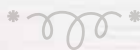



CURREY CREEK CHURCH

ADVENT

Christmas 2019





*Today in the town of David
a Savior has been born to you;
he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Luke 2:11

The word Advent is from the Latin word for **coming**.

Advent remembers Jesus' first coming, encourages his coming into us anew, and anticipates his coming again in power and glory! Advent is observed during the four weeks prior to Christmas day and has been celebrated by the church for millennia. In recent years, this grand observance has experienced a revival of sorts among non-liturgical churches like Currey Creek.

But why celebrate Advent? Aren't we already busy enough? Aren't our holiday calendars already full with finals, family, friends, and feasts? Isn't this just one more thing to schedule? The modern church should not fall prey to what C.S. Lewis called "chronological snobbery" which is the notion that we have nothing to learn from those saints that have come before us who have benefited and grown from celebrating Advent. So why celebrate Advent?

First, **Advent places us in the company of those Old Testament saints who waited patiently for that coming of Jesus the first time.** Our patience today is defined by the rise of Amazon Prime in which you can get virtually anything you need or want in two days! That was certainly not the case for the saints of old. They waited, longed for, pined for the promised Messiah. Advent forces us to slow down and

learn patience when it comes to what we most need and what we should most desire.

In the second place, **Advent enables us to slow down.** A friend recently shared an article from Christianity Today titled, "Make a Joyful Silence Unto the Lord." I encourage you to read it! The point of the article was to practice silence both personally and corporately as a way to settle our hearts and actually hear from the Lord. Advent enables us, in like manner, to settle our hearts by slowing down in the midst of all the pressures to fill every moment with activity.

Finally, **Advent engenders confidence in the Lord!** He has not failed in any of his promises and he will not fail in regards to the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ! Advent renews our sense of hope and anticipation. At just the right time, God sent his Son and at just the right time the Son will return in power and glory to redeem his people.

My hope and desire is that these scriptures and devotionals will encourage you as well as focus your affections on the Lord Jesus. Merry Christmas!

- John



Advent
Week



Hope

Sunday	Isaiah 9:2
Monday	Isaiah 9:6-7
Tuesday	Psalms 122:1
Wednesday	Psalms 122:2-5
Thursday	Psalms 122:6-9
Friday	Isaiah 2:2-5
Saturday	Romans 13:11-14

HOPE | WK 1

Scripture Focus | Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called,

*Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace*

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

DEVOTIONAL

The first mention of the town called “Church of the Dunes” was in 1067. It was sacked six times in the Middle Ages and was a center of conflicts between the countries of Holland, Spain, France and England in the 16th and 17th centuries. The town became an important piece of the Treaty of Ulrecht in 1713 as British negotiators demanded France agree to destroy the fortifications of the town and block up the port. The town was thrust into the international spotlight in May of 1940 after what Winston Churchill described as “a colossal military disaster” had taken place in Belgium. Due to poor military strategy and the inability to predict the enemy’s strategy on the part of the allies, the German Army swept down upon Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium in a period of 18 days and had defeated many allied troops. Cut off from aid, approximately 340,000 allied troops found themselves trapped between an advancing German army and the sea. The demoralized soldiers had been soundly beaten in battle, were in a defenseless position, and were clinging to the only thing they had, **hope.**

A very similar situation is found in ancient Israel’s history. Due to the defensive policies of a shortsighted and unfaithful King Ahaz, Israel was in desperate straits. Ahaz had repeatedly refused the instruction of the Lord and had relied on his own resources and understanding for guidance. This tact had actually plunged the nation into more darkness in which they would grope in gloom. The prophet Isaiah describes it this way; “And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness” Isaiah 8:22.

Into this desperate situation God speaks. God declares that there will be a miracle of deliverance. Whereas the people had become accustomed to the darkness, they would soon find themselves squinting at the brightness of the dawn! God would show himself to them and their sin, and rebellion would not be enough to quell his revealed glory. How could God possibly bring hope where there had only been dread? Would a great king arise? A magnificent leader? Would God himself in all his omnipotent power become more warlike, more oppressive, and more violent, for that is how wars are won, is it not? By no means! You see, God is strong enough to overcome by incarnating himself as a vulnerable and humble child according to Isaiah 9:6.

