all things have reached completion. While we remember Israel’s waiting and hoping and we give thanks for Christ’s birth, we also anticipate his second coming at the end of time. For this reason, Advent began as a penitential season, a time for discipline and intentional repentance in the confident expectation and hope of Christ’s coming again.

The Advent season includes the four Sundays preceding Christmas. Worship on these Sundays should be designed to help people see the tension between celebrating and hoping.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Adapted and reprinted by permission from The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition, © 2013, Faith Alive Christian Resources.*

## USING THIS DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE

The purpose of this guide is to give our church a supplemental resource for mid-week worship and discipleship during the 2024 Advent & Christmas season. The content follows our sermon series theme: “Waiting with Hope” which will help us to see that God is teaching us how to wait for his return with faithfulness and steadfastness.

The birth of Jesus, our Immanuel, testifies that in the midst of the brokenness of the world and the brokenness of our lives, God is at work and he will not abandon us. The big story of the Bible is of God pursuing greater intimacy with his people and the redemption of all that was lost in Eden – culminating in the new heavens and earth. These pages are written to remind us of this big story – God’s plan of saving the world through Jesus and his call for us to wait with hope until his return.

Feel free to use these materials for personal devotions, family worship, your Community Group, or other gatherings. Each of the four weeks in December will focus on one passage of Scripture in which God is teaching us to wait with hope for the return of Christ. There is one written devotional reflection by a member of Mclean Presbyterian or Capital Pres Herndon for each week based on that Sunday’s sermon text, along with five additional daily readings and questions for group discussion and personal reflection.

As we walk through these weeks of Advent & Christmas, it’s my prayer that we will truly wait with all hope together as we glorify and enjoy him for who he is, for what he’s done for us, and for what he’s promised to do.

Grace and peace,



Micah Shelton  
*Pastoral Intern for Worship*

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## TIPS FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONALS

If you are working through this devotional as a family, here are some ways you can get everyone involved:

1. Give each person responsibility: let one person choose a song from the playlist (see #2), share the reading of the Scripture passage, have someone else ask the questions, and invite everyone to give their own answers. Take time to pray together.
2. Listen to a song together from our “Waiting with Hope” playlist and encourage kids to move as they feel led! God put the wiggle in them!
3. Draw/create symbols. Kids are often visual learners. As a family, draw a picture or make a Lego creation related to the Scripture story for that day. Be creative!
4. Set a regular time. It is best to have a set time to do this devotional every day. Whether at the start of the day before everyone begins their work, or at the dinner table, strive to be consistent in doing this

## THE WAIT ISN'T OVER

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**SCRIPTURE READING: ROMANS 8:18-25**

### **DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION**

*by Micah Shelton, Pastoral Intern for Worship*

The first question of the Heidelberg Catechism hangs over my desk. It is a faithful and redemptive reminder of my hope and where I may find it. It begins by saying that “I am not my own but belong — body and soul, in life and in death — to my faithful savior Jesus. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.”

Because of sin, our lives and this world have been subjected to futility, to bondage, to the tyranny of the devil. Our innermost soul and the world around us know that this is not what we were created for. We were created for freedom and not bondage, for life and not death.

And yet, here we remain in a world where the suffering so often feels more present than the hope of a world beyond this one. Romans 8:18-25 meets us in that lack of perspective and takes our eyes and points them to Jesus, to eternity with him. It acknowledges that our bodies, our souls, groan because they know that we were created for something more than this fallen world. We have received a great promise of life, but our bodies cry out for the fulfillment of that promise because this world is so contrary to it. Our whole self cries out for freedom.

It is easy to ignore this inward desire for freedom. It may even feel easier to act as if the challenges of this world are our only reward. This Advent season we are reminded that our pain is not meaningless, that our sufferings are not the end, and that our tearful waiting is not forever. All will be made right. Those who endure suffering and wait with hope will receive adoption as sons and daughters into the redeemed kingdom of Christ. Great glory is being revealed to us through Christ Jesus! The hope of this life, the hope of new life with Christ Jesus is the tool by which we can face all that this world has to offer because we know that greater glory awaits us on the other side. Christ has come into the world, and he has given us hope that fans the flame of our waiting and expectant hearts. So Christian, do not fear the groaning of your heart, because all of your desire and expectation will be fulfilled in the glorious and matchless arms of our Savior.

