



SOVEREIGN KING

CONFESSING ✠ PROCLAIMING ✠ CONSTRUCTING

NOVEMBER 2021

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Dear Parent,



Every Christian parent wants to raise families who will grow up to love and trust Jesus. Parents deliberately search for the church that provides the most opportunities for their families to grow up in the Lord. We want Sovereign King Church to be that church!

We must not, however, neglect our homes—where our families see our faith on real-time display every day. According to the Bible, we parents have the primary responsibility for teaching our families about God. His word must be prominent in our conversation and daily life with our kids. Training our families in godliness is not something that we can put off until they're older.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

The call to training our families in godliness is comprehensive. To summarize this passage, it is saying we, parents, have responsibility to teach our families during mealtime, drive time, bedtime, in the morning- the whole day through. The elders at Sovereign King Church recognize that we have a responsibility as a church to walk alongside parents as they train their families in godliness. We want to equip parents to pray and plan for the spiritual development of their families. We want to encourage you to begin to have a time of family worship throughout the week. In this guide, you will find out what family worship is and how to do it. It contains weekly bible readings, catechism questions, things to pray for, and song suggestions. It is our prayer that it will help you establish a family tradition that will bless you, your children, and generations yet to come.

WHAT IS FAMILY WORSHIP?

Family worship should be a priority in your home because the home is the training ground for biblical formation in the lives of your children. It is the responsibility of parents, and primarily of fathers, to provide Christian instruction in the home for the purpose of raising your children to know and fear the Lord.

Family worship is simply taking time as a family to worship God at home in a family setting. When a family gathers together at home for prayer, Bible reading, and turning their hearts to the Lord - that is family worship. It is also called family devotions. Unfortunately, few Christian adults today grew up in homes that practiced family worship. You may not have had this modeled for you growing up, and if you are like most Christian families today this has not been a regular part of your life.

There is good news! It is never too late to begin family worship - with teenagers, or with grandchildren. It is OK to start slowly. "Do not despise the day of small beginnings."

What should you do during Family Worship?

Keep it simple.

You don't have to replicate a church service. Simple consistency is far better than trying something complicated which you will give up. Remember, you will fail and have times where family worship is a struggle. Don't give up. Just ask God to help!

Consider including the following elements together during your family worship:

Read: Read a portion of the Bible together. If you have children who are old enough to read you can have them read aloud. Of course, you will want to help with any big words or concepts.

Discuss: After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read. First, what did the passage say to the original readers? Second, what does the passage mean for all time? Third, how does this passage apply to us as individuals and as a family? You will want to ask questions and get everyone to participate in the discussion.

Sing: Yikes! Did you say singing? One of the ways that God invites us to worship Him is by singing. If your children are younger, and you are enthusiastic about it, they will love it, and you will lay the groundwork for singing in your family for generations to come. If your kids are all teenagers, and you have never tried singing together as a family, you may want to try this in a few months - after family worship has taken root. It can be helpful to use worship CDs or DVDs. Youtube.com works as well. We have a link to a family worship playlist at www.sellersburgkids.com

Catechism: It's a funny word but it just means question and answers. Christians throughout history have memorized catechism questions and answers to help learn the basics of the faith. In this guide we will include catechism questions for you to work on with your family. Every Sunday we will have a time to work on them together as a church.

Pray: End your family worship time with prayer. Let prayer become an important part of your home. Pray for your neighbors, your community, the nation, and the world.



Nov 7– 13th

Bible Passage for the Week

[Matthew 15:10-20](#)

[1 Thessalonians 3](#)

[Deuteronomy 1:1-18](#)

Verse to Memorize

[Jeremiah 17:9-10](#)

Catechism Questions

Q. Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?

A. They were the Jewish leaders during the time of Jesus.

Q. Did the Pharisees and Sadducees follow Jesus?

A. While a small number did become followers of Jesus, most of them hated Him and wanted to kill Him because He exposed the many evil and hypocritical things they did.

Q. What is a hypocrite?

A. A hypocrite pretends to be something that they are not. They pretend to serve God but, in their hearts, they do not know him.