*The hope of the nations would
be bound up in a child.
Simply incredible!*

Operation Dynamo was launched on May 27, 1940 and in all more than 1500 ships were used to evacuate the primarily English and French soldiers from the beach at “Church of the Dunes.” We know it better as Dunkirk. It was at Dunkirk that we saw hope in action. **Hope allows us, in spite of present circumstances, to anticipate a miracle of deliverance at the right time.**

- John Free

REFLECTION



In Romans 5 Paul writes,

*“...and hope does not put us to shame,
because God’s love has been poured into
our hearts through the Holy Spirit who
has been given to us. For while we were
still weak, at the right time Christ died for
the ungodly...”*

Romans 5:5-6

Notice that Paul says the hope that is the result of suffering, endurance, and character will not put us to shame. In other words, the hope that we have will never be shown to be empty or merely wishful thinking. Notice also that God’s timing was perfect regarding Jesus’ rescuing death. This is why we can anticipate the Lord Jesus Christ at Advent. This is why we look forward, in hope, to Jesus’ second advent when, at just the right time, the Day Star will rise.

RESPOND

COME
THOU LONG
EXPECTED JESUS

Charles Wesley

- 1

Come, thou long expected
Jesus, born to set thy people
free; from our fears and sins
release us, let us find our rest
in thee. Israel’s strength and
consolation, hope of all the
earth thou art; dear desire
of every nation, joy of every
longing heart.
- 2

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom
bring. By thine own eternal
spirit rule in all our hearts
alone; by thine all sufficient
merit, raise us to thy glorious
throne.

PRAYER | *Spend time in private prayer*

O Lover to the uttermost, may I read the meltings of thy heart to me in the manger of thy birth, in the garden of thy agony, in the cross of thy suffering, in the tomb of thy resurrection, in the heaven of thy intercession. Bold in this thought I defy my adversary, tread down his temptations, resist his schemings, renounce the world, am valiant for truth.

Deepen in me a sense of my holy relationship to thee, as spiritual Bridegroom, as Jehovah's Fellow, as sinner's Friend.

I think of thy glory and my vileness, thy majesty and my meanness, thy beauty and my deformity, thy purity and my filth, thy righteousness and my iniquity. Thou hast loved me everlastingly, unchangeably, may I love thee as I am loved; Thou hast given thyself for me, may I give myself to thee; Thou hast died for me, may I live to thee, in every moment of my time, in every movement of my mind, in every pulse of my heart. May I never dally with the world and its allurements, but walk by thy side, listen to thy voice, be clothed with thy graces, and adorned with thy righteousness.

- *The Valley of Vision*

Hope

Family Time Devotional

PREPARATION

Cupcakes or brownies

Birthday candles

Lighter

As you gather together, give each one a cupcake with a candle. Today we are celebrating the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means coming. We are preparing for Christ's coming at Christmas. Light the candles.

Often when you light a candle on a cupcake you are told to make a wish and blow it out. Does a wish always come true?

Let them blow out their candles and eat their snack while you finish.

READ SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:2

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to light up our darkness. He came to rescue us from our sins. The Bible also tells us that He will come again. This is not just a wish, this is truth. The hope that Jesus brings is not a wish. This is the Gospel, or Good News, of Christmas.

Jesus came to rescue us from the darkness of our sin and bring to us the hope of life forevermore.

*Our hope is in Jesus.
He is the way, the truth and the life.*

End by thanking God for the hope that came to the world through Jesus.

Advent
Week



Peace

Sunday	Isaiah 40:3-5
Monday	Psalms 72:18
Tuesday	Isaiah 11:1-10
Wednesday	Luke 1:26-38
Thursday	Psalms 27
Friday	Romans 8:19-21
Saturday	Philippians 4:4-9

Scripture Focus | Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling:

In the wilderness prepare the way for
the Lord make straight in the desert
a highway for our God every valley
shall be raised up, every mountain and
hill made low; the rough ground shall
become level, the rugged places a plain.