Despite our individualism, our selfishness, it is far greater that we live in the reality that we are not our own. Our entire self from our first breath until our last is guarded by our faithful savior Jesus. He has purchased us from bondage, and we wait with all hope for the full and total fulfillment of our redemption through Christ Jesus. This glorious redemption gives us the necessary glimpse of eternity to wait well and to wait with hope.



## CALL TO WORSHIP

*Psalm 23:1-4*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

## SONGS

Use the QR code to access our church Advent & Christmas playlist and queue these songs this week:



- “Come Light our Hearts”
- “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”
- “Joy to the World”
- “Noel”
- “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
- “O Sing a Song of Bethlehem”

## PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Father of glory, we ask that you would open our hearts and minds to faithfully seek you through your Word. In this advent season, we ask that your Holy Spirit would light our hearts and teach us to await the second coming of your Son Jesus with all hope and love. Amen.

## DAILY READING

MON: *Genesis 3:1-15 | The First Call to Wait for a Savior*

TUES: *Psalm 13 | How Long O Lord*

WED: *Isaiah 40 | Comfort for God's People*

THURS: *Luke 1:46-56 | Mary Rejoices That Her Waiting is Over*

FRI: *James 5:7-12 | Patience in Suffering*

SAT: *Matthew 24:36-44 | Watch and Wait*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In Romans 8:18, Paul reflects on the relationship between present suffering and future glory. How do you personally wrestle with the challenge of comparing your current struggles to the promise of eternal glory? What practical ways can we keep an eternal perspective without dismissing or downplaying the pain we face in the present moment?
- In what ways do you personally experience creation (or even your own life) yearning for Christ's return? How does this anticipation affect your perspective on the world around you?
- In Romans 8:24-25, we're reminded of the hope we have in Christ for eternity. What challenges or distractions make it easy to lose sight of this hope in your day-to-day life? How do you intentionally reconnect with that shared hope when it feels distant?
- How can we wait for Christ's return together as a community, and how can we encourage each other in hope as we look toward eternity?

## PRAYER OF RESPONSE

Heavenly Father, teach us to wait. Teach us to wait for your second coming with hope. For we know that we will sing like Mary did after your first coming, and our hearts look forward with joy until that day. Until it comes, we ask that you would continue to give us glimpses of glory to energize us in our waiting. We long for you, help us to wait with eternity in our perspective. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

## WATCH AND WAIT

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**SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 24:36-44**

### DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

*by Tanner Johnsrud, Herndon Community Group Leader*

The Bible tells a wonderful story from creation to new creation. The story of the Bible is far more than — but certainly not less than — the glorious fact that Jesus came to die for our sins. Jesus promises that he will come again and set things the way they should be. The fact of the Lord's return should fill us with expectant hope. He will come again — and he will keep all of his promises, and will set everything right!

This is such a marvelous promise that we all want to know when it will happen. We look forward to the Lord's return with greater expectation than children looking forward to Christmas! But Jesus in his great wisdom and love tells us to wait. And he directs us how to wait.

We are to wait with an attitude of humility. For two thousand years people have tried to guess about the timing of the Lord's return. But Jesus tells us that none of us knows. We need to humbly accept that the timing of his return will remain a mystery. God has his plans, and knows his own timing. We don't know when it will be and we don't need to know, but we know it will bring him great glory, and it will be for our good. We can be satisfied with that. We don't need to speculate as to the timing of his purposes; instead, we can trust in the Lord and rest in the assurance that he will return.

