



FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Each year we prepare for the coming of Christmas. We spend time decorating our homes. We spend time putting lights on our houses. We spend time setting up our Christmas trees. We spend time searching for and buying presents for the ones we love. We as Americans spend a lot of time preparing for the coming of Christmas. Today here in our worship service we are going to spend some time preparing our hearts for the Coming King. Over the next few weeks we will spend some time lighting our Advent Wreath. From now until Christmas we will light one candle each week until we have all our candles lit. We have four Sundays from now until Christmas. Then on Christmas we will light the final candle that represents the light of the world – Jesus Christ himself. Let us light the first candle:

1. The first candle we will light will help us to remember the prophets and their message of HOPE, those brave men of old who foretold of the coming of a King. Thousands of years before the birth of Christ, God sent prophets as messengers to let the world know that a new King was coming.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote Isaiah 9:2-7, *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian. For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."*

(Light the first candle at this time.)

Prayer: Father, today we begin our time of preparation for the birthday of Your Son. May the light of this candle remind us that You have given hope to a people who have walked in darkness. You have spoken to us through Your prophets let us be receptive to hear. As we view this candle may we remember that Your Word is faithful and that your promises still burn brightly in our lives. Grant that the light of your love for us will help us to become lights in

the lives of those around us. Prepare our hearts for the joy and gladness of your coming, for Jesus is our hope. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2. The first candle of the advent wreath was lit so that we would remember the Prophets and their message of HOPE.

(Have the candle from the previous week already lit.)

The second candle we will light today represents the Angels and the message of PEACE that they announced. As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, we remember that Jesus is both our HOPE and our PEACE.

Angels were Gods special messengers, who proclaimed the coming of the Christ Child. It was an angel that came to Mary to tell her that she would conceive and have a son, even though she was still a virgin. It was an angel who came to Joseph, the betrothed husband of Mary, to tell him, *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."* Mt. 1:20-21 And it was an angel who announced to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people; for today in the city of David there has been born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Jesus promised in John 14:27, *"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 let them be afraid."*

Prayer: Father, today we continue our time of preparation for the birthday of your Son. May the lighting of this candle remind us that You sent special messengers – the angels – to proclaim the coming of Jesus Christ. As we view this candle may we remember that You always send messengers into the world, because you love the world and you want to see people saved. As your Word always proves to be faithful may Your promises burn brightly in our lives. Grant that we may find peace as we prepare to celebrate our Lord's birth. May divisions in ourselves and in our families be peacefully resolved. May there be peace in our cities and in the countries of our world. Help us to see the paths of peace in our lives, and then give to us courage to follow them. Lord, let us remember that you only are the giver of lasting peace and that you are always with us. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

3. The first candle of the advent wreath was lit so that we would remember the Prophets with their message of HOPE. The second candle was lit to help us to remember the Angels and their message of PEACE.

(Have the first two candles which were lit in previous weeks already lit.)

Today we light the third candle of the advent wreath which represents JOY, by which we may remember the Shepherds who came to Jesus with great joy and anticipation at his birth.

The Shepherds remind us that Jesus has come for the common – everyday man. Our need for a Savior is not based on our status in life, but is based on our sinfulness. Even Jesus said, *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."* (Mt. 9:12) The Bible goes on to tell us in 1 Cor. 1:26-31 *"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, 'HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD.'"*

Isaiah 65:18 also reminds us, *"But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight."* and in Galatians 5:22-25 we read, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."*

(Light the third candle at this time.)

Prayer: Father, today we continue to prepare for the birthday of Your Son. As we think about the shepherds may we realize the deep need that we have for a Savior. Help us to be aware that all of us have fallen short of Your glory and we are sinful. As we view this candle may we remember that Your word is faithful and that Your promises are true, no matter what our status in this life. May each of us come to You in humility seeking forgiveness. We joyfully praise you, O Lord, for the fulfillment of Your promise of a Savior and what that means in our lives. Thank you for the gift of salvation through the birth of Your son, Jesus. Create us anew as we wait, and help us to see Your glory as you fill our lives with your living Spirit. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

4. The first candle of the advent wreath was lit so that we would remember the Prophets and the HOPE Christ offers. The second candle was lit to help us to remember the Angels and the PEACE that the Saviour provides. The third candle was lit to help us remember the Shepherds and the JOY we now have in Christ.

(Have the first three candles which were lit in previous weeks already lit.)

The fourth candle we will light today will help us remember of the Wisemen and God's LOVE for all men everywhere. The Wisemen remind us that Jesus has come for all the people of the world regardless of their nationality or ethnic background. The Bible tells us that God set a star in the East to guide those from a distant land so that they find the young child Jesus. The Wisemen became seekers of the Christ Child and found Him. Christ has come to bring salvation to all nations. In Luke 11: it says, *"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened."* If we too seek the Christ Child this Christmas season, we too can find Him. Jesus Himself demonstrated self-giving love in his ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with

others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us His most precious gift. As God is love, let us be love also by showing the nations the gift of HOPE, PEACE, and JOY that is Jesus the Christ.

In the Book of Deuteronomy 10:17-19a we find these words, *"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."*

And from the Gospel of John 13:34-35 we hear, *"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

(Light the fourth candle at this time.)

Prayer: Father, today we continue our time of preparation for the birthday of Your Son. As we light this candle may we remember the Wisemen and their search for the Christ Child. Let us remember that if we will seek You, You have promised that You will be found. May Your word remain faithful and Your promises still burn brightly in our lives. Teach us also to love, O Lord. May we always remember to put you first as we follow Christ's footsteps, that we may know your love and show it in our lives. As we prepare for our celebration of Jesus' birth, also fill our hearts with love for the world, that all may know your love and the one whom you have sent, your son, our Savior. Amen.

FOR THE ADVENT SERVICE

5. First we light the candle for HOPE because Jesus is our hope. Second, we light the candle for PEACE because Jesus is our hope and peace. Third, we light the candle for JOY because Jesus brings joy. Fourth, we light the candle for LOVE because Jesus is love. Finally we light the center candle. This is the CHRIST candle. Jesus is born. Jesus has come. Jesus is our salvation.

We come this day to light the final candle of the advent wreath. It is different than all the others to remind us that there is only one begotten Son of God. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords who has come to offer salvation to all of mankind. Jesus said, *"I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."* This candle stands as a light above all others for Jesus is the *"Light of the World."* This light is not hidden under a basket. This light is not placed in a closet. This light is placed above all can see it, for Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself."*

(Light the Christ candle at this time.)

Let us pray, Great God of love and light, we thank You now for the light of that special star over two thousand years ago that guided humble shepherds and learned wise men to the holy babe. Lead us now, by the light of Your love, that we also may follow You to new life in him. Father, today we welcome the coming of your son - Jesus Christ our Lord. We are a people of darkness and we live in a dark land yet a Light has been sent into this world to give us hope. May we remember that above all else, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of the world who alone offers HOPE, JOY, PEACE, and LOVE to all men who receive by grace this Good News. Amen.