*And the glory of the
Lord will be revealed,*

and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever considered how much of your day is spent in preparation for something else? For example, in order to eat a meal at home someone plans the meal, purchases the ingredients, ensures the kitchen is ready for cooking, washes and cuts, cooks the food, and finally the family gets to eat! And once the meal is over, the dishes are picked up, washed, and put away in preparation for the next meal. We prepare for meetings, study for tests, schedule appointments, write to-do lists, attend classes, arrange travel, train for sporting activities and more. Hours of practice go before a game, just like hours of preparation go before a presentation, and hours of prayer go before a hard conversation with a friend or family member.

Who enjoys the work of preparing? What if your God-given calling on your life was to prepare for one thing? One event that was world changing? Everything that had happened before or would ever happen since hinged on one event that you were called to prepare the world for. Have you ever considered how John the Baptist was just this person? The Scripture focus for this week is found in Isaiah chapter 40 and is quoted again in Matthew (3:3; 11:10), Mark (1:3), and Luke (3:4). These three Gospel writers inform their audiences that John the Baptist was the one that Isaiah prophesied about. In fact, they go further, quoting Jesus who asserted that John was the “Elijah that is to come” that Malachi prophesied about (Mal. 3:1). Jesus valued John greatly, saying of him, **“among those born of women, there is no one greater than John”** Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28.

This was John’s divine assignment, to prepare the way for the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He did it faithfully, and it cost him

his life. As Christians, we know this season by the name Advent, which has its roots in a Latin word that means “coming.” There is a coming event that we eagerly anticipate and thus prepare for. It is the coming of Christ, our Lord! It necessitates preparation of our hearts, priorities, time, and attention. Yes, we await the season of the birth we do so with the eye not on the manger, but on the clouds!

*We expectantly await his
second coming when he will
institute his everlasting rule and
reign and his everlasting peace
over his kingdom!*

May you rest in his already present and ample peace this season as you anxiously await his coming, and may you enjoy all the blessings of expectant hope, perfect peace, abundant joy, and unending love that he so freely offers. I hope you will consider the song for this week. There are not many songs that are still sung today that have roots as old as this one. Although the hymn as we know it was translated from Latin in 1861, phrases in this song can be traced back to the 8th, or perhaps even the 5th centuries! As you contemplate the rich prose of the song, may the wonder and excitement of our preparation for his coming be upon you.

- Eric Cate

REFLECTION



Is a sense of preparation for Christ’s coming something that you consider? How can this perspective change the way you view this Advent season, and this season of life?

Preparation and peace go hand-in-hand. When an event occurs that you are well prepared for, there is no anxiety about the event. In fact, there can be great peace. Consider Paul’s warning in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2. How do preparation and peace relate to one another in this warning?

What work does God need to do in your own heart to stir a renewed sense of wonder and excitement for his return? Finish this week by considering your role as a preparer like John the Baptist. How are you going about the work of preparing the hearts of others to be open and accepting of Jesus’ love and salvation for them? Are you prepared for the hard work of being a preparer, even if you grow tired and weary when it becomes hard? (Matt. 11:2-4)

RESPOND

O COME,
O COME,
IMMANUEL

John Mason Neale
& Henry Sloane Coffin

- 1 O come, O come, Immanuel, and
ransom captive Israel that mourns
in lonely exile here until the Son of
God appear. Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.
- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high, who
ordered all things mightily; to us the
path of knowledge show and teach us
in its ways to go. Refrain
- 3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai’s height in
ancient times did give the law in cloud
and majesty and awe. Refrain
- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse’s stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o’er the grave.
Refrain
- 5 O come, O Key of David, come and
open wide our heavenly home. Make
safe for us the heavenward road and
bar the way to death’s abode. Refrain
- 6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar! Dispel
the shadows of the night and turn our
darkness into light. Refrain
- 7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease and
be yourself our King of Peace. Refrain

PRAYER | Spend time in private prayer

God of my end, it is my greatest, noblest pleasure to be acquainted with thee and with my rational, immortal soul; it is sweet and entertaining to look into my being when all my powers and passions are united and engaged in pursuit of thee, when my soul longs and passionately breathes after conformity to thee and the full enjoyment of thee; no hours pass away with so much pleasure as those spent in communion with thee and with my heart. O how desirable, how profitable to the Christian life is a spirit of holy watchfulness and godly jealousy over myself, when my soul is afraid of nothing except grieving and offending thee, the blessed God, my Father and friend, whom I then love and long to please, rather than be happy in myself! Knowing, as I do, that this is the pious temper, worthy of the highest ambition, and closest pursuit of intelligent creatures and holy Christians, may my joy derive from glorifying and delighting thee.