People to Pray for:

Church: [Trinity Reformed Church](#)

Pastor Tim Bayly

Ministry: [Fight Laugh Feast Network](#)

Magistrate: [State Representative John Jacob](#)

Song Suggestion

[All Creatures of our God and King](#)

[All Praise to Him](#)

Notes to Help

Bible Passage for the Week

Deuteronomy means “second law.” It is the second time that God through Moses gives to his people the law for them. This time it is to the generation whose parents had refused to go into the promised land. In our passage, Moses begins recounting the account of their refusal and subsequent wandering in the wilderness.

In 1 Thessalonians 3, we see the love of Paul for the people. He sent Timothy to check on them. In the final verses we see how the people are called to love each other and look for the coming of Christ.

In Matthew 15:10-20 Jesus tells us that its not what goes into to us that defiles us but what comes from within. Our problems are not primarily all the things happening around us but rather the sin that is within us that we must have forgiven and fight against. Don't fall into the temptation to think you can merely keep sin at bay by avoiding certain things but you must have faith in Christ and a changed heart.

Catechism

There are two ditches Christians parents must work to avoid with their child, worldliness and hypocrisy. Some parents don't keep their children from dangers in the world but others don't teach their children about the dangers while sheltering them and thus can easily raise proud hypocrites. We must recognized that the sin and evil isn't always out there but is within our heart.

People to Pray for:

This week we are praying for Trinity Reformed Church our sister church. Pray for growth in maturity and comfort through trials. We are also praying for the FLF network that God would keep the podcasters (including your pastor) from pride.

Song Suggestion

God's creation though cursed from the fall is good.
And all of it is designed to praise him.

Nov 14-20th

Bible Passage for the Week

[Matthew 15:21-28](#)

[1 Thessalonians 4](#)

[Deuteronomy 1:19-33](#)

Verse to Memorize

[1 Peter 5:5](#)

Catechism Questions

Q. What is pride? A. Pride is an undue confidence in one's own talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, or rank in life, which is often accompanied with boasting or looking down upon others. Pride is taking the glory that belongs to God and keeping it for ourselves.

Q. What does God think about pride?

A. The Bible says that God hates pride and is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Q. What is humility?

A. Humility is having a right assessment of one's own talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments or rank in life as an undeserved gift from God which comes by recognizing that one is a sinner who must depend upon God for all things.

Q. What does a humble person do?

A. A humble person:

1. Fears God and repents of sin.
2. Recognizes virtues and talents that others possess and gives due honor.
3. Recognizes the limits of one's talents, ability, or authority.
4. Uses their talents, ability, and authority for the glory of God
5. Submits to proper authority.

People to Pray for:

Church: [Holy Trinity Reformed Church](#)

Pastor James Brown Jr.

Ministry: [Warhorn Media](#)

Magistrate: [State Representative Curt Nisly](#)

Notes to Help

Bible Passage for the Week

In the Old Testament reading, Moses recounts the sending of spies and their bad report. When God calls us to something we cannot let a bad report keep us from it. We can't the possibility of suffering keep us from obedience.

In 1 Thessalonians 4, there is both instruction on godly living and an answer about what happens to those who die in the Lord. We have great hope in Christ. Please read the article on Advent at the back of this guide for more on this hope.

In Matthew 15, we see the faith and humility of the gentile woman. She is persistent and Jesus honors her faith while testing her. The catechism will continue the theme of humility.

Catechism Questions

Last week's questions dealt with hypocrisy. This week we continue to look at a ditch that many Christian children can fall into and that is pride. We must raise up humble children because God is opposed to the proud. It is easy to become like the Pharisees who look down upon others. We also must avoid false humility and we do so by having a right assessment of one's gifting which comes with the help of God and those he has put over you.

People to Pray for:

Chance Summers spent some time with us last year before moving to California to be a pastor. Please pray for him and the work there.

Pray for Daniel Courney as he has been ministering outside of a very hostile abortion clinic and will be traveling overseas to preach soon.

Song Selection:

John Adams has put together a couple of playlists for our church of the songs and psalms what we sing.

[Here is the Hymn playlist](#)

[Here is the Psalm playlist](#)

[From the Depths of Woe](#)
[Whate're My God Ordains is Right](#)

Nov 21-27th

Bible Passage for the Week

Matthew 15:29-16:12

1 Thessalonians 5

Deuteronomy 1:34-46

Verse to Memorize

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Catechism Questions

Q. Why did God make you and all things?

A. For his own glory.

Q. How can you glorify God?

A. By loving him and doing what he commands.

Q. Why ought you to glorify God?

A. Because he made me and takes care of me.

Q. What are you thankful for?

A.

