



# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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*Week 2*



## WEEK 2: DAY 1

### *Family Story Night*

Each week starts with a short story that will help awaken our imagination to the wonder of the Incarnation. If you have children, these are designed to be read aloud with your family as a way to include them in Advent. It will conclude with a Scripture as well as a few questions. Make these moments special. One way the early church did this was by lighting a candle at the beginning of each week during their Advent reading. For example, read the story at night and light a candle in a dark room. Let it be a reminder to your children that God has brought light to the darkness. Each week, light an additional candle and watch the room grow brighter and brighter until Christmas morning.

#### *The Fence*

He was sure of it now. After the first time, he thought maybe he had just miscounted. Sheep can sort of blend together when they're in clumps. So, he counted again. Same number. Then one more time just in case, but he already knew what the number would be. Two less than were supposed to be at the pond. He strained his neck as high as possible and scanned all the way down the fence line but saw nothing. Just a long line of piled stones stretching on and on. The boy ran back towards the tree.

"Abba!" he called to the man sitting under it. His eyes were closed.

"Yes, son?" he answered. "What was the number?"

"Two are missing," the boy said with a quiver in his voice. The father opened his eyes and rose, pausing for a moment to pick up the staff laying at his feet.

"Are you certain?" he asked, already moving towards the fence line.

"I counted three times," replied the boy following behind him. They neared the fence. There were pieces of wood in places to fill lower gaps in the stone. They were rough and splintered.

"Why would they go beyond this?" the boy asked.

The shepherd was scanning the wood back-and-forth in a quick, steady motion. "Here," he said pointing down to his right about ten feet from where they stood. He walked over and stooped down at the spot. The boy ran to him and noticed the small tuft of wool hanging off one of the splinters.

"Here is where they went through," he said, then remembered the boy's question. "This fence helps them see where they should stop. They don't always pay attention to it. Sometimes, they leave."

The boy looked beyond the fence. "But there's nothing out there for them," he said. "There's no water. No pastures. Hardly any trees. And there are wolves. And there are lions." He thought about their fangs and shook his head. "It's scary out there."

"I know," said the father as he stepped over the fence. He turned and offered his hand to the boy. "That's why we have to go get them."

They travelled in silence for some time. Nothing but the sound of wind and the steady thud of the shepherd's staff hitting the ground. The boy looked behind them and couldn't see the trees or pastures or pond anymore. Even the fence had disappeared in the distance.

"You know, people do this too," the father said, never breaking his scan of the hillsides. "The Law of Moses is meant to protect. Like the fence, it acts as a guard so people don't wander away into sin and death. Yet they break through it all the time."

The boy thought for a moment. "Has anyone followed the Law perfectly?" he asked.

"Not yet," the father replied. "Everyone has wandered past the fence."

It was then that the boy noticed something from the corner of his eye. At first, he thought an insect was buzzing around. But no. There were two of them. Two small lumps moving down into a valley to his left.

"Look!" the boy shouted, but his father was already staring in the same direction. "We found them!"

They began to run towards the sheep. They ran faster than any sheep on earth could run. And it was not long at all before they stood in front of the two of them, blocking their path towards certain death. The boy looked down and noticed the smaller one's hooves were injured. Both of their coats were nearly brown with dirt.

Twigs and thorns poked out of their sides.

The shepherd reached out and touched the bigger one on top of the head and scratched behind its ear. It moved towards him. Then he scooped the other up and lifted it over his shoulders.

“Alright, little ones,” he said. “That’s enough. It’s time to come home.”

He turned back and began walking in the direction of the pond and the trees and the green pastures. The bigger sheep followed closely at his side. The boy followed them. He looked down and noticed his legs were bleeding from running through the thorns and briars. The cuts stung with every step.

“When we get back, are we going to punish them?” he asked. The shepherd stopped and looked back at his son’s legs, then at the sheep.

“They certainly deserve to be punished,” he said. “But no, we are not going to punish them. We are going to celebrate. They were lost, but now they’re found.” Then he started walking again.

The boy smiled and thought about the party they would have. He caught up with his father and looked down at the sheep as they walked together. He picked twigs and leaves out of his wool then patted him gently on the head. The sheep nuzzled against the boy’s hand.

“The cuts were worth it to bring you home,” he said.

## *Reading*

### *Isaiah 53:3-6*

He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;

it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,

a punishment for his own sins!

5 But he was pierced for our rebellion,

crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Yet the LORD laid on him [Jesus]

the sins of us all.

***Galatians 3:24-27, 29***

The law [of Moses] was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. 25 And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes...29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

***Family Discussion***

What are ways we can sometimes “wander past the fence” and miss what God has called us to? How does Christmas impact the way we see our own sin?