I long to fill all my time for thee, whether at home or in the way; to place all my concerns in thy hands; to be entirely at thy disposal, having no will or interest of my own.

Help me to live to thee for ever, to make thee my last and only end, so that I may never more in one instance love my sinful self.

- The Valley of Vision

Peace

Family Time Devotional

PREPARATION

Plain Band-Aids
(large enough to draw on)

Markers

Today we are celebrating the second Sunday of Advent. Advent means coming. We are preparing to celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas.

Give everyone a Band-Aid. Have them draw a heart or a cross on their Band-Aid. Have each one put their Band-Aid on.

READ
SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:6
Psalm 147:3

We usually use a Band-Aid to cover up a wound, so that it can heal.

God knows that our world is full of people in desperate need of comfort and healing. That's why at the right time, God sent His son Jesus. The Bible tells us that Jesus came as our Prince of Peace. It tells us that He came to heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds.

God sent Jesus to a world full of sick, broken hearts. He sent Jesus to heal our sick hearts and to give us a peace deep down inside of our hearts. Jesus is the only one

that can do that for us. As we get ready for Christmas, we need to remember the gift of Jesus.

God sent Jesus, the Prince of Peace to save us and give our hearts a peace that only God can give to us.

End by thanking God that He sent Jesus to rescue us and to bring us peace.



Advent
Week



Joy

Sunday	Zephaniah 3:17
Monday	Psalms 16:11
Tuesday	1 Peter 1:8-9
Wednesday	Galatians 5:22-23
Thursday	Psalms 119:111
Friday	John 15:11
Saturday	Luke 2:10

SCRIPTURE FOCUS | Matthew 2:1-11

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?"

*We saw his
star when it rose
and have come to
worship him.*

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, for this is what the prophet has written: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

"Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

*When they saw
the star, they were
overjoyed.*

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a difference between joy and happiness, and it seems to me that the biblical view of joy has been stolen from us. Like a stealthy Christmas gift ninja, someone or something has taken a foundational element of our Christian walk. Now that sounds pretty outlandish because we all think we are pretty happy. I mean, don't we look happy? Are we not well dressed, well educated, with a handicap finally below a 10, and our kids' teeth are all straight? We get to walk around the beautiful Hill Country with our mocha choca pumpkin latte and watch our kids play coach pitch baseball.

From the outside looking in, it sure looks like a happy life. But here's the deal; once one of those examples goes sideways, it sends us out of happiness. In the twinkling of an eye one sarcastic comment said or one unmet expectation not met, and we are put into an entirely different mood. For example, I love Christmas time. I love the reason we celebrate, I love the lights, I love the laughter, I love giving gifts and I love the smell of a real tree in a house and most of all, I love listening to Christmas music before Thanksgiving. It takes quite a bit to change my outlook during this season except for one thing. The moment the radio or someone around me with ill motives plays "Christmas Shoes" by Newsong. If you are wanting to sob uncontrollably in the car line before picking up your innocent children from school, then listen to "Christmas Shoes."

That's because it does not take much to change our happiness. Our happiness is based on circumstances. One song or one slow driver in the

fast lane on I-10 has the ability to change our whole day. Our day to day happiness, which is wrapped up in circumstances, can be so frail and so fragile. The biblical view of joy, however, is stronger. It does not bruise easily. There are no circumstances that blow it out of the water. I believe that the reason for this is that **our joy is found in position rather than circumstance.**

In Matthew 2:10-11 it says,

"When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him."

The Messiah coming was something that the wise men had waited on for a long time. When they saw Jesus, the scripture tells us that they "fell to their knees and worshiped him." Something stirred so deeply in their hearts that they knew this child would change everything – and they worshiped him. For these wise men, no circumstance could change this reality. You see, Jesus came to not only save us from our current reality but our eternal reality as well. He saved us from our sin so that we are now in right standing before God. Because of Jesus our position before the holy God is secure.

Simply sit under the gravity of that for a moment. We were, as Ephesians 2 states, "children of darkness" on a path towards an eternity apart from God. There was no hope. But God, being rich in mercy made us alive together with Christ!

