

# **Celebrate Advent Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**

## **Introduction**

The season of Advent begins the Christian liturgical church year. During the weeks of Advent we participate in a time of waiting for the birth of the Messiah and we hear from Scripture words from the prophets pointing us to Christ's birth. It is also a time for Christians to look with hope for the second coming of Christ.

Advent is also a time of intentional prayer for the light of Christ to fill the darkest corners of our world. We quietly listen to the voice of God in Scripture and blend our voices with those of God's people in song. We pray together for the light of Christ's love to fill our hearts with hope, peace, joy and love.

These Advent worship times provide the opportunity for quiet reflection, the words of the Psalmist and Old Testament prophets; a hymn for the lighting of the Advent wreath; other hymns and the visual symbolism centered around the Advent wreath.

## **Advent Wreath Background**

As Christians, we use symbols to express visually the basic tenets of our faith and as reminders of the pilgrimage of our life in Christ. Symbols can have heightened meaning for us when associated with particular seasons of that journey. One such symbol is the Advent wreath. The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh.

The Advent wreath has its roots in the pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People sought the return of the sun in the dark time of the year (at the winter solstice) by lighting candles and fires. As early as the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to represent Christ's coming into the world.

Using this same symbolism, the Advent wreath was developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of the waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath, a circle, came to represent the eternal victory over death through Jesus Christ. The evergreens were a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lighted candles were a reminder of the light of Christ brought into the world. This symbolism can be just as strong for us today.

There is no one prescribed color for the candles, although several traditions are current. Four natural colored candles are always appropriate and symbolize the Light for which we wait. Deep purple candles, a sign of the penitential nature sometimes attributed to the season, may be appropriate. Another practice uses a pink candle for the third week of Advent. It reminds us that the end of Advent is almost here, and we can hardly contain our joy. Others who use blue as the liturgical color during Advent would be consistent to use blue candles.

The making of the wreath can be an activity where students contribute to making the wreath, using materials gathered from the yard or garden. If your congregation uses an Advent wreath for worship services it may also be incorporated into your chapel.

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## December 2, 2012 "Advent Hope"

### Responsive Prayer 2 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Leader: O Lord, open my lips,

People: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

Leader: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

People: **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Scripture:** Luke 19:28-40

**Hymn:** "Savior of the Nations, Come" LSB 332/AGPS 205

(Someone lights one of the purple/blue candles during the hymn introduction)

### **Introduction**

It seems pretty weird or different to be hearing about Jesus' triumphal entry at the beginning of Advent. Perhaps it is as weird as hearing about a Christmas in July celebration. However, the church has used the Palm Sunday text as its Gospel reading on the first Sunday of Advent for many years. It does so because of the deep connect between the incarnation of God and that very Godman's suffering on the cross for the sins of the world. It is for this very purpose that Jesus is born: to lay down his life as a ransom for many.

### **Outline**

- Jesus is our king. He comes to our midst and takes on human flesh (John 1:14) in order that he would be crucified on the cross to save us from our sins (Luke 9:21-22). Discuss what a coronation is. When Jesus is born, angels, and country folk (shepherds), and foreign dignitaries come to bow down before him. That same king rides into Jerusalem – the city where he will be crucified – in the midst of a parade. The people line the streets with garments and palm branches.
- These people thought he was coming to restore an earthly kingdom. He did not. Instead, he came to bring heavenly peace and forgiveness to sinners. We also expect Jesus to do things for us that he did not come to do. We look to him for earthly gain.
- Despite our sin, Jesus still comes to our lives to give us his good gifts and Spirit. He gathers us together like stones and builds a great temple – holy and heavenly before him.
- Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey that no one has ever used before. The donkey is a work animal and is very humble. His entrance into the world was also lowly and humble. Jesus was born in a stable to a young virgin.
- Jesus may be humble and lowly, but he is still the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is still Man, but is also God. He dies upon the cross and in his death he overcomes death. He kills death itself and gives forgiveness to you and me. In his resurrection, he gives to us eternal life in him. These good gifts are delivered by his good Holy Spirit. In the preaching of the Word, in Holy Baptism, in Holy Absolution, and in the Sacrament of the Altar.
- Jesus is born in the shadow of the cross. It is for this purpose that he came and for this purpose he was born. A king, born to die, marches into your life to give you freedom and peace from all your sin.

**Conclusion**

We start another church year, remembering that Jesus has come for us. He comes lowly and humble, riding to the cross of Calvary to give you life and salvation. He is our hope.

**Prayer for Advent Hope**

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection, we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## December 9, 2012 “Advent Peace”

### Responsive Prayer 2 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Leader: O Lord, open my lips,

People: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

Leader: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

People: **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Scripture:** Luke 3:1-14

**Hymn:** “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist Cry” LSB 344

(Someone lights one of the purple/blue candles during the hymn introduction)

### **Introduction**

The world has a different understanding of peace from what Jesus teaches us. Jesus’ peace is peace from the wrath of God the Father because of our sins. We all deserve death and eternal damnation for our sin, but Jesus comes to appease or put away the Father’s wrath (BIG word: Propitiate) by dying on the cross. The blood he shed covers us and washes us from our sin.