During Advent, we get to remember that Christ has come to our rescue. All of us, like the sheep in the story, have gone astray from God. But Christ came into our thorns and briars to bring us back home.

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## WEEK 2: DAY 2

### *Reading*

#### ***Hebrews 4:14-18***

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

#### ***Hebrews 8:1-13***

Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. 2 There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands.

3 And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest must make an offering, too. 4 If he were here on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law.

5 They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: “Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.”

6 But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

7 If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. 8 But when God found fault with the people, he said: “The day is coming, says the LORD,

when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel and Judah.

9 This covenant will not be like the one

I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand

and led them out of the land of Egypt.

They did not remain faithful to my covenant,

so I turned my back on them, says the LORD.

10 But this is the new covenant I will make

with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD:

I will put my laws in their minds,  
and I will write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

11 And they will not need to teach their neighbors,  
nor will they need to teach their relatives,  
saying, 'You should know the LORD.'

For everyone, from the least to the greatest,  
will know me already.

12 And I will forgive their wickedness,  
and I will never again remember their sins."

13 When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

## *Reflection*

Jesus came to establish the new covenant promised long ago through the prophets. In the old covenant, God's people were to follow the Law of Moses perfectly and so be blessed by God. Of course, many times, they chose not to. After some time had passed, they would repent by offering a sacrifice to God. At this time, the presence of God was separate from the people of Israel because of their sin. They could not enter the holiest of holy places in the tabernacle. So, they needed a mediator between God and Israel – a priest. God's new promise, however, was that a day would come where the veil that separated the holiest of holy places would be torn and we would have access to God. It would be possible only through a Great High Priest who would go before us.

Because of the Incarnation, you have access today to the throne of God Himself. You have a Great High Priest who understands your weaknesses. And you have the ability to stand as one whose sin has been removed as far as the east is from the west.

## *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*I approach Your throne of grace with confidence this day knowing that I will find mercy to help in time of need. Thank You for drawing near. As one who is prone to wander, I hold fast to my confession that Jesus is Lord. I cling to it with all of my might. May I be filled with all the fullness of God as I go along my way. I walk with confidence and gratitude according to Your promises through Jesus Christ. Amen.*



## WEEK 2: DAY 3

### *Reading*

#### *Psalm 146*

Praise the LORD!

Let all that I am praise the LORD.

2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.

3 Don't put your confidence in powerful people;  
there is no help for you there.

4 When they breathe their last, they return to the earth,  
and all their plans die with them.

5 But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper,  
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

6 He made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and everything in them.  
He keeps every promise forever.

7 He gives justice to the oppressed  
and food to the hungry.

The LORD frees the prisoners.

8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are weighed down.  
The LORD loves the godly.

9 The LORD protects the foreigners among us.  
He cares for the orphans and widows,  
but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.

10 The LORD will reign forever.

He will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations.

Praise the LORD!

### *Reflection*

Each day, we put our trust in many different places. Spend a few minutes and make a list of specific areas (e.g., relationships, career, future dreams, etc.) that require trust from you. Are you putting too much faith in something or someone other than God? To put it another way, is there an area in your life you have misplaced your hope?





## WEEK 2: DAY 4

### *Reading*

#### *Psalm 24*

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.

The world and all its people belong to him.

2 For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas  
and built it on the ocean depths.

3 Who may climb the mountain of the LORD?  
Who may stand in his holy place?

4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,  
who do not worship idols  
and never tell lies.

5 They will receive the LORD's blessing  
and have a right relationship with God their savior.

6 Such people may seek you  
and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

7 Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

8 Who is the King of glory?  
The LORD, strong and mighty;  
the LORD, invincible in battle.

9 Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

10 Who is the King of glory?  
The LORD of Heaven's Armies—  
he is the King of glory.

### *Reflection*

Tradition holds that Psalm 24 was sung after the children of Israel made their ascent to Jerusalem for yearly feasts or celebrations. When they arrived at the gates, this hymn could be heard throughout the city. In many ways, it was a song of hopeful waiting. This must have been a time of reflection as well. The psalm has





## WEEK 2: DAY 5

### *Reading*

#### *Colossians 1:15–23*

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,  
16 for through him God created everything  
in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see  
and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

17 He existed before anything else,  
and he holds all creation together.

18 Christ is also the head of the church,  
which is his body.

He is the beginning,  
supreme over all who rise from the dead.

So he is first in everything.

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.

21 This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies,  
separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. 22 Yet now he has reconciled  
you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result,  
he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you  
stand before him without a single fault.

23 But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift  
away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good  
News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as  
God's servant to proclaim it.