That reality is what caused the wise men to fall down and worship. From that position, true joy is found.

A deep joy found in Christ is what carries us through both wonderful and difficult circumstances.

So this Christmas, raise your gaze up a bit from the circumstances surrounding you. Hold on to something stronger than that. Hold on to the joy that Christ offers.

- Jared Patrick

REFLECTION



- 1. Read Romans 5:1-11.
- 2. In terms of the contrast between happiness and joy, how does this passage show us that joy is stronger?
- 3. Where are some areas of your life where you focus more on happiness instead of joy?
- 4. What are some ways you can focus on joy this Christmas season?

RESPOND

JOY TO THE WORLD

Isaac Watts

- 1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King! Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing.
- 2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
- 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.

PRAYER | Spend time in private prayer

Oh Christ,
All thy ways of mercy tend to and end in my delight. Thou didst weep,
sorrow, suffer that I might rejoice. For my joy thou hast sent the Comforter,
multiplied thy promises, shown me my future happiness, given me a living
fountain.

Thou art preparing joy for me and me for joy; I pray for joy, wait for joy,
long for joy; give me more than I can hold, desire, or think of. Measure out
to me my times and degrees of joy, at my work, business, duties. If I weep
at night, give me joy in the morning.

Let me rest in the thought of thy love, pardon for my sin, my title to heaven,
my future unspotted state. I am an unworthy recipient of thy grace. I often
disesteem thy blood and slight thy love, but can in repentance draw water
from the wells of thy joyous forgiveness.

*Let my heart leap towards the eternal
sabbath, where the work of redemption,
sanctification, preservation, glorification is
finished and perfected forever, where thou wilt
rejoice over me with joy.*

There is no joy like the joy of heaven, for in that state are no sad divisions,
unchristian quarrels, contentions, evil designs, weariness, hunger, cold,
sadness, sin, suffering, persecutions, toil of duty. O healthful place where
none are sick! O happy land where all are kings! O holy assembly where
all are priests! How free a state where none are servants except to thee!
Bring me speedily to the land of joy.

- The Valley of Vision

Joy Family Time Devotional

PREPARATION

Bubbles
(a few containers to share)

Today we are celebrating the third Sunday of Advent. Advent means
coming. We are preparing to celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas.

Have everyone take turns blowing bubbles. See how long they last
until they pop.

READ
SCRIPTURE

Matthew 2:1-11

Blowing bubbles makes us happy.
We love to watch them and
chase them, but they pop!

The Bible tells us that the wise
men saw the star and they
rejoiced, with great joy. Why
were they so filled with joy?
Were they just happy they
saw a star?

*The wise men knew
that their faithful
God had promised
a Messiah.*

When they saw the star, they
realized that God was fulfilling
His promise to send a Savior.
They rejoiced. That joy, that
comes from faith and trust in
a faithful God, did not go away
for them.

That is the same joy that we as
followers of Christ have. It is the
deep-down joy of knowing that
God is faithful, His promises are
true, and that we are His rescued,
redeemed children. That joy will
not go away!

End by praising God for His
incredible gift!

Advent
Week



Love

Sunday	John 3:16-19
Monday	Psalms 24:1-10
Tuesday	Isaiah 7:10-14
Wednesday	John 1:14

SCRIPTURE FOCUS | John 3:16-19

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

DEVOTIONAL

Individuals in the United States are projected to spend over 720 billion dollars on Christmas gifts this year. 720 billion! There are quite a few of observations we can make from that one statistic. We are rich. We are consumers. We are discontent. We like to spend. We like to get. But you could also argue that we also like to give. When Americans are spending 720 billion dollars on Christmas, that no doubt means that there is much gift giving taking place among family and friends.

Gift giving is modeled
by our Heavenly Father.
He gave us his Son.

So, in a sense, the gift giving at Christmas is a reflection of God's gift to us, Jesus Christ. When you look at the costly gift that the Father gave us, it often leads to the question of "why?" Why did God give his only Son? We find the answer everywhere in His Word. It is His great love for us. If our gift giving is to be a reflection of God's gift to us, the obvious question is Why do we give gifts?

