

Advent Celebration 2021

TINSEL, COOKIES, SNOW, AND QUALITY TIME WITH FAMILY. THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS FULL OF JOY, CELEBRATION, AND AWE. IT'S SO EASY TO GET SWEEPED UP IN THE BUSYNESS OF TREE LIGHTINGS AND PRESENT WRAPPING THAT WE SOMETIMES FORGET TO STAND IN AWE OF JESUS THIS TIME OF YEAR. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO USE THIS GUIDE AS A REFERENCE DURING THIS SEASON. WE'VE ALSO ADDED SOME EXTRA THOUGHTS AND SCRIPTURES THAT YOU CAN USE AT HOME WITH YOUR FAMILY.

The Meaning of "Advent"

We celebrate Advent during the four weeks leading up to Christmas. The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his first Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Advent is marked by a spirit of hope, expectation, peace, preparation, love, and joy.



The Colors & Symbols of Advent

Historically, the primary color of Advent is purple. This is the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. The shift from purple to pink on the final Sunday of Advent signifies a spirit of joy and celebration after a more solemn focus of hope, peace and love.

The circular shape of the Advent wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that we have in God—the hope of newness, renewal, and eternal life. The candles symbolize the light of God coming into a dark world through the birth of His Son. They remind us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace and love to others.

The center candle is called the Christ Candle. It is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The white color reminds us of God's holiness and purity, and the central location of the candle reminds us that Christ is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

First Sunday of Advent | November 28

Sunday's Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Hope & Expectation

Advent is a season of waiting with hope and anticipation as we prepare ourselves for an encounter with the God who came to us in the flesh—Jesus.

On the first Sunday of Advent, we light the first candle which symbolizes **Hope**. Our human hope implies a degree of uncertainty—things are not sure, they are possibilities, but not certain. Hope in God is void of uncertainty. Certainty is at its core, because it rests in the stability of God—His character and His will—which are unwavering. Hope is an anchor to the soul, latching onto the certainty of the promises of the future God has made. The hope that God has provided for you is not merely a wish. It is not dependent upon other people, possessions or circumstances for its validity. It is the application of your faith that supplies a confident expectation in God's fulfillment of His promises. Where is your hope rooted? In our advent reading, verse 37 says that "no word from God will ever fail." May our faith be as strong as Mary's as she trusted God's plan and looked forward with hope and expectation!

Other Verses to Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16 | Lamentations 3:21-24 | Jeremiah 29:11 | Hebrews 6:19 | Romans 15:13

Second Sunday of Advent | December 5

Sunday's Reading: Isaiah 7:14 & Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Peace & Preparation

On the second Sunday of Advent, we light the second candle which symbolizes **Peace**. The world defines peace as “freedom from disturbance; tranquility.” God’s Word tells us that *Jesus* is our Prince of Peace. He is the only true source of peace in this world. Peace should not be only viewed as the absence of bad things in our lives. It is acknowledging the presence of God, claiming His promises, and being thankful and content with the blessings God has given, despite our circumstances.

In John 14:27, Jesus promises, “*peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*” Again in John 16:33 He promises, “*I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!*” Praise be to the Lord for His great and precious promises! Take heart, oh Christian! What peace the promises of God bring!

The promise of the “Prince of Peace” took centuries to be fulfilled. Just as the people in that day, we need to look forward with joyful anticipation, confidently believing in the promises of God. As we look back and see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Christ’s first coming, we can also look ahead to the second coming of Christ. How are we preparing for His return?

Other Verses to Read: Philippians 4:6-7 | 1 Peter 5:7 | Isaiah 26:3 | Psalm 4:8 | Numbers 6:24-26

Third Sunday of Advent | December 12

Today's Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Love & Fulfillment

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The promised Messiah. A prophecy fulfilled. Emmanuel—God with us.

On the third Sunday of Advent, we light the third candle which symbolizes **Love**. Everyone defines love in a different way. Some define it as a feeling, based on human instinct and articulation. Some define it as a choice, transcending emotion and resting on human will or resolve. Still others define love as a force of nature, uncontrollable and beyond comprehension. The Bible tells us that God is love and that we cannot fully experience the fullness of love apart from Him. When we have a full understanding of God’s perfect love displayed in the gracious sending of His Son to earth, then we not only experience love, but we can also love others. We love because He first loved us. Without God, we have no basis for love and no ability to love.

God’s love is self-giving and sacrificial, exemplified in the giving of His Son on our behalf. God’s love is unconditional, given to us when we don’t deserve it. God’s love is eternal and powerful, for nothing can separate us from His love. What amazing love He has for us! Are we showing His love to the world around us?

Other Verses to Read: John 3:16 | Romans 8:31-39 | 1 John 4:7-21

Fourth Sunday of Advent | December 19

Today's Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Joy & Proclamation

On the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, we light the fourth candle which symbolizes **Joy**. It is a different color because it signals a change in the tone of the Advent season—from a somber tone to one of rejoicing. Joy is often defined as “a feeling of great pleasure and happiness,” but true joy is the action of choosing to trust God and be content in our circumstances.

The shepherds could have stayed put in the field that night. Instead, they went and found Jesus – and when they found Him, they couldn’t help but worship Him! And that wasn’t the end, they then returned to their homes, glorifying and praising God and sharing what they had seen—they proclaimed it! Jesus was the Good News that was promised to bring joy to all people!

Other Verses to Read: Psalm 16:7-11 | 1 Peter 1:3-9 | Hebrews 12:1-3 | Psalm 126:3 | Revelation 19

MAY YOUR HEART, MIND, AND SPIRIT DWELL SECURELY IN HIS HOPE, PEACE, JOY AND LOVE—
BOTH THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON AND IN THE YEAR TO COME.