People to Pray for:

This week spend your time in thanksgiving. Thank God for all that He is and that He has done and promises to do. Here is a prayer to use as a guide: Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

Song Suggestion:

Give Thanks

Come Ye Thankful People Come

Notes to Help

Bible Passage for the Week

The Apostle Paul says that the Old Testament was written in part for our example. As you read in Deuteronomy of God's displeasure over the ingratitude and faithlessness of the Hebrews, consider it as a warning for us also.

In the Epistle, we are given more instruction from the apostle on how to live in light of the work of Christ in our life and as we look forward to the final resurrection. Pay attention particularly to the memory verse for this week.

Finally in the gospel of Matthew, we see our Lord Jesus provide for the second time a feast for thousands. This time he reminds the people that there would be coming a time of judgment for them. And he calls us to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees. Don't let even a little bit of the pride and hypocrisy of the pharisees into your life. Rather live a life of gratitude to the Lord.

Catechism Questions:

The last question has a blank answer for you to fill in.

Church History Profile:

John Robinson was the pastor of the pilgrims before they left on the Mayflower. He had led them out of England to Holland but was unable to make the trip with them to America. He was beloved by the people and sent them off with a tearful farewell speech. William Bradford the governor of Plymouth Colony and said this of Pastor Robinson in his book detailing the history of the pilgrims.

"Indeed, such was the love and respect that this worthy man, Mr. John Robinson, had to his flock, and his flock to him, that it might be said of them, as it once was of the famous Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the people of Rome, that it was hard to judge whether he was more delighted in having such a people or they in having such a pastor. His love was great towards them, and his care was always bent to their best good both for soul and body; for, besides his singular ability in divine things (wherein he excelled), he was also very able in directing their civil affairs and foreseeing dangers and troubles; so he was very helpful to their material well-being, and was in every way a common father to them. None offended him more than those who kept apart from the rest, and neglected the common good; or those who were rigid in matters of outward order and would inveigh against the evil of others, and yet were remiss themselves and not too careful to maintain virtuous conversation."

November 28th –Dec 4th

Bible Passage for the Week

[Mark 13:33-37](#)

[2 John](#)

[Deuteronomy 2:1-15](#)

Verse to Memorize

[Romans 13:12](#)

Catechism Questions

Q. 151. Where is Christ now?

A. In heaven, interceding for sinners.

Q. 152. Will he come again?

A. Yes; at the last day Christ will come to judge the world.

Q. 153. When will Christ return?

A. No one knows when Christ will return, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the father.

Q. 154. Should we try to predict when Christ will return?

A. No. Since Jesus Himself told us that only God the Father knows the time of His return, it would be impossible for us to find out when it will be.

Q. 155. What should we do while Christ is away?

A. While Christ is away we should:

Preach the Gospel to all creation.

Demonstrate to the world that Scripture speaks to every area of life, and expand God's Kingdom in those areas He gives us to work in.

And we should remain faithful to Him.

People to Pray for:

Church: [Clearnote Church](#)

Pastor Dave Abu-sara

Ministry: [Sweet Water Research](#)

David Pendergrass

Civil Magistrate: [Indiana House of Representatives](#)

Song Suggestion

[O Come O Come Emmanuel](#)

[Come Thou Long Expected Jesus](#)

Notes to Help

Bible Passage for the Week

The People of God had wandered in the wilderness for long enough and in Deuteronomy 2, they have begun to move towards the promised land. As they head that way notice God's provision for the nations who came from Lot and even the people who came from Esaul. God is good to all. This anticipates the salvation of the nations that is found in Christ. God's people are a light to the nations.

In the 2nd epistle of John, we are commanded to love each other and to avoid the false teaching of those who deny Christ.

For the next four weeks, our sermons will focus on the second coming of Christ. You might think this is odd considering that we will soon celebrate the first coming of Christ. Read the article on Advent at the end to see this connection of our rejoicing at Christ's first coming and our living by faith in the hope we have at his final coming.

Our passage in Mark comes at a point in which Christ has just prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. He then moves to tell of his final coming to judge the living in the dead. We are called to be alert as we await this coming. Our awaiting this return is not a passive waiting but an active waiting. We have work to do that the Lord has called us to.

