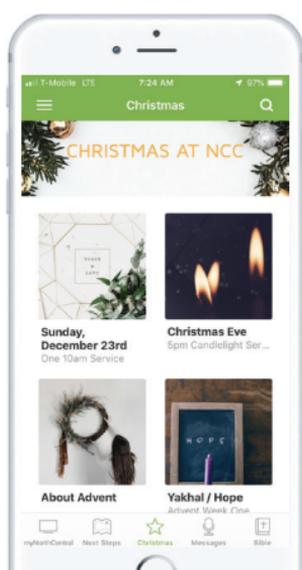


A D V E N T

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North Central Church

What is Advent?

Hope + Peace + Joy + Love

Throughout the Bible, God promised The Advent or coming of his son, Jesus. This is one of the most important events in all of human history – the almighty, eternal, creator of the universe becoming human, living among us, and suffering on our behalf in order to give us life.

The Old Testament looked expectantly for The Advent of God's forever king, the anointed one who would bring peace to his people. **Isaiah 9:6** anticipates and declares, *"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."*

In **Luke 2:8-11**, when the long-awaited Messiah finally came, angels announced his birth by declaring, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

For centuries, Christians around the world have used the four weeks leading up to Christmas to prepare themselves for the celebration of Jesus' birth. It's a time when we observe his first coming while we also look forward to his second coming. Each of the four weeks leading up to Advent is focused on hope, peace, joy, and love respectively.

Hope can be described as an eager expectation for good. It carries the connotation of waiting.

Peace, in the Bible, is not just the absence of conflict but the presence of something much more significant.

Joy, which an inner sense of well-being.

Love, the most of these, is not just something that God shows, it is something that he is; it's a part of his nature and character.

Week One - Hope

Waiting for God to bring about good in our lives. It's different than optimism, which looks for the silver lining in the cloud of circumstance. Instead, biblical hope chooses to wait expectantly for God to bring his goodness to bear in our future regardless of how dark our circumstances are. This hope comes from God's past faithfulness. At Advent, we look backward in order to look forward to a better future. Our hope is that God will liberate humanity, and the entire universe, from evil.

Waiting for the Lord

Isaiah 8:17

17 I will wait for the Lord, who has turned away from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my hope in him.

Psalms 130:5-7

5 I am counting on the Lord; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word. 6 I long for the Lord more than sentries long for the dawn, yes, more than sentries long for the dawn. 7 O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is unfailing love. His redemption overflows.

Psalms 39:7

7 And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.

The Hope of Eternal Life

1 Peter 1:3-4

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

Prayer

Loving God, help us to wait expectantly for the goodness to come and to always remember your past faithfulness. Thank you for sending your son Jesus to deliver us from evil and for giving everyone who places their trust & hope in you the gift of eternal life. Amen.

Week Two - Peace

Biblical peace means to make complete or to restore to a state of wholeness. The Advent of Jesus is the arrival of peace. He not only made peace with God for us, but he became our peace. Through The Advent of Jesus, not only are we no longer in conflict with God, but much more God has restored us to a state of wholeness.

For Unto Us a Child is Born

Isaiah 9:5-6

6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Christ is Our Peace

Romans 5:1-2

1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. 2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

John 14:27

27 "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

Ephesians 2:14-15

14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. 15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.

Colossians 1:19-20

19 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, 20 and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for coming to earth to make peace with God for our sins and restoring us to a state of wholeness so that we can share God's glory. You are our peace. Amen.

Week Three - Joy

Biblically, it is an attitude that God's people adopt, not because of good circumstances but because of God's love and promises. It's our future destiny, not our current struggles that determine our joy as we anticipate our future redemption. But joy isn't about ignoring the negative aspects of life, but rather it's a profound decision of faith and hope in Jesus' life and love.

Everlasting Joy

Isaiah 51:11

11 Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

Luke 2:10

10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

Luke 10:21

21 At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.

Philippians 1:25

25 Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith.

Philippians 3:1

1 Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

2 Corinthians 6:10

10 Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

Prayer

Jesus, Help us to find our joy, not in our circumstances or current struggles, but in having faith in your life and love as we anticipate our future redemption. Help us to praise you in all things. Amen.

Week Four - Love

It's a kind of love that seeks the well-being of others, even enemies, without looking for anything in return. The magnitude of God's love was revealed in The Advent, life, and death of Jesus. The heart of the Christian faith is a trust that at the center of the universe is a being that is overflowing with love for this world and that our primary purpose is to receive his love and express it back to others.

God's Great Love

Romans 5:8

8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

1 John 4:9

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

1 John 4:11

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

Luke 6:31

31 Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

Mark 12:31

31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to receive your love and express it back to others as you would. Help us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to see the well-being of others, even our enemies, without looking for anything in return. We love because you first loved us. Amen.

Christmas Day

Jesus is here! Rejoice in our God, who at the very form of a baby has come to redeem the Earth and erase the sins of all who believe in Him. Hallelujah!

Read Luke 1 & 2

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Luke 1:30-31, 38

30 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Zechariah's Prophecy

Luke 1:77-79

77 "You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. 78 Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:6-7

6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

The Shepherds and Angels

Luke 2:11-14,16

11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

Prayer

Jesus, you came to be light in our darkness. You came to be peace in our brokenness. You came to be joy in our sadness and you came to bring your love. Today we celebrate your birth. Amen.

