

Devotions for the Week of December 3, 2017

LARGE-PRINT

1st Sunday of Advent

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, December 3, 2017

The season of Advent is first of all about the end of time, not about the coming of Christmas. Advent, which means “*coming*” or “*arrival*,” because it precedes Christmas, has often been understood to be a time to prepare for the coming of a child a Bethlehem. Advent is so much more.

Advent not only points us toward Christmas and the moment God entered the world in flesh as Jesus, but more importantly, Advent points us forward to “*the second coming*,” when Christ will return, will judge wickedness, and will prevail over every evil. As Laurence Hull Stookey writes, in his book Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church, “*Advent is the celebration of the promise that Christ will bring an end to all that is contrary to the ways of God; the resurrection of Jesus is the first sign of this destruction of the powers of death, the inauguration and anticipation of what is yet to come in fullness.*”

Read the following scriptures on this first Sunday of Advent. **Read Isaiah 2: 1-5; Matthew 24: 36-44; and Romans 13: 11-14.** These scriptures do not speak of a serene scene, a baby in a manger. Here we do not have a “Christmas card” picture, but instead a picture of triumph, victory, judgment, and surprise.

MercyMe sings, “*I can only imagine, what it will be like...When I walk by Your side. I can only imagine, what my eyes will see...When Your face is before me. I can only imagine. When that day comes, And I find myself standing in the Son. I can only imagine.*”

Advent asks us to not only “*imagine*,” but to ask ourselves, “Am I prepared?” Am I prepared to awake to find myself “*standing in the Son*,” standing before Jesus Christ?

Ask yourself: “How prepared am I to meet Jesus? If I knew that

Christ was coming back tomorrow, what would I change? How would I treat people differently? How would I use my time differently? How would I worship differently? What would I do to prepare?”

Pray and ask God to help show you one area of your life you can work on during this Advent season, to bring it more in line with God’s plan for your life.

Family Activity - Sunday, December 3, 2017

Make an Advent Wreath. Make or buy a circular base. The circle symbolizes God’s eternal nature. Make four holes in the base for candles. The light of the candles represents Christ. Attach evergreen branches to the base. Evergreens stand for God’s everlasting love. Insert the candles. Light 1 candle each week and take a moment to think about the coming of Christ with your family. This week, read Isaiah 2:1-5 as you light the first candle.

Monday, December 4, 2017

Advent is the season to remember, repent, and rehearse. First, remember. Advent has to do with the “*coming of Christ.*” The “*coming of Christ*” has a past. As Walter Burghardt writes, “*On a night we now take for granted, the whole of history was turned upside down. A unique person entered our world. Not an angel. Not another prophet: God’s own Son.*” Since that night our earth has not been the same.

The first thing we are called to do during Advent is to “remember.” We remember that God came into the world. Jesus Christ was born. We look forward to celebrating that birth at Christmas. **Read Luke 2: 1-20.**

The good news of Christmas is that God became one of us. In Jesus, God came to share our lives, first as a tiny baby, then as a growing child and finally as a man who even experienced suffering and death. How might you and your family be more attentive to the presence of Jesus in your lives? What might you do differently to prepare to remember Christ’s birth this year?

Take time to give God thanks for sending His Son for you, and pray about how you and your family might remember His birth more

meaningfully.

Family Activity - Monday, December 4, 2017

Save money for charities by making an “Advent box” with your children. With the children, contribute to the “Advent box” daily, with a prayer for those in need.

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

Advent is the season to remember, repent, and rehearse. Secondly, Advent is the season to repent. Burghardt writes, *“Our memory of the first Christmas does not mean that we can live in the past. Bethlehem was a beginning. Christmas is now. For all the countless cribs that will dot the Christmas scenery, Jesus no longer lives in a crib. He grew up; he preached and healed; he died and came to life again. Jesus rested in a crib not for his own sake; he rested in a crib because he wanted to rest in us. It is St. Paul’s ‘It is no longer I who live; it is Christ who lives in me’ (Galatians 2:20).”*