There are two ditches to avoid when it comes to the Lord's return. One ditch is to assume things will only get worse and worse and therefore we should not bother polishing the brass on a sinking ship. It's the lazy and faithless waiting akin to the man who hid his talent in the ground or worse the Hebrews who refused to go into the promised land.

The other ditch is to grow so in love with the world that we don't long for and look forward to seeing Jesus face to face. There is both a longterm faithfulness and an earnest anticipation that we are called to have. There is a zeal we should have because the days are short. The time is at hand and we must be found faithful.

The catechism questions will help you teach your children to look forward to Christ and to be faithful in being kingdom workers.

Thanksgiving



The Pilgrims set ground at Plymouth Rock on December 11, 1620. One third of the original colonists or Pilgrims were made up of members of the Puritan sect of the English Separatist Church. Their first winter was devastating. At the beginning of the following fall, they had lost almost half of the original 102 who sailed on the Mayflower.

But the harvest of 1621 was a bountiful one. And the remaining colonists (22 men, 4 married women, and 27 children) decided to celebrate with a feast -- including 91 Indians who had helped the Pilgrims survive their first year. It is believed that the Pilgrims would not have made it through the year without the help of the natives. The feast was more of a traditional English harvest festival than a true "thanksgiving" observance. It lasted three days.

Thanksgiving

Two eyewitness accounts of the first Thanksgiving in 1621, Plymouth Rock :

From Edward Winslow: "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

From William Bradford: "They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion.

All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."

Advent

By Pastor Bill Smith

The Christian faith is history. Living the Christian faith is living history. Christianity is about God telling his story about his relationship with his creation and especially his chosen people in time and space. With the internalization of faith in the Christian culture, succumbing to the pressures of an unbiblical worldview, Christians find it odd to speak about salvation in terms of historical events. Salvation, everyone knows, is about my personal relationship with God and that sense of peace that I have. It is a private experience that somehow rises above history and looks to escape from history with all of its horrible fleshly bindings.

All of these concepts concerning salvation and history would have seemed odd to our forefathers in the faith that lived in Bible times. For centuries our fathers in the faith worshiped God telling the story of redemption. When fruit was brought to the Lord after the people of God had settled in the promised land, they were to recount Israel's history. As Passover was celebrated through the centuries the custom arose which was consonant with the offering of the fruit. On the night of the Passover the youngest son would ask, "Why is this night distinguished from all other nights?" After questioning all the distinctions of the night, the child received a response from his father.

But he did not respond by saying "Point 1: The Doctrine of God." To be sure, there are many truths about God that are revealed and foundational to the story, but it was the story that was told. This is the story Moses told the people to recount in bringing an offering to the Lord:

And you shall make response before Yahweh your God, "A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Yahweh, have given me." (Deut 26.5-10)

This was the recounting of the great deeds that God had done and what that meant in the present and what it looked forward to in the future. That story is now shaped around and focused on that which happened in Jesus. Our story has a past, lives in the present and looks toward the conclusion. We live in the present grasping the past in one hand and the future in the other. The season of Advent brings the history of hope in Jesus into focus for the church and aids us in living out the history of hope.

In order to understand the meaning of Advent, we need to make sure that we grasp the nature of the Christian hope. I am afraid that many Christians, having been immersed in a certain Christian theological climate for some time, have this problem with understanding the Christian hope. So, in the setting of learning about Advent, let's refresh our understanding about the certain hope that God promises his people.

ADVENT AS THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

The word "advent" is not confined to so-called "religious" usage. Advent simply means "coming." This is not really the best way to describe the Biblical picture of Jesus' birth or his future presence on the earth. New Testament (NT) authors are more fond of words such as "manifestation," "revelation" or, most prominent in Paul, "presence" (the meaning of the Greek word *parousia*, more than likely with overtones of "royal presence"). There is no harm in using the term "advent" or "coming" as long as we do not carry the baggage that sometimes comes with those words. For example, we cannot believe that God is some distant, disassociated being sitting in a distant land that will one day show up on earth. This is what is normally called deism. We believe in a God who is always and intimately associated with his creation yet separate from it. When the Bible speaks about God coming, it speaks more in terms of apocalypse, the unveiling, the revelation of Jesus Christ (see for example, Rev 1.1, the "apocalypse of Jesus Christ"). This is the manifestation of what has been there all along. The difference is now we can see it. Nevertheless, Advent is the name of the Christian season, and Jesus' "advent," in the traditional use of the term, is the essence of the Christian hope.