Many of you, no doubt, already have gifts that are sitting wrapped under your Christmas tree at this

very moment. Gifts that you picked out at a store or ordered from Amazon. But why are you giving the gifts that you are giving? Have you ever really thought about that question? Often we give gifts because we know it will make the other person happy. Other times we give gifts because we want to be generous. And then there are those who feel an overwhelming sense of obligation. "I must get them a gift because I know they will be getting me one," or "My kids will never speak to me again if I don't get them the things on their list."

What if our reason for gift giving wasn't to make others happy, or to be seen as generous, or because we feel obligated? **What if we gave gifts this**

Christmas out of true, genuine, sacrificial love for the person we are giving to? Would the gift look

different? What is something you could give that would actually demonstrate your love for another person? If you don't know what that would be, I challenge you to think about it. Pray about it.

How can your gift giving this Christmas season look more like the loving, sacrificial gift that the Father gave to the world?

- Stuart Head

REFLECTION



The greatest gift one could ever receive is the gift of Jesus Christ. God the Father so loved the world that he gave us his only Son. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. This gift changed the world.

This baby boy was God incarnate.
Immanuel. God with us.

What an amazing gift that was born out of the amazing love that the Father has for you and for me. And that love is not based on who we are but on who he is. God is love. God loves. And he loved so much that he gave. Marvel in that truth this Christmas and reflect that same love to others.

RESPOND

AWAY IN
A MANGER

Martin Luther
& Charles H. Gabriel

1 Away in a manger, no crib
for a bed, the little Lord Jesus
laid down His sweet head;
the stars in the heavens
looked down where He lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on
the hay.

2 The cattle are lowing, the
Baby awakes, but little Lord
Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look
down from the sky and stay
by my side until morning
is nigh.

3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask
Thee to stay close by me
forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in
Thy tender care, and fit us
for heaven, to live with
Thee there.

PRAYER | Spend time in private prayer

Gracious Lord,

Thy name is love, in love receive my prayer. My sins are more than the wide sea's sand, but where sin abounds, there is grace more abundant.

Look to the cross of thy beloved Son, and view the preciousness of his atoning blood; Listen to his never-failing intercession, and whisper to my heart, "Thy sins are forgiven be of good cheer, lie down in peace." Grace cataracts from heaven and flows forever, and mercy never wearies in bestowing benefits. Grant me more and more to prize the privilege of prayer, to come to thee a sin-soiled sinner, to find pardon in thee, to converse with thee; to know thee in prayer as the path in which my feet tread, the latch upon the door of my lips, the light that shines through my eyes, the music of my ears, the marrow of my understanding, the strength of my will, the power of my affection, the sweetness of my memory.

May the matter of my prayer be always wise, humble, submissive, obedient, scriptural, Christ-like.

Give me unwavering faith that supplications are never in vain, that if I seem not to obtain my petitions, I shall have larger, richer answers, surpassing all that I ask or think. Unsought, thou hast given me the greatest gift, the person of thy son, and in him thou wilt give me all I need.

- The Valley of Vision

Love

Family Time Devotional

PREPARATION

Ingredients to make Christmas Cookies

A gift box, bag or plate to wrap some of the cookies in

Today we are celebrating the 4th Sunday of Advent. Advent means coming. We are preparing to celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas.

Make Christmas cookies together as a family. Have fun baking and decorating them. Choose some to wrap to give away.

READ SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-7
John 3:16-19

It was fun making cookies together! We are surrounded by people we love. We are together in a light, warm, cozy home.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born, not in a warm, cozy home. Jesus was born in a cold, damp stable. Mary and Joseph were not welcomed in Bethlehem, they were not surrounded by people they loved. However, it was there that love came to earth. The Bible tells us that God loves the world so much that He gave His Son. That is the gift of Christmas!

God gives to anyone willing to receive the gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus.

Today, as we are getting very close to Christmas day, let's think about someone around us who may not know Jesus. Someone who may not feel loved or welcomed. Who is someone that comes to mind? Can we wrap up a tray of cookies and give a small gift of love to them? Can we pray that they too will come to know the love of Jesus?

Pray together thanking God for His gift of love, the gift of a Savior. Pray for the ones your family mentioned. Ask for God to help you give your small gift to them and tell them of the great love of God.





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