### **Outline**

- Our lives are a wilderness. Alone, we know only death and sin. God comes to us from outside of us and declares his Good Work into our ears. Why does God call it the Valley of the Shadow of Death?
- John the Baptist was the forerunner of our Lord. He was sent into the world to declare the coming (Advent) of the Messiah. He was sent into the world to prepare us for Jesus. He did so by the preaching of the Word and by a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- He warned the people of a wrath to come and prophesied of the coming Jesus who would give them the Holy Spirit. Where do you get the Holy Spirit? John warned the people by preaching the Law to them, but he also comforted the people by preaching the coming of the Christ to them.
- John knows that he is not the Christ, but only the one to prepare the way for him. He says to his disciples that he must decrease and Christ must increase. Indeed, Christ must increase all the way to the Cross and to his Resurrection.
- It is Christ who makes the mountains low and the valleys high. He is the great equalizer and the great Savior of the world. He does this by dying on the cross and shedding his blood for the world.

### **Conclusion**

This is your peace, Christ has come into the world and he has come to you. He has marked you with his blood by the waters of your baptism. There he has made you his own and appeased the wrath of the Father. Now, when God the Father looks at you, he delights in you because of his Son. You are redeemed and made new in Jesus – true peace for the world.

**Prayer for Advent Peace**

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

## December 16, 2012 “Advent Joy”

### Responsive Prayer 2 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Leader: O Lord, open my lips,

People: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

Leader: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

People: **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Scripture:** Luke 7:18-28

**Hymn:** “Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding” LSB 345

(Someone lights one of the blue candles or the pink candle during the hymn introduction)

### **Introduction**

Jesus came into the world to redeem us from our sins and bring us salvation by faith in him. When John sent his disciples to Jesus, Jesus explained his work to those gathered. He pointed them to the good news of His work and ministry. Jesus calls the people’s attention to the work of the prophet. John was a prophet – the greatest ever born, but still least in the kingdom of heaven.

### **Outline**

- Prophets were men sent to speak the Lord’s Word. John once said that he must decrease and that Christ must increase. That is the point of a prophet. He should be out of the way – instead, he should point to Jesus.
- Perhaps like a good television: we watch our shows on the TV, but don’t really realize the screen or the speakers. Instead, we concentrate on the show that we’re watching. That is the case until the picture starts to fade or the speakers get scratchy. In the same way, a prophet comes to give the message of Jesus. He isn’t the center of attention – Jesus is.
- What did the people go out into the wilderness to see? They didn’t go to see kings and a show. What did they see when they got to the Jordan and heard John’s message? John wore camel’s hair and a leather belt. He ate locusts and honey.
- Pastors also come to speak, not about the Christ, but to speak the Christ into the midst of God’s people. They are not the center of the attention, but instead it is Jesus that God is bringing into the midst of you.
- What is this message of the prophets and the pastors? It is the cross of Jesus Christ. It is that God has come in human flesh and suffered, died, and rose again. This is the joy of Advent, of Christmas, and of Easter. This is our joy – for God delights in you. He sends his messengers to prepare the way and then comes into our lives, our hearts, our communities.

### **Conclusion**

A thrilling voice is sounding! God has sent his messengers before his face to prepare each life and each heart for Jesus. Our God has come in the flesh of man and he comes for you. He takes your sins and dies on the cross to pay their price.

**Prayer for Advent Joy**

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## December 23, 2012 "Advent Love"

### Responsive Prayer 2 from *Lutheran Service Book*

Leader: O Lord, open my lips,

People: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

Leader: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

People: **make haste to help me, O Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Scripture:** Luke 1:39-45

**Hymn:** "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" LSB 357/AGPS 186  
(Someone lights the last candle during the hymn introduction)

### **Introduction**

Jesus is the culmination of all the prophet's messages of a promised one. Jesus is the longed for Savior of men. When Jesus comes, he shows us what true love is: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

### **Outline**

- Mary goes to visit her relative, Elizabeth. She bears the living Lord Jesus Christ in her womb. Even there he affects his surroundings.
- John leaps in his mother's womb when he hears Mary's greeting. This is the hallmark of the Christian faith – the message will be declared. It will be the whole livelihood of John. He will be a preacher. The Lord Jesus will say to preach is why he came into the world (Mark 1:38). St. Paul says that faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).
- Jesus sends preachers into the world to bring his good gifts and Spirit to his people. They are called to be faithful to this Word and to declare it in season and out of season. What do they declare and do?
  - Jesus has come as King and Lord to die upon the tree of the Cross for the salvation of the world. He appeases the wrath of God and brings forgiveness of sins and life eternal by the shedding of his blood for you.
  - He comes with good gifts in Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Sacrament of the Altar.
- Good gifts of true advent love for you this Christmas. This is truly the God of heaven and earth. He is the babe of Bethlehem: the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He comes for you – to free you from your sins and bring you to himself.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus is love. He is God and he shows us and gives us his true heavenly love in his dying on the Cross. The promise is for you and for your children and for all who believe.

### **Prayer for Advent Love**

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted up by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
Amen.

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