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If you were to ask the average evangelical on the street, “What is the Christian hope?” more often than not—I would say the vast majority of the time—you would receive the answer, “Going to heaven when I die.” It is no wonder this is the common answer in the church. This is what is preached from our pulpits. It is the popular theology of the day, and it is one of the two diagnostic questions developed by our Presbyterian brother for Evangelism Explosion: “Do you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?” Going to heaven when you die becomes by default the definition of the Christian hope.

I fear that our lack of understanding of God’s relationship to creation, the story of the Bible and the implications of the resurrection—in short, a deficient biblical worldview—has allowed us to slip into a theology with which Plato would have been quite happy to affirm but Paul would have denounced with all of his might. In the modern, popular Christian worldview the resurrection of Jesus means I can go to heaven when I die. But questions arise about all this talk about the resurrection of our bodies when Jesus comes again. Why is all this happening? Why is this necessary if we are already in heavenly disembodied bliss?

To be sure, there is continuing life after death. For the faithful there is a life in the presence of Christ unlike we know in the present. When we die we are present with the Lord in heaven. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5.8). This condition is far better than our present condition in many respects. Paul said that for him it would be far better to depart and be with Christ (Phil 1.23). Living in this disembodied state, though it is a time of rest, is not the full-orb Christian hope. In fact, Paul says that this condition between death and the resurrection is a time of being “unclothed” or “naked” (2 Cor 5.2-4), a time which, he says, is a necessary step between our deaths and then death being swallowed up in life. Paul, we learn from his writings, was not striving to attain going to heaven when he died. We find that Paul was desiring to know Christ in the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death so that by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead (Phil 3.10-11). “Going to heaven when you die” therefore is not the final hope of the Christian faith. That is only a stop-over to the final hope.

So what is the Christian hope? The Christian hope is the unveiling (or coming) of Christ at the consummation of our present history. This is not just a bland “Christ shows up.” The hope that is wrapped up in the coming of Christ involves many things. The writer of Hebrews says it like this: “... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb 9.28). Christ’s second appearing will be for our salvation. That which involved in that salvation is the Christian hope.

Several things are involved in that salvation that is realized at Christ’s second appearing.

1. The reign of Christ will be fully manifested on the earth.

All of Christ’s enemies will be put under his feet. We will see the righteousness ruling in the earth. The world we be put into proper relationship with God. The house of God which man was called to build will be completed; Christ having finished the work as the true man.

2. The vindication of God’s people.

God’s people will be shown to be in the right, and we will judge the nations with Christ. God will declare openly to the world that we are his people and the rightful heirs of the world.

3. Death will be defeated.

It is a sad view of the Christian hope which allows death to defeat God’s people at any point. But that is exactly the problem with modern conceptions of the Christian hope. We are content to leave this old body in the grave. But the Christian hope is that our final hope is that death is swallowed up in victory or in life, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5.

4. Creation will be renewed.

The world is not something that God is simply going to throw in the trash heap. God is about the business of renewing the entire Creation in and through Christ. This is what Paul speaks about in Romans 8. This is that for which Paul says that the creation itself groans. God’s people in the present are to be groaning with and in behalf of creation in waiting for our redemption, the deliverance of our bodies (cf. Rom 8:19ff.).

This Christian hope is not understood nor proclaimed as much as it should be because we don’t seem to grasp the story of the Scriptures which begins with the Creator God who, in response to sin, made promises to redeem the entire world. Our anemic individualistic view of salvation has made the Christian hope sound, if people were to be honest, not as good as the popular view of the Christian hope. Normally, when thinking about going to heaven when I die, most of what I think of as being heaven is more like the great, big candy shop in the sky in which I am going to be a toddler who loves candy. Heaven, and thus the Christian hope for many Christians, sad to say, is the final place of self-indulgence. The Christian hope is a mansion over the hilltop lavished with French provincial furniture and sitting around playing a harp and eating bon-bons. This may be your dream. But it is not our hope. Our hope—which is not an attitude but the promise of God

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—is the righteous rule of Christ being manifest in the earth, the vindication of God's people, death being swallowed up in life and the creation being renewed with all that goes with these things. This is the inheritance promised to our father Abraham. This is our hope. But this brings up another question to which we must turn our attention and which will inform our celebration of the season of Advent:

What does Christian hope have to do with present living? The first thing we need to understand here is that the future hope shapes present living. As the writer of Hebrews emphasizes throughout his epistle, your final goal—the inheritance promised by God—and what you believe about that will determine how you live in the present. The Christian hope shapes our present practice. When Paul says that he desires to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death so that by any means he may attain the resurrection of the dead, the future resurrection is his motivation for living the life he is living in the present.