We are to wait with an attitude of certainty. Jesus tells us of the days of Noah, when people were unaware that the flood was coming, and went through their lives as usual. In the same way, there will be people who don't know, don't believe, or don't care that the Lord will return. As such, they live their lives without the certain knowledge that Jesus will return to judge evil and sin and set the world right. But Jesus gives us the certain promise of his coming. Knowing with absolute certainty that he will come again and that we will be with him forever gives us strength to endure trials and great hope for the future.

We are to wait with an attitude of expectancy. Jesus makes the point that if we knew that someone was coming to rob our house at a particular time, we would be ready for them. Our minds, hearts, and wills would be ready to defend our home and protect our family. How much more so should we be ready for Christ's return. We don't know the day or the hour of his return. So we should always live in eager anticipation of his coming. Our hearts, minds, and wills should be shaped by the fact that he could come at any time. This shouldn't fill Christians with fear, but with renewed hope, joyous expectation, and a desire to tell our neighbors and loved ones about the Lord's promised and imminent coming.



## CALL TO WORSHIP

*Psalm 130:5-8*

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.  
O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.  
And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

## SONGS

*Use the QR code to access our church Advent & Christmas playlist and queue these songs this week:*



- “Go Tell It on the Mountain”
- “Away in a Manger”
- “Creation Sings the Father’s Song”
- “Emmanuel (Glory in the Highest)”
- “Wonderful Merciful Savior”
- “Angels We Have Heard on High”

## PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

*Inspired by Hebrews 1:1-4*

Mighty and merciful Father, you have spoken to us by your Son, whom you appointed the heir of all things and through whom you created the world. Christ, you are the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and you uphold the universe by the word of your power. By your Spirit, show us your glory through these words of Scripture. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

## DAILY READING

MON: *Genesis 15 | God’s Covenant with Abraham*

TUES: *Isaiah 52 | Awake, Awake*

WED: *Matthew 26:36-46 | The Disciples Sleep on the Job*

THURS: *Ephesians 5:1-21 | Awake O Sleeper*

FRI: *Revelation 22 | I Am Coming Soon*

SAT: *2 Corinthians 4:7-18 | Waiting for Glory*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In Matthew 4:38-39, Jesus talks about how people in Noah’s time were caught off guard. How do the temptations they faced mirror what we struggle with now?
- What does it mean to be spiritually asleep? How can we resist that temptation? Reflect on James 4:7.
- Since we don’t know when Christ will return, how can we each help our CG (or another small community you are part of in the life of the church) to stay spiritually prepared?
- If someone watched your daily life, how would they know you’re living with hope for Christ’s return? What would stand out?

## PRAYER OF RESPONSE

O God, you have given us the sure promise that Jesus will return to judge the earth. Make us ready, we pray, for his royal coming, that we may consider daily what sort of people we ought to be, and be found faithful servants waiting and working for our Master’s return. In your mercy, grant that many may be won for him before he comes, and make us bold in our witness until that day, whether he comes at midnight, or at dawn, or in the daytime. For his name’s sake. Amen.

## WAITING FOR GLORY

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SCRIPTURE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18

### DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

*by Caroline Fiol, Assistant Director of Student Ministries, Junior High*

“We are assured that we are waiting for a glory that surpasses this world.”

You and I are not strangers to suffering. We know what it is like to be hurt by others and also by ourselves. We ourselves have experienced loss. The world around us is broken and that brokenness trickles into our homes and our hearts. We ache for the promise of reconciliation of all things and peace on heaven and on earth.

One reason I love the season of Advent is that it is an invitation to step back, pause, and lean into a posture of waiting. Waiting is never easy for me. I love to rush into things. I often crave change and progress. But this week I invite you to join me in pausing and waiting. I invite you to pause and ponder the things unseen. Remember that God is a God who keeps his promises. The promised Messiah is coming. The Son of God who promises to make every wrong right is coming. And spoiler, he has come and he promises to come again.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7-8, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the treasure they have. He compares them to jars of clay, weak vessels. And yet, they hold to the treasure of the gospel. As Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians, God delights to use “what is weak in the world to shame the strong,” (1 Corinthians 1:27). The reason for this is so that none of us will boast in and of ourselves, but of God. And so weak, clay vessels that we are, we get to show God’s power and glory through our weakness. This is a theme that Paul uses throughout his letters. It is humbling to know that the God of the universe uses us to glorify himself.

