



ADVENT

AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

Week 3



WEEK 3: 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 begin with a Scripture reading and conclude with a time of prayer. 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.

Reading

Psalm 23 (ESV)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

The Shepherd King

The boy's father stood looking into the pink water as it reflected every color of the sky. The day had been long. He'd rescued two sheep and travelled far to bring them home. Both were drinking from the pool and the boy could hear his father singing as they did. He didn't sing well or often but he sang nonetheless. He'd always say it was because King David sang in this valley.

The father was still humming the melody when a stone split the middle of the still water and skipped across. He looked over to see the boy searching for another to throw.

"Do you think this is the one he meant?" said the boy as he sent another smooth stone sailing across. "When David the King wrote the 23rd Psalm, I think he was sitting here at this pond."

"There are a lot of places of still water in Israel," the father replied.

"These are David's though. He sang on these hills. He shepherded on them like us. This is my favorite pond in the whole valley, and I bet it was his too," the boy said.

"Well, that was a long, long time ago," the father said. "It may have looked differently then. Maybe it wasn't even here yet."

"No," the boy shook his head, "this was the one he meant."

The father smiled from the corner of his mouth, "What makes you so sure?"

"There's a green pasture all around," the boy said swirling his finger in a circle. "Still and quiet waters. Lying down in green pastures," he quoted. "It's all here."

"True," the father said, still grinning, "There are other green pastures near here. Maybe it was one of those that the King meant."

"But you always choose to come to this one after a long day. It helps you doesn't it?" the boy said.

"Yes," the father laughed to himself, "it does."

"That's not how I know though."

"Oh yeah? Why is that? How do you *know* this is the one?" he asked with a raised

eyebrow.

“This is the only one that makes you sing.”

The father looked back into the water and thought for a moment.

“What were you singing?”

“It was the song your mother and I sang when we arrived at the gates of Jerusalem. The *twenty-fourth* Psalm. It was a song of advent.”

“What does that mean?” he asked.

“It means a song of waiting for an arrival.”

“What are the words?”

The father looked up the valley and cleared his throat.

“It says,

‘Who can climb the hill of the Lord?

Who can stand in such a holy place?

Only those whose hands are clean.

Only those whose hearts are pure.

Only those who trust in what is true.

Only those whose promises are good.

These are the ones who will receive blessing.

A blessing from the Lord.

These are the ones who will receive righteousness.

Righteousness from the God of Jacob.’

Then the father closed his eyes as he spoke louder,

‘Lift up your heads, oh gates!

Lift up high, you ancient doors,

So the King of Glory may come in!

Who is the King of Glory?

The LORD, strong and mighty.

The LORD of angels and armies.

He is the King of Glory.

Lift up the gates! Raise high the doors!

May the King of Glory come be with us!’”

It was quiet after that. The boy watched small ripples in the water as tears dropped off his father's cheeks.

"Abba," said the boy. "Do you think there will ever be a King like David again in Israel?"

The father wiped his eyes. "The LORD has promised a Savior King will come. A Messiah. Just as he promised our ancestor Abraham that he would have a family and become a mighty nation."

The boy looked up at his father and said, "And if His promises were true then..." he paused and waited on his father's reply this time.

"They are true now," said his father.

"They are true now," said the boy as he looked back down into the water. "And if He was faithful to them..."

"He will be faithful to us," said the father.

"He will be faithful to us," said the boy.

The sun was hidden behind the hills now and stars were starting to peek through the twilight.

"Let's build our fire before it gets too dark," the father said turning back towards the trees. All the sheep were busy finding a place to bed down for the night. He put his arm around the boy as they walked past the water.

"You know," he said looking up at the sky, "I'm beginning to think you may be right. I think that really may be the one."

Family Prayer

Spend a moment and thank the Lord for sending Christ. Like the story, you can turn Psalm 24 into a prayer for Advent. Ask God to lift high the gates of your heart so that His glory can flood in.



WEEK 3: DAY 2

Reading

Philippians 2:1-11

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Reflection

Spend a few minutes writing or reflecting on the questions Paul asks in verse one.

What encourages your heart today about belonging to Christ?

In light of your current circumstances, what comforts you about God's love?

Is your heart tender and compassionate or hardened and cold?

Afterward, consider how Christ is described in verses 5-11 as our model of how to embrace humility.