While this may sound “far out” to some people, really it is something that we live every day. That which we want for the future—whether near or distant—shapes what we do in the present. For instance, if a young man wants to be a doctor in the future, that will determine many things in his pre-doctor days. It means that he will need to be very familiar with the sciences. It also means that he will have to do some things sometimes that he does not particularly enjoy. But the goal of becoming a doctor determines his actions in the present. Now, if a young man aspires to be a computer technician, a plumber, a construction worker, or a salesman in the future, his present actions will take a different course than the young man who wants to be a doctor. The point is, the future shapes the present. So it is with the Christian hope.

The second truth we need to understand here is that the future hope informs present living. Our Christian hope tells us what things will be like. That vision of the future informs us as to what we are to be doing right now. Our lives are to be lived in such a way so that we begin to shape the present to look like the future. In other words, we are not to be sitting on our hands waiting for the great cataclysmic day to arrive when all things are put to rights. We are to be working in the present to shape the future. This does not mean that we bring in the kingdom through human efforts.

But it does mean that what we do here and now is moving toward and is consistent with what Christ is doing and will do in the future.

Third, we need to understand that the future hope is continuous with the present. What is done here and now has ramifications for life after the resurrection. It is not as if this all of this life will just be a bad memory with little or nothing to do with the life in the resurrection. There is a continuity between this life and the next. Paul's climax to his discussion in 1 Corinthians 15 concerning the resurrection is probably not what many of us would expect. Instead of saying, “Isn't all of this glorious stuff! Now worship God with greater vigor and thanksgiving” or saying, “Now wait for the resurrection,” Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor 15.58). Paul says that what you do right now matters for coming future life in the resurrection. Your labor—whatever that may be to the glory of God and empowered by the Spirit—is not in vain in the Lord. The basis for Paul's statement is the resurrection of Jesus himself. In the resurrection we see a continuity (as well as a discontinuity) between old creation and new creation. What is done in this present life will somehow be carried over into the future life, having been transformed. That which cannot be transformed will be burned up (cf. 1 Cor 3). But what you do now as God's people will be a part of the new creation.

Certainly things will be radically different (and that must not be down-played), but the difference will not be start-all- over new. Like Jesus resurrection, our resurrection will be our lives transformed. The relationship of future hope and present living then is one of intimate connection that must be taken seriously by the Christian. Your work—whether a doctor or a computer tech, whether a pastor or a mother, whether a missionary or an artist—your work will be carried over in a transformed way into the coming age. Thus, the conclusion of the story, should shape the way we write the chapters of our lives.

This Christian hope with all of its various facets are woven into the historical celebration of the Advent season. Interestingly, Advent was developed as the last aspect of the Christian calendar. It was not really implemented in the Christian calendar until the sixth century. It seems to have developed as another Lenten-type observance that preceded

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the celebration of baptism on January 6, the baptism of Jesus or Epiphany. Like Easter this might have been another time in the Liturgical Year in which catechumens were baptized. The early historical evidence points to the development of Advent as being in Spain and/or Gaul.

Advent consists of four Sundays that precede Christmas. Woven within these Lord's Days is a focus on the glorious tension in which we live between the Advents; the hope that has been realized and the hope yet to come. Again, as with all other aspects of the Liturgical Year, Easter informs us in the proper celebration of the season. The resurrection gives us understanding of the first advent and the resurrection gives us the foundation for the second advent. We are told with power in the resurrection of Jesus that the long-expected hope of the people of God is found in the Person of Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. Jesus is the One promised by God through the prophets. God revealed this to some even before the resurrection.

