

Advent - An Invitation for Fellow Travelers

Have you ever participated in something so often that it lost its meaning? For busy people, the Christmas season might be at the top of that list. It is difficult enough to stay ahead as December barrels toward us much less remember its deeper purpose. And sadly over time, a month of Advent seems to be more ritual than meaningful.

Simply put; Advent challenges our complacency by inviting us on a journey. It offers a spiritual journey for both the curious traveler and the dedicated disciple.

Advent is simply an invitation to take a journey for fellow-travelers.

Advent leads fellow-travelers through promises God makes in history before Jesus ever arrived...before Christmas was even a word. It allows travelers to explore the weight of hopeless hearts who never heard of Jesus but who were promised a better day. It invites them to experience the hope these ancient Jewish people dared feel under the pressure of political and social oppression. It explores those Old Testament promises pointing to the hope that, at one crucial point in history, humanity would receive a great gift from God. This gift would one day bring peace, hope, and salvation.

Then the fellow-traveler meets two strangers named Mary and Joseph. Becoming familiar with this couple in the Gospels, Advent allows them to see how God was inviting Mary and Joseph into the Great Story. Advent implores each fellow-traveler to experience with this young betrothed couple the heavy requests God made on them both. And as the fellow-traveler arrives at the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, they realize these promises of God were all completed in the gift of this newborn baby.

“Advent” comes from a word meaning “coming” or “visit.” Advent fellow-travelers come to visit with the weary Mary and obedient Joseph as God visits with humankind.

That is why Jesus would be called Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." History is a fumbled mess of humans trying to right wrongs. Advent is the truth that God has come to us to make all things right again. Jesus' arrival in Bethlehem is the key that rights all wrongs.

Each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas will take our church through four different examinations of God's promise. This year, we will explore the orchestration of God as He invites the most unlikely of participants into the journey of Jesus' Great Story. And, as God's orchestra of people waited patiently for the promised Messiah, so we wait through these weeks with great expectation and hope for Christmas morning.

One more thing...

The journey of Advent celebrates the journey to the first arrival of Jesus Christ as a baby in Bethlehem. But because Jesus lived a sinless life, died a voluntary death, and rose victoriously from the grave, Christians find themselves waiting for one more Advent. This is the Second Advent. This Second Advent represents our patient wait for His promised return. Jesus has promised to come again (John 14:1-6). However, His next coming will not be as a baby who sacrifices His life to wash away sin, but as a King to rule and reign once for all (Revelation 1:7-8). And, since the curtain on this Second Advent has not fallen yet, God is still inviting any curious fellow-traveler to drop heavy burdens, respond to His invitation, and join His orchestra of Christ followers.

The Great Conclusion to God's Great Story is in reality, the conclusion to every Christmas Advent.

My prayer is that you would join us for our Advent journey and discover the anticipation and joy of God's promise once again. Joy in the coming of Jesus at Christmastime and anticipation of a greater joy as we wait for Him to come again.

"And behold, I am coming soon.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

- Jesus Christ, Revelation 22:7

PRAYER

Each day this week, choose one of the following topics and make it central to your prayer time with God

1. Pray for a spirit of hope and expectation during this Advent season. Ask God to renew your sense of anticipation for the coming of Jesus into your life and the world.
2. Pray for joy to permeate your heart and the hearts of those around you as you await the celebration of Christ's birth. Ask God to fill your days with a sense of joy that comes from knowing the Savior.
3. Pray for a sense of peace amidst the busyness of the holiday season. Ask God to help you focus on the true meaning of Christmas and experience His peace that surpasses all understanding.
4. Pray for a spirit of adoration and worship. Ask God to help you and Village Church East to enter into a deeper worship experience as we reflect on the miracle of Jesus' birth.
5. Pray for unity and togetherness in families and communities during Advent. Ask God to strengthen bonds and create opportunities for meaningful connections with loved ones.
6. Pray for heightened awareness of God's presence, particularly in the context of Advent. Ask for divine encounters that deepen your understanding of God's nearness and involvement in your life.
7. Pray for a heart of readiness and preparation. Ask God to help our world make space in our lives to receive the true meaning of Christmas and that God would prepare hearts to welcome Jesus anew.