Burghardt goes on to say, *“But if the first Christmas is to come to birth in me, if Christ is not only to live in me but come alive in me, Advent calls for a conversion. To convert means to turn; to turn from something to someone. Concretely, to turn from self to Christ...So many take Christ for granted, give him less time than we take to shave or do our nails. We do what we have to do; worship on weekends, resist the gross temptations, walk a thin line between good and evil...Advent is the season to take the barnacles off my Christian bottom - the obstacles that keep me from being enthusiastic in my faith and hope and love, too sophisticated to love God with all my mind and heart, all my soul and strength, too self-centered to love my sisters and brothers like other selves, as Jesus Had loved me.”*

Read Luke 3:7-8, Luke 15:7, and Acts 2:38. It is only through repentance that the way is opened for Christ to enter into our hearts and for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Take time this Advent, time right now, to look over your life. Do you have any unconfessed sin in your life? Are there any relationships that need mending? Is there anyone you

need to ask forgiveness from? Have you loved God with all your heart, soul and mind? Has God been the number one priority in your life? Confess all your sins to Him and He will cleanse you “*white as snow,*” and the Holy Spirit will work His power in you.

Family Activity - Tuesday, December 5, 2017

As a family, set an extra place at your dinner table to remind you of Christ’s presence in your life.

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

Advent is the season to remember, repent, and rehearse. Thirdly, Advent is the season to rehearse. Advent is the time we rehearse for the final coming of Christ. How do you prepare for something as awesome and as unpredictable as Christ coming on “*clouds of glory?*” How do you live Advent as if Christ were coming in majesty this Christmas?

Burghardt writes, “*How would I react if Priority Mail reached me November 30 with this short message: ‘Expect my Son December 25. Will not come in a crib, but trailing clouds of glory. This is the end. Repeat: This is the end. Prepare for his arrival. It’ll be sheep at his right hand, goats at his left. No regrets accepted. Signed, Father?’ I suspect my Advent would be different.*”

This Advent take a hard look at your life. Ask yourself: How Christlike am I where I am, in what I do, with the people whose lives I touch? **Read Revelation 3:15-16, Matthew 25: 31-46 and Ephesians 4: 14-24.**

We are called to be “*hot*” in our faith, to live our faith out, helping others and not just talking about it, and we are called to grow more and more into the “*likeness*” of Christ. Once again, ask God to reveal areas in which you need to grow. How are you living out your faith? Are you lukewarm in your love for Jesus? What areas of your faith do you have to “*rehearse,*” do further preparation for the coming of Christ? Pray for guidance.

Family Activity - Wednesday, December 6, 2017

Make Christmas cards for family and friends. Make these cards together and include Bible verses.

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Isaiah 2: 1-5 is just one vision God has given of what it will be like the day He returns. Swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Things of battle turned into instruments of life. Society will be transformed. Justice will take place. Peace will rule the land.

I Can Only Imagine. **Read Revelation 21 & 22.** Try to picture in your mind, if only for a second, what this day will be like. Take time to give God thanks for the beauty in your life today and give God thanks for the vision of what is yet to be.

Family Activity - Thursday, December 7, 2017

Instead of watching television tonight, build family memories by playing games, singing songs, baking cookies, and growing closer to one another.

Friday, December 8, 2017

Build into this Advent season, a daily time with God. Continue to prepare for the “*coming*” of Christ through prayer and reading the scriptures. Simply spend more time talking to God; let Him know your concerns, your needs, your desires.

Family Activity - Friday, December 8, 2017

Give of Yourself. Sit down with your family and decide together on a way you can help someone less fortunate this Christmas.

Saturday, December 9, 2017

Read the Revised Common Lectionary readings for the 1st week of Advent. The Revised Common Lectionary is a three-year cycle of scripture readings used by many Protestant churches. Each Sunday there

are four readings: a reading from the Hebrew Bible, a Psalm, a reading from the Epistles, and a Gospel reading. This week's lectionary readings are:

- Jeremiah 33: 14-16
- Psalm 25:1-10
- I Thessalonians 3: 9-13
- Luke 21: 25-36.

Family Activity - Saturday, December 9, 2017

Read the lectionary passages together and talk about them. Then take time to simply pray together as a family.

Don't Forget: Invite Someone To Church Tomorrow!!

