

The Gifts of Advent: A Midweek Series for Advent

Welcome

A gift is given freely and offered in love. In the weeks before Christmas, we often race around finding just the right gifts for friends and family. The season of Advent is itself a gift—a time set apart to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. We give thanks for God’s gift to us in the baby of Bethlehem.

This series highlights four aspects of Advent that become blessings and gifts in our lives: patience, speech and silence, hope, and family.

Introduction

Week 1: The Gift of Patience

Waiting is hard. We eagerly anticipate the desires of our hearts and want them to come soon. We wait for the first day of school or the first snowfall. We wait to see a loved one or to hear a doctor’s news. Just as the farmer waits for crops or the fig tree waits for summer, we are reminded to be patient until the coming of the Lord.

Week 2: The Gifts of Speech and Silence

Encountering the angel of the Lord, Zechariah was struck speechless. His imposed silence became a time to reflect on the wonders of God. Like Zechariah, we are called at times to be silent and listen, at other times to shout with joy.

Week 3: The Gift of Hope

Hope is a word on which our future rests. We cannot know what will come, but with faith we place our hope in Christ. Like Zechariah, we hope for the tender mercy of our God, light in the midst of darkness and death, and the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of our sins.

Week 4: The Gift of Family

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a family tree from Abraham to Jesus. Between the recitation of names, we also hear the story of God at work in our world from generation to generation. The Advent and Christmas seasons highlight the significance of family and friends in our lives. We witness Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, and the shepherds together tending their flocks. As God’s children, we become part of the family tree.

Opening Dialogue

Week 1 (*Ps. 37:7; Heb. 12:9*)

“Patience is a virtue,” we hear it said.

But the wait is long; we cannot see the end.

“Rome wasn’t built in just a day.”

We rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

“Patience is also a form of action.”

So we run with endurance the race set before us.

“How poor are they that have not patience!”

**We are rich in our hope of the promised Messiah.
Come, Lord Jesus!**

Week 2 (*Eccles. 3:1, 6; Ps. 62:1; Ps. 40:10; Ps. 19:14*)

For everything there is a season:

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

For God alone my soul waits in silence;

from God alone comes my salvation.

I will not hide God’s saving help within my heart.

I will speak of God’s faithfulness and steadfast love.

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts

be acceptable to God, our rock and our redeemer.

Week 3 (*Isa. 42:16, 30:26, 11:6, 35:1, 7:14*)

Hope is a candle that flickers yet offers warmth and life.

**The darkness will turn into light,
the moon shine as bright as the sun.**

Hope is a hand that grasps and reaches out in peace.

**The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard lie down with the kid.**

Hope is a song that grows and fills the world with joy.

**The wilderness and dry land will be glad,
the desert rejoice and bloom.**

Hope is a promise of a baby to be born in a manger stall.

A woman will bear a son and name him Immanuel.

Week 4 (*Matt. 1*)

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and friends,
aunts, uncles, sons, and daughters,

people who reach out to nurture and love,
people who live by water and word—

God adopts us and names us and claims us.

God renews us, uplifts and restores us.

Generations from Abraham to David to Joseph,

to Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God;

our generations too, and all those to come:

We are joined in the family of God.

Gathering Song: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Week 1: Oh, come, oh, come,
Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Week 2: Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord
of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Refrain

Week 3: Oh, come, strong Branch of
Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Refrain

Week 4: Oh, come, blest Dayspring,
come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Refrain

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

Prayer

Week 1 (*Luke 2:30-32*)

O God for whom we long,
we thank you for the gift of patience.
Grant peace in our hearts as we wait with hope,
that we may sing with Simeon:

**My eyes have seen your salvation,
a light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ,
your gift to all the world.

Amen.

Week 2 (*Luke 2:68-69, 72*)

O God for whom we long,
we thank you for the gifts of speech and silence.
Teach us to listen from our hearts and speak of
your love, that we may shout with Zechariah:

**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
who has remembered his holy covenant
and raised up a mighty Savior.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus
Christ, your gift to all the world.

Amen.

Week 3 (*Isa. 40:31*)

O God for whom we long,
we thank you for the gift of hope.
Be our light in the darkness,
that we may proclaim with Isaiah:

**Those who hope in the Lord will
renew their strength.**

**They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus
Christ,
your gift to all the world.

Amen.

Week 4 (*Luke 1:46, 49, 50*)

O God for whom we long,
we thank you for the gift of family and
friends.
Strengthen the ties that bind us together,
that we may sing with Mary:

**My soul magnifies you, and holy is
your name.**

**You shower mercy from generation to
generation.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus
Christ,
your gift to all the world.

Amen.

Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

Gospel

Week 1: Mark 13:28-29

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Week 2: Luke 1:13-20

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." 19 The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

Week 3: Luke 1:67-79

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a mighty savior[a] for us
in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,

73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon[b] us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Week 4: Matthew 1:1-17

1 An account of the genealogy^[a] of Jesus the Messiah,^[a] the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, **3** and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, **4** and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, **5** and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, **6** and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, **7** and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,^[a] **8** and Asaph^[a] the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, **9** and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, **10** and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,^[a] and Amos^[a] the father of Josiah, **11** and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, **13** and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, **14** and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, **15** and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, **16** and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.^[a]

Reflection

The reflection concludes:

God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in Jesus, God's Son.

Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

Prayers

For this time of waiting and watching for the coming of our Savior,
we give you thanks, O Lord.

When the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words,
we cry to you, O Lord.

For the hope that shines through the darkest night,
we turn to you, O Lord.

For the gift of friends and family who walk with us through life,
we praise your name, O Lord.

Gather us all under the promise of your Son, who taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

The peace of God accompany your waiting, the light of Christ warm your hearts, and the joy of the Spirit fill you with hope.

Amen.

Sending Song: Prepare the Royal Highway

Week 1: Prepare the royal highway;
the King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley
a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory,
foretold in sacred story: *Refrain*

Week 2: God's people, see him coming:
your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you! *Refrain*

Week 3: Then fling the gates wide open
to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation
its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him;
their voices join your singing: *Refrain*

Week 4: His is no earthly kingdom;
it comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
for kindness so abounding: *Refrain*

Refrain

**Hosanna to the Lord,
for he fulfills God's word!**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon.

Thanks be to God.