As we wait, we are reminded of our own weakness and of God’s undeniable grace and power. Paul carries on in our passage to paint a picture of the Christian life and his own discouragement, yet there is hope. Though Paul says he is “afflicted in every way,” he is not crushed. Though our lives are full of brokenness, we wait for our Savior to return remembering that it is God who raised Jesus from the dead and promises to raise us also and bring us into his presence (verse 14). I love how Paul is so honest with the Corinthians about their suffering, but he is also honest with them about God’s power and reminds them of God’s promises. Later, in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul says, “For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.”

You and I are called to hold tight to the treasure of the gospel, and in faith wait for the glorious day when Christ shall return. Our afflictions definitely don’t seem small to us, but in comparison to what’s to come, they are. So, my friends, as we wait for what is to come, remember that it will surpass anything in this world, remember that God is powerful, and wait for glory in hope.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

*Psalm 33:18-22*

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his steadfast love,  
that he may deliver their soul from death  
and keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.  
For our heart is glad in him,  
because we trust in his holy name.  
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,  
even as we hope in you.

## SONGS

Use the QR code to access our church Advent & Christmas playlist and queue these songs this week:



- “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”
- “Joy Has Dawned”
- “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”
- “Do You Hear What I Hear?”
- “Come Adore the Humble King”
- “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

## PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Eternal God, we cry out today for a word from you. As our season of discontent approaches the day of your coming, we pray that you would speak to us in the gracious ways that you know best. Open our eyes that have been closed by fear and blinded by self-pity, that we may see you even in the anxieties and uncertainties that beset our days and threaten to overwhelm us like a cloud of darkness. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the joy of those who are happy and the comfort of those who mourn, we pray. Amen.

## DAILY READING

MON: *Exodus 40:16-38 | The Glory of the Lord*  
TUES: *Psalm 130 | My Soul Waits for the Lord*  
WED: *Isaiah 6:1-8 | Isaiah’s Vision of the Lord*  
THURS: *Luke 2:8-20 | Glory to God in the Highest*  
FRI: *Phillipians 2:1-11 | Christ Exalted for the  
Glory of God*  
SAT: *John 14:1-6 | Waiting for Home*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What does it mean that we are “jars of clay” carrying the treasure of God’s power?
  - » Reflection: How have you seen God’s strength working through your weaknesses?
  - » Practical: When do you expect that you will need to remind yourself this week that the power belongs to God, not you?
- The passage says we are “afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair.” Can you relate to this tension?
  - » Reflection: When have you felt this tension between hardship and hope in your own life?
  - » Practical: What can you do when you feel pressed down by difficulties, to hold on to the promise of not being crushed or destroyed?
- Paul calls our struggles “light and momentary” compared to the “eternal weight of glory.” How does focusing on eternity change the way you see your current struggles?
  - » Reflection: How does shifting the horizon of our understanding from right now to eternity shape how you handle suffering or challenges today?
  - » Practical: How can we help each other to shift our focus from the “seen” (temporary) to the “unseen” (eternal) this week?

## PRAYER OF RESPONSE

*A prayer attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux*

O God, whose greatness knows no limits, whose wisdom knows no bounds, whose peace excels all understanding; you love and help us beyond measure — help us to love you. Though we cannot fully do so because of your infinite goodness, increase and deepen our understanding so that we may love you more and more; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## WAITING FOR HOME

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SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 14:1-6

### DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

*by Faith Goodwin, Board of Women*

This year has been very difficult for me emotionally and spiritually. Many people around me have suffered loss, and in many ways this world has felt like anywhere but home. I've asked God why more times than I care to admit, and finding joy in God has been a struggle.

