



Advent (Dec 2017)

Announcements /Reminders

- **No separate community group meetings in Jan** - Instead, we will once again come together on Wednesdays at Providence to pray together as a body. More info to come later.
- **Open House** - We will have Open House at our new office tomorrow from 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. The location is 701 N. State of Franklin, Suite 14 (in the Karing Hearts office complex, office located beside of dry-cleaners). Please plan to drop by at your convenience.

I. **OPEN** - See if there is anyone who wants to share a short testimony, or if there are there specific praise updates to begin CG.

PRAY

Q - Sermon takeaways from those who were in attendance?

***READ ALOUD Luke 1:26-45** - *26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

II. **REFLECT**

This past Sunday Spencer led us into this season of Advent. The word Advent speaks of an arrival, occurrence, or coming. It's actually derived from the Latin word *Adventus*, which means "coming." The early church, 4th or 5th century, would set aside a short period of time as a time of preparation, which might include penance, prayer, and fasting. Interestingly, when advent was first observed the occurrence, arrival or

coming that they had in mind was actually Christ's return...His second coming. So, they were looking forward to the 2nd coming, and not necessarily backward at His first coming (i.e. Christmas). By the 6th century, however, this had changed and advent's focus was tied more specifically to Christmas and the advent of the Christ child.

Discussion - On Sunday, Spencer reminded us that the observance of advent is primarily about being intentional in our focus on Christ at Christmas. It's a time for reflection...a time for gaining perspective. It's not something else just to add to a busy season. Rather, it's a time to remember that Christ HAS come and IS coming again. It's why we have hope...our reason for living...the reason we can endure...etc.

On a separate sheet of paper or note card, answer the following questions. Share amongst the group.

Q - Because Jesus really did come _____.

Q - Because I know Jesus really is coming again _____.

Quoting from Isaiah 7:14, Matt 23 states, "***Behold, the virgin shall conceive and have a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us).***" In this one word, *Immanuel* we have the totality of the Gospel. Immanuel tells us that God...the God of heaven...the Creator of heaven and earth...the One who spoke everything and everyone into existence...humbled himself (Phil 2) and came to earth. He was born of a woman and under the law (Gal 4)...and although fully God, he became fully man as well. But why? Why would God choose to do such a thing? The answer astounds us, but it is and always will be...because He loves us. He loves us so much that He came to pay the penalty for our sins and then He returned to heaven promising that one day He will return.

And now what? We wait. But it's not a sitting-on-the-couch-doing-nothing kind of waiting. Rather, it's active and intentional. We work while we wait. We build the Kingdom while we wait. We serve one another while we wait. We do the things God has called us to do on this earth, but deep inside of us there's always a longing for his coming...a holy waiting.

Q - Why is waiting so hard for us? Especially as Americans we are all about doing, producing, checking things off of our lists, etc. Advent prompts us to stop in our tracks and wait on Him...on purpose...with intentionality.

Q - What are real and tangible ways that we can wait on Him well these next four weeks individually and with our families?

For the next four weeks our children from Camp Red Stone will exclaim from the front, "Prepare, prepare, prepare the way of the Lord" to which the congregation joyfully responds saying, "Come, come, come Lord Jesus come."

In the spirit of this celebration of the coming of the Lord, let's end our community group gatherings this week by singing two timeless Christmas carols that speak of his coming. (Have everyone look up the words on their phones, or else provide copies for them.)

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye,
O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord.
Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens

Of heaven above;
Glory to God,
Glory in the highest;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord.

IV. CLOSE

Final thoughts?

V. BE ON-MISSION -

We encourage everyone to participate in advent this year utilizing the inserts provided in the worship guides each week.