Prayer

Father in Heaven,

Thank You for modeling what you command. Today, I put to death selfishness and pride that fuels the need to impress others. Instead, I put on the humility of Christ and ask for strength as I serve and consider others more important than myself. As I do, may they experience the love of Christ in a fresh way. I praise You for sending us the Name that is above every name, Jesus Christ. Amen



WEEK 3: DAY 3

Reading

1 Corinthians 15:17-23

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. 18 In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! 19 And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

20 But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. 23 But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! 52 It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53 For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

54 Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. 57 But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

Reflection

Advent is more than celebrating the birth of our Savior. It is the anticipation of the day when He returns and makes all things new. Advent is a season to cling to hope. Hope that our work and love and pain and sorrow and waiting will all be used by God for our good (see Romans 8:28). For, like Adam, we will die. But, like the Second Adam (Jesus), we will join in the resurrection. This hope brings light and life to every aspect of our lives. Because of the Incarnation and Resurrection, every moment of this day has purpose in your life.

Prayer

The following is taken from the third and fourth stanzas of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Use them as a prayer of praise to the Lord.

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Sun of righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings,

Ris'n with healing in His wings:

Mild He lays His glory by,

Born that man no more may die;

Born to raise the sons of earth;

Born to give them second birth.

Come, Desire of nations, come!

Fix in us Thy humble home:

Rise, the woman's conqu'ring seed,

Bruise in us the serpent's head;

Adam's likeness now efface,

Stamp Thine image in its place:

Final Adam from above,

Reinstate us in Thy love.



WEEK 3: DAY 4

Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11

“Comfort, comfort my people,”
says your God.
2 “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.
Tell her that her sad days are gone
and her sins are pardoned.
Yes, the LORD has punished her twice over
for all her sins.”
3 Listen! It’s the voice of someone shouting,
“Clear the way through the wilderness
for the LORD!
Make a straight highway through the wasteland
for our God!
4 Fill in the valleys,
and level the mountains and hills.
Straighten the curves,
and smooth out the rough places.
5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
The LORD has spoken!”
6 A voice said, “Shout!”
I asked, “What should I shout?”
“Shout that people are like the grass.
Their beauty fades as quickly
as the flowers in a field.
7 The grass withers and the flowers fade
beneath the breath of the LORD.
And so it is with people.
8 The grass withers and the flowers fade,
but the word of our God stands forever.”
9 O Zion, messenger of good news,
shout from the mountaintops!
Shout it louder, O Jerusalem.
Shout, and do not be afraid.
Tell the towns of Judah,

“Your God is coming!”

10 Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power.

He will rule with a powerful arm.

See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

He will carry the lambs in his arms,
holding them close to his heart.

He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

1 Peter 1:21-25

21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

23 For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. 24 As the Scriptures say,

“People are like grass;

their beauty is like a flower in the field.

The grass withers and the flower fades.

25 But the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

Reflection

It is sobering to think that everyone you know and love will one day fade like the grass. All our glory and accomplishments blown away in the wind. Yet Peter goes on to say, “But the word of the Lord remains forever. And this is the *good news* preached to you.” The promises of God give us eternal hope in the midst of fleeting years. C.S. Lewis put it this way, “Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, all of our moments have deep meaning.

Prayer

Father in Heaven,

Though outwardly I am wasting away, inwardly I am being renewed moment by moment. Aim my life towards Heaven today. Unmask any lesser hope and replace it with the unshakeable, steadfast hope of eternal life that is mine in Christ. Keep me close, lest I waste my days chasing after the wind. Blow away the chaff of selfish ambition and jealousy. May I instead be carried by the work of your Holy Spirit as you prepare me for the eternal weight of glory that's beyond all comparison. In Christ, Amen.



WEEK 3: DAY 5

Reading

Titus 3:3-8

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. 4 But—

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

8 This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good. These teachings are good and beneficial for everyone.

Reflection

There came a moment in redemptive history when the people of God no longer had to wait. After centuries of silence, the loving kindness and goodness of God *arrived*. And He did not come angry or vengeful. He was not holding a sword or gavel. When Jesus Christ appeared, He did so to save. Those who were walking in darkness finally saw a great light (see Matthew 4:16). They were no longer looking. He was with them.

Prayer

Father in Heaven,

How great is Your loving kindness towards us. As we live in the warmth of Your grace, let us understand in deeper ways what it means that we are heirs to the hope of eternal life. May the arrival of our Savior stoke the fire in our hearts for His promised return. We look to a better country today; our true home where the knowledge of the glory of God covers every blade of grass. Amen.