

LINWORTH ROAD CHURCH ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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Introduction

Advent is a Christian tradition that marks the beginning of the liturgical year and is a season of preparation and anticipation leading up to Christmas. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "arrival," referring to the coming of Christ—both in his birth at Christmas and his future return. Advent emphasizes a time of waiting and spiritual readiness, encouraging us to reflect on the significance of Christ's birth and to prepare our hearts for his coming

We invite and encourage you to take time this Advent season to reflect on your relationship with Christ, slow down, look beyond the holiday rush, and deepen your sense of expectation for the fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth. May the peace and joy of Christmas fill your heart as you celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A note to parents:

The questions for kids are designed to encourage them to think about how they can actively prepare their hearts in simple, tangible ways, even in the midst of the holiday season. We encourage you to do this together as a family once a week. Including something like hot chocolate, doing it by candle light or sharing in a Christmas treat can make this time more meaningful.

WEEK ONE

Expectation

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 9:6-7 & Luke 1:26-33

Devotional:

We begin Advent with the theme of expectation. We look forward with hope to the coming of Christ, both in His birth and in His future return. The people of Israel had been waiting for centuries for the promised Messiah. They were expecting a Savior who would deliver them from oppression and bring peace to the world. This passage from Isaiah filled them with longing—a longing that would only be fulfilled in God's perfect timing. As they looked forward with hope, their expectation was rooted in God's promises and His faithfulness to fulfill them. In the New Testament, we see the fulfillment of this promise as the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, announcing that she will bear the Son of the Most High, the long-awaited Messiah.

As we enter the first week of advent we too are called to live in expectation. Just as God fulfilled His promise to send a Savior in the person of Jesus, we also live with the expectation that Christ will return one day to establish His Kingdom in fullness. In our waiting, we are invited to cultivate a sense of hopeful expectation—to remember that God's word is true, and that His promises will never fail.

Reflection

What are you waiting for in your own life? How can you prepare your heart to receive Him more fully this season?

Questions for kids

Why do you think people were so excited for Jesus to come? How do these passages help us know that God will always keep his promises?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we reflect on Your coming, we pray that You would renew our hearts with hope and expectation. May we, like Mary, trust in Your promises, and eagerly await Your return. Amen.

WEEK TWO

Preparation

Scripture Readings:

Malachi 3:1-4 Matthew 3:1-12

Devotional:

Malachi's prophecy points to the coming of a messenger who will prepare the way for the Lord. In the historical context, Malachi was speaking to a people who had returned from exile. The promise of a coming messenger was meant to stir up anticipation—God was not finished with His people. A day was coming when God would act decisively, entering His temple in a way that would purify and refine His people. This prophecy is ultimately fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist, who prepares the hearts of the people for Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. Just as Malachi spoke of a refiner's fire and a fullers' soap, so John the Baptist's message of repentance and forgiveness aimed to purify the people, making them ready for the Messiah's coming.

The imagery of refinement is central to this passage. Just as precious metals are purified by fire, our hearts must be purified to truly welcome Christ. This purification involves repentance—acknowledging our sin, confessing it, and turning back to God.

Reflection

What areas in your life need refinement? Are there sins you need to confess to prepare your heart for Jesus this season?

Questions for kids

What do you think it means to "prepare" for Jesus? Why do you think John the Baptist told people to repent (say sorry for their sins)?

Prayer

Lord Jesus as we prepare to celebrate Your first coming, we ask that You would prepare our hearts for Your return. Refine us, O Lord, through the fire of Your Holy Spirit. Help us to repent of our sins, to turn away from all that would hinder our relationship with You, and to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Amen.

WEEK THREE

Anticipation

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 11:1-10 & Romans 15:7-13

Devotional:

Isaiah's prophecy speaks of a time when a righteous king from the line of Jesse (the father of King David) will rise up to establish God's kingdom. This "shoot" from the "stump" of Jesse symbolizes the unexpected and humble beginnings of the Messiah. From the seemingly dead end of Israel's royal line, God will bring forth new life—a king who will rule with justice, wisdom, and peace. In Romans 15, Paul encourages the believers to welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed them. The hope of Christ is not limited to one people group; it is a hope for all nations.