Take, for instance, Simeon, a faithful man who eagerly awaited the redemption of Israel. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would not see death until he saw the One through whom God would reveal his righteousness, his covenant faithfulness, and redeem his people. Simeon saw Jesus when he was presented in the Temple. Here is how the story is told

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2.25-32)

The advent of the Yahweh's Christ or Messiah was the long-for hope of Israel, God's people. It is this hope that is the focus of the Advent Season in the Christian calendar.

What does Advent Season have to do with Christian hope?

The season of Advent reminds us that we live between the advents. Advent, as it relates to the Christian calendar, is purposely ambiguous. Though its calendrical relationship is to Christmas and anticipates the birth of Jesus, Advent readings as well as practice through the years has focused on the second as well as the first coming of Jesus. As we think about it biblically, we can understand better why this is the case. There are similarities and differences between the first and second advents, and, therefore, there are similarities and differences in the way the people of God live and hope in relationship to these advents. Consider the similarities.

1. There is an absence.

While we know that Jesus is with us at all times in and through the Person of the Spirit, there is also the reality that he is not here. As he himself proclaims to his disciples, he must go away. In Acts 1 Jesus was taken out of their sight into the clouds. And so, just as our fathers in the old creation waited for the presence of Christ and the redemption that was to come through him, so we wait for our final redemption when Christ comes again.

2. There is a promise.

Our fathers in the old creation had the promise of God that he would redeem his people. All of God's faithful people held on to that promise (cf. Heb 11). We are also left with the promise that Jesus will come again. And that promise will be fulfilled.

3. There are activities that should characterize our waiting.

Simeon and Anna were two of God's faithful people looking for the redemption of Israel. While waiting they were engaged in activities shaped by the promise of God for the future. And as I explained above, we are to be shaped by the future hope of the second coming of Christ.

While there are similarities between the first advent and the second, there are also some major differences. The first dissimilarity is the most glaring. Continued on next page

Advent

1. Jesus had not yet come the first time.

The old creation saints were waiting for the first coming of Christ. We are waiting for the second with our hope firmly grounded in what has already taken place in the first. Jesus has come and embodied the hope of God's people and given us better promises. Jesus resurrection from the dead during his ministry on earth provides a very different perspective both on the past and the future.

2. Before the first coming the world almost in complete darkness, but now we live in the light of the new day that has dawned.

The age to come has broken in on this present age in the resurrection of Jesus. We now live essentially with one foot in the old world and one foot in the new. So, Advent is the celebration that is torn between two comings. There is a rejoicing in what God has already done in Christ and a groaning for God to complete the work.

The season of Advent also reminds us of our calling to live in light of the Christian hope. We are always to be living in light of the hope that we have. But for the purposes of our discipleship, the Church has wisely drawn a focus on this time of the year to emphasize this.

Romans 13:11-14 reads: "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Because the day has dawned and we live in the first light of the day of salvation that is dawning, live right. Don't participate in the works of darkness.

Living in light of Advent also means being the light of the world. The light has come into the world. In Christ we are called to be the light of the world. Celebrating Advent is a call to follow Christ in his vocation in being that light.

We don't know exactly what chapter we are on in God's story in relation to the conclusion to this chapter of God's story. But we do know that our story has a beginning, and we have been promised a conclusion. Therefore, we live in expectant hope. May our celebration of Advent be a living out of our Christian hope.



Sermon Notes FOR KIDS



AS YOU ATTEND CHURCH SERVICE WITH YOUR FAMILY, USE THIS SHEET TO HELP YOU PAY ATTENTION AND LEARN. WE WANT YOU TO WORSHIP WITH US BY SINGING TO GOD AND LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE.



WHO IS SPEAKING?

WORDS YOU HEARD BUT DON'T KNOW...



WHAT IS THE MAIN PASSAGE WE ARE READING TODAY?

BOOK:

CHAPTER:

VERSE:

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT GOD FROM THIS PASSAGE?

WHICH SONG FROM TODAY'S SERVICE IS YOUR FAVORITE AND WHY?

WRITE OR DRAW SOMETHING THAT YOU HEARD IN THE SERMON OR IN A SONG TODAY.



FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW WHILE IN SERVICE AND THEN, ON THE WAY HOME, TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU HEARD AND THE NOTES YOU WROTE DOWN.

★ I HEARD _____

_____ TODAY
BUT WAS CONFUSED OR HAD A HARD TIME BELIEVING IT.



HEARING AND BELIEVING THAT GOD IS _____

CHANGES THE WAY I _____