Enter Advent. A time for pausing and reflection. In the middle of all the circumstances we face, this passage calls us to pause and reflect on the promise of home. Jesus promises us that He is going to the Father to prepare a place for us to be with Him forever. And Jesus doesn't make this promise at a calm point in his ministry. No. He makes this promise right after telling Peter that he will deny Jesus three times and just before he tells his disciples to abide in Christ because suffering, harm and hatred are coming. He knows the deep sorrow of this world, and he knows of our deep need for home.

Jesus' promise here is meant to assure us that we have a home with Him even when we fail, and fail badly. His grace is more powerful than our sinful actions. His promise anchors us in Him so that we can face trials with the sure hope of home. We have assurance that we will not lose our room in the Father's house.

How should this sure hope of home change us?

First, it should make us bold in asking for forgiveness and grace. If Jesus promised this to Peter who would deny Him a few hours after promising him an eternal home, we can go to God and others and humbly repent because we know our hope for home is sure. He knew our sin and yet still offers us hope for an eternal home with him. We can go out into the world resting securely in God.

Second, it should make us reflect on the joyful reality of Heaven. We really WILL be with God forever. We'll get to experience the full reality of His presence. We will dwell with him! As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him."

If this year has been as challenging for you as it has been for me, I encourage you to let the reality of home fill you with joy this Advent. Let Christ's promise of home meet you in your need, this world is not the end. And if you have had an absolutely amazing year, know that the joy found in Jesus is greater and far more sustaining than anything else.

May you truly experience the joy of God this Christmas. He is calling us home.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

*Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.  
For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

## SONGS

Use the QR code to access our church Advent & Christmas playlist and queue these songs this week:



- “Come Light Our Hearts” by Sandra McCracken featuring Rain for Roots
- “Behold the Savior”
- “What Child is This”
- “Fullness of Grace” by Kristyn Getty
- “Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery”
- “Away in a Manger”

## PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Be near us, Lord Jesus, we ask you to stay close by us forever and love us, we pray. Immanuel, we invite you to draw near and dwell with us. Surround us with your tender, caring presence, that what we say and do in worship might prepare us to live forever with you in heaven. In your powerful name we pray. Amen.

## DAILY READING

MON: *Psalm 91 | God my Refuge and My Fortress*

TUES: *Luke 1:26-36 | Birth of Jesus Foretold*

WED: *Matthew 1:18-25 | The Birth of Jesus Christ*

THURS: *Luke 3:1-20 | Prepare the Way of the Lord*

FRI: *2 Corinthians 5:1-10 | An Eternal Home*

SAT: *Revelation 21:1-4 | Waiting for Healing*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- “Let not your hearts be troubled.” What are the worries or concerns weighing on your heart today? How does Jesus’ invitation to trust in him offer you comfort or guidance in those moments?
- Think about the promise that Jesus will come back and take us to be with Him. How does this promise change the way you act every day? What things might you do differently when you remember this promise?
- When Thomas asked, “How can we know the way?” it reflects our own uncertainties. In what areas of your life do you feel unsure or lost? How can embracing Jesus’ statement that he is “the way” help you navigate those decisions?
- Reflect on the promise that Jesus will come again and take us to Himself. How does this hope influence your daily life and shape the way you engage with others in the world? What actions or attitudes might change when you focus on this promise?

## PRAYER OF RESPONSE

*An Advent Prayer by Henri J.M. Nouwen, from “The Lord is Near”*

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, “Come Lord Jesus!”

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# 2024 ADVENT SCHEDULE

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## Advent Communion Service

DEC. 1 | 7PM | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

## Adult Christian Education: *Sing Like Never Before*

DEC. 8 | 10:45AM | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

## Live Nativity

DEC. 14 | 10AM-12PM | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

## Christmas Concert & Reception

DEC. 15 | 7PM | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

## Christmas Eve Services

DEC. 24

4PM FAMILY | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

6PM & 8PM CANDLELIGHT | MCLEAN PRESBYTERIAN

6PM CANDLELIGHT | CAPITAL PRES HERNDON

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*McLean Presbyterian Church*  
1020 Balls Hill Rd; McLean, VA  
[mcleanpres.org/advent](http://mcleanpres.org/advent)



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