Paul connects this inclusive hope with the promises made in the Old Testament, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan for all people—Jew and Gentile alike. Anticipation reflects an emotional engagement with what is hoped for. It is a longing or eager waiting for God's intervention, whether it's the coming of Christ, the fulfillment of personal promises, or divine restoration. It involves a certain level of joyful expectation, but also spiritual readiness and emotional engagement with what God will do.

Let us anticipate the fullness of this hope—when all peoples will praise God for His great mercy and the kingdom of peace He will establish through Jesus. As we wait for His return, we are called to live in the light of this hope, sharing His love with others and welcoming all people into the family of God.

Reflection

In what ways can you share the hope of Christ with others this season—especially those who may not yet know Him? What specific areas of your life or world do you long for Jesus to bring His justice and peace?

Questions for kids

What does it mean to you that Jesus is the hope of the whole world? How can you share the good news of Jesus with your friends or family this Christmas season?

Prayer

As we await the celebration of Jesus' birth, we also long for His return. We thank You that in Him, the hope of salvation is available to all people. Help us to live in the light of this hope, trusting in Your promises and eagerly anticipating the day when all things will be made new.

Amen.

WEEK FOUR

Gratitude

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 100 & 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Devotional:

In Psalm 100, the psalmist calls the whole earth to give thanks and praise to God. It is an invitation to come into God's presence with joy and gratitude, acknowledging His goodness and faithfulness. This Psalm reminds us that thanksgiving is not just a response to the blessings we receive, but a way of recognizing the very character of God.

In the 1 Thessalonians passage, we are given three commands that are essential to living a life of gratitude; rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances. Because of Jesus, we have a secure hope that transcends our circumstances. Gratitude in all things is not about denying our struggles but about recognizing God's faithfulness even in the midst of them.

In the context of Advent, these passages remind us to thank God not only for the material blessings we have but for the spiritual blessings—His presence, His love, His faithfulness—that are ours in Christ.

Reflection

Is it easy or hard for you to give thanks in difficult circumstances? Why? How does the practice of prayer help you cultivate a thankful heart?

Questions for kids

What are three things you can thank God for today? How can you show gratitude to your family and friends this Advent season?

Prayer

Father God, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. As we celebrate His birth this Advent season, fill our hearts with gratitude for the many blessings You have given us—both seen and unseen.

Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY

The Savior Has Come

Scripture Readings:

Luke 2:1-20

Devotional:

On this Christmas Day, we celebrate the greatest gift ever given—the birth of Jesus. This passage paints a picture of simplicity and humility, showing us that Jesus' coming was not marked by grandeur or earthly power. This child, born in a lowly stable, is the fulfillment of God's promise to bring salvation to all people, regardless of their status or circumstance. The announcement of His birth, first given to shepherds—outsiders in society—reminds us that God's grace is available to all, and His kingdom is for everyone.

The joy of Christmas is in the message the angels brought to the shepherds: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11). This Savior, Jesus, brings peace and hope to the world, reconciling us to God. The shepherds responded with immediate faith and action, rushing to see the baby and then spreading the good news of His birth. Like the shepherds, we are invited to encounter Jesus today with awe and share the joy of His coming with others. As we reflect on His birth, let us remember that Christmas is not just a story of a baby in a manger, but the beginning of God's redemptive work.

Reflection

How does the humble birth of Jesus challenge your view of greatness and power? Who in your life might need to hear the good news of Jesus today?

Questions for kids

How do you think the shepherds felt when they heard the good news from the angels? What part of the Christmas story makes you feel the most thankful?

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us today to respond with joy and praise for the gift of Christ. May we glorify You in all that we do and share the good news of Jesus with those around us. Thank You for the precious gift of Jesus, and may this Christmas be a time of deep gratitude and worship.