

Advent Prayers: Week One



Hope

Waiting for Something Great

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:2,6

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

REFLECTION

The Advent season begins today. As we start preparing our minds and our hearts for Christ's birth, why do we begin in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible? We begin in the book of Isaiah because there we learn that the people of Israel were waiting for something for many years. They were expecting difficult things: hunger, unfair rulers, pain, suffering.

Have you ever had a time when you had to wait? Not for just a few seconds or minutes. But days, weeks, years? What were you waiting for? It can be very difficult.

But this is why we have these words in Isaiah. During Advent they remind us that we are waiting. But we are waiting with HOPE!!

The one we are waiting for is someone great!! Someone who is wonderful, mighty, everlasting, and one who will bring peace. We are waiting for Jesus.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Sticky Hopes

In our scripture today, the writer says the people will see a great light. We light candles to bring light in darkness. During Advent, we associate light with Hope. Spend some time talking and writing down or drawing things that you are hopeful for in your life and in the world, and put them on sticky notes or pieces of paper. Take those sticky notes and put them by the light switches in your house. This week, as you turn on and turn off the lights, say a prayer about the things you hope for on the notes. When your family is together talk about how you felt each time you remembered to pray and hope.

PRAYER

To the One who gives us Hope, thank you for inviting us to this time of waiting. Help us to:

Open our eyes so we can see your light,

Open our ears so we can hear your words of hope,

Open our minds so we can understand you,

Open our hearts so we can receive your love.

Come, long expected Jesus, we are waiting for you! AMEN

Advent Prayers: Week Two



Peace

Finding Comfort

SCRIPTURE: Read Isaiah 40:1-5 and Luke 3:2-6

REFLECTION

John, son of Zechariah, known to many of us as “John the Baptist” was Jesus’ cousin. During the Advent Season, church leaders will often teach us about John because he was someone who prepared people to be ready for Jesus and his ministry. In the Luke passage, you can see that John quotes the book of Isaiah because he knows that his audience would recognize that familiar passage. John believed that Jesus was the one that would help the world become again what God intended it to be. He urged those around him to be ready for God’s work through Jesus. During Advent, we are invited to prepare ourselves to be ready for Jesus’ work in the world.

The writer of Isaiah takes about comfort. This comfort is the reassurance that God did not abandon His people and that He is with us right now. We live in a world where difficult things happen every day. Many people ask, “Where is God?” Isaiah reminds us that we serve a God who brings comfort and peace even in the midst of difficulty and pain.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Signs of Peace

In a world filled with conflict, God calls us to be peacemakers. One way we can do this is by bringing comfort to others who may be sad, hurting, lonely or sick. Individually or as a family, create at least one or more "signs of peace." Decide who in your life could use a sign of peace this season. Perhaps you write a letter to a family member who lives far away. Another idea is to make a small poster together as a family (with drawings, words, pictures from magazines), frame the poster, and deliver it or mail it to the person or people who need this sign of peace (you could also make one for a senior center, hospital, or homebound friend). Have fun and be creative with your signs of comfort and peace.

PRAYER

God of Comfort and Peace,

We come to you this Advent Season with questions.

Why is there sadness?

Why do scary things happen?

Why are people mean to each other?

We know we can come to you with these questions.

That you hold our pain and sadness close to you and understand

Thank you for being a God who can comfort.

Help us to bring comfort to those around us.

Help us to encourage those who are struggling

Teach us to be peacemakers every day.

AMEN

Advent Prayers: Week Three



Joy

Learning About Being God's Family

Scripture: Read Luke 1:39-56

REFLECTION

The weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas are when many people travel to be closer to family. We see in our scripture this week that when Mary learned she was pregnant, she traveled to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was also expecting a baby. Mary must have been experiencing a lot of different emotions: excitement, anxiousness, wonder, and fear. When we have big things happen in our lives, we want to share them with family.

What we learn today is that Elizabeth was the perfect person for Mary to visit because she celebrated Mary for who she was and gave her encouragement and support. Elizabeth offered Mary the experience of joy for the upcoming birth of Jesus. And what did Mary do? She sang a song of JOY. The song shares with us that Mary believed that Jesus would be the one who would bring JOY to all the people.

DISCUSSION TIME

1. What are some of your family traditions during Advent? What are some things you enjoy doing when you gather with relatives you don't see often?
2. Think of and share with each other ways that God has used you to do good things no matter what your age, height, or strength
3. What does the word JOY mean to you? What are some ways you can share JOY with others during this time of Advent?

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Spreading JOY

- Find a family in need you can help during this Holiday Season. (The Giving Tree is a perfect example)
- Take an evening this week and make your family's favorite holiday treat. Make 2 batches. One for your family and one to give away
- Pray that the things you have done would bring the Joy of Jesus to others during this time of Advent.

PRAYER

Creator of JOY, we share Mary's JOY this week:

The JOY of expectation

The JOY of family

The JOY of new beginnings

The JOY of compassion

The JOY of your promise of justice for all

As we continue to wait for your son

Help us to be bearers of JOY and Love

Help us to embrace others as family

Help us to know how we can help those in need

We pray that your JOY may cause the world to turn to you

Amen

Advent Prayers: Week Four



Love

Expected and Unexpected

SCRIPTURE: Read Luke 2:1-16

REFLECTION

Joseph and Mary were expecting a baby. They were expecting to travel, as everyone was required to travel. They were expecting to arrive in Bethlehem before Jesus was born. What was unexpected was having no place to stay, having a baby amongst the animals, and placing their precious one in a feeding trough for safe keeping.

Jesus comes to us today in expected and unexpected ways. We expect the candles, the beautiful hymns, our familiar passage told from the gospel of Luke. But Jesus meets us in unexpected ways. Through helping our neighbor who needs transportation. By being able to be kind to someone who is difficult. And remembering to pay attention to those who may get left out or looked over. May we bring HOPE, LOVE, JOY, and PEACE to our world all throughout the year.

DISCUSSION TIME

1. What are your favorite Christmas Eve traditions? What do you expect when you attend a Christmas Eve service together?
2. What are ways that you can expect Jesus each day? How can you learn to see Jesus in your daily lives?
3. What is your favorite part of the story of Jesus' birth? Why is it your favorite?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

- As we await the final days until Christmas, sing Silent Night together.
- Sing 'Go Tell it On the Mountain' and 'Happy Birthday Jesus' on His Birthday.
- Connect with family in person or through FaceTime/phone at some point on Christmas Day. Share with each other something you are thankful for. Give all of those thanks to God in prayer.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

As we see familiar sights

As we smell familiar smells

As we sing familiar songs

We remember that you entered the world

In unexpected surroundings

With unexpected parents

At an unexpected time.

Help us to expect you in the unexpected

And to love the world as you do

Not only during the Advent and Christmas season but all year long

Amen

CHRISTMAS DAY PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

Happy Birthday!

We are so glad that you chose to be born
and that you choose to get to know us.

Thank you for becoming part of our family
and for inviting us to become part of yours.

Thank you for loving us. We love you!

It's in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.