

# First Sunday Of Advent

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2, 4-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

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 increase 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.

(Light candle while the interpretation is read)

Interpretation

This morning we light our first candle . The light of the flame symbolizes the illumination of Jesus Christ in our lives.

The disciple John tells us: Jesus Christ is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

This Christmas season, let the light of Jesus Christ shine out of darkness, let his light shine in our hearts so that we may have the knowledge of the glory of God.

(Pray)

Prayer

Gracious Lord. May your mighty blessings be upon all of us this Christmas season.

May your light shine upon our lives removing the darkness about us.

May the joyful good news of Jesus and his coming change our lives and give us hope for when he comes again in power.

Amen.

# Second Sunday Of Advent

John 1:6-9, 15-16,19-23

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."

Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

(Light Candles 1 and 2 while the interpretation is read)

Interpretation

Jesus is the Christ, period. This is the testimony of John the Baptist. For all the greatness of John the Baptist; for all the wisdom, powerful work and changed lives - John is clear: don't confuse me with the one who is much greater than I, Jesus Christ.

Like John, we who believe are to live our lives so that all we do will point others to Christ, for as John says, "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another."

(Pray)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray that you give us the insight to follow the example of John the Baptist and place you before all other in our life. May the power of your Holy Spirit be with us now - Amen

# Third Sunday Of Advent

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, To a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

(Light Candles 1,2 and 3 while the interpretation is read)

## Interpretation

It is amazing how the young woman Mary is fully obedient to the Lord, even though she doesn't fully understand the implications of what is about to happen to her. We hold up Mary as a woman of strong faith - her faith is strong not simply because she listens, but it is strong because she accepts God's Word, even when she doesn't fully understand it.

(Pray)

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, you know that many times in our lives we hold back our faith because we cannot fully understand what is happening in our lives. We ask this morning that you give us the boldness to step out and act, allowing you to guide us when the way is uncertain - Amen

# Fourth Sunday Of Advent

Luke 1:26-38

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Light Candles 1,2,3,4 while the interpretation is read)

Interpretation

Imagine the difficulty of this young couple. Having traveled over a great distance they find themselves out on the street. Exhausted, discouraged, nerves on edge and hope running thin - were they wondering if God was going to pull them through this? But God does, doesn't he, and probably in a way they never expected - perhaps God will do this for you this Christmas - pull you through that hard time in a way you never expected.

(Pray)

Prayer

Lord God, you know it is hard for us to imagine Mary and Joseph as discouraged parents, but you know discouragement follows us all. We ask, that this Christmas, you give us a full blessing of the hope that Jesus Christ promised us - Amen

# Christmas Eve Prayer

( Pray )

In the time before, before they knew of his coming, people lived in doubt and fear that maybe their prophets and rabbis were wrong. Maybe the Messiah would never come.

In the time before, under the oppression of Rome, it becomes easy to lose sight of the hope. It becomes easy to think this darkness will last.

In the time before, it was dark.

In the time before, we were ruled by fear, doubt, oppression, repression, depression, aggression and the idea that maybe this was all wrong.

but then the moment.

The child came forth and sucked in air, then cried out.

The cry of the child, plaintive, weak, breaking, echoed and reverberated across the desert, the seas, the mountains.

The moments after, all time flowed

the moments after, shepherds bowed

the moments after, our doubts were answered

the moments after, we had our reason.

the moments after, it was light.

(Light candles 1,2,3,4 and the Christ Candle )