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The Advent of Jesus Fulfilled
Christmas Day 2016, Jeff & Ruthie Germon

We don't normally get the chance to have a service on Christmas Day. I think it is a great time to reflect on what it is we have really celebrated this Advent season. For many of us Christmas is such a busy time, especially for those of us who are in full-time church ministry. We have come through four weeks of Advent trying to keep our hearts and minds focused on the true meaning of Christmas, but at the same time, life is happening. And it is easy to get distracted by everything and forget why we are celebrating. So, what I would like to do this morning is slow down and remind ourselves of the four gifts of Advent given in the coming of Jesus.

It was Ruthie who wrote the Advent readings so I have asked her to come up with me and help me. Most of it is simply Scripture that she carefully chose, with her comments in between. We will take turns reading them again and then chat about them along the way. Let God's Word speak to you as we read these.

[2]
First Sunday of Advent - PEACE

(Ruthie)

The first Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of Peace.

The word 'advent' means 'arrival' or 'coming.'

Jesus' arrival has been in the news for a very long time. About 2700 years ago the prophet Isaiah predicted it with these words:

[3]

Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Jeff)

Then 2000 years ago Jesus' arrival was announced with the words,

[4]

Luke 2:14 (NLT)

¹⁴ "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth..."

He arrived during a time of great political unrest, which only got worse as the Romans destroyed Jerusalem about 70 years later.

Often we wonder what God meant when his messengers told of the coming Prince of Peace.

(Ruthie)

Jesus himself confidently spoke of the peace he came to give us, saying

[5]

John 14:27 (NLT)

27 “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.

John 16:33 (NLT)

33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

(Jeff)

Since He promises that we will have trouble in this world, we can see that his peace is not the peace of perfect circumstances.

Jesus came to give us peace with God and with each other. His messenger Paul tells us

[6]

Romans 5:1 (NLT)

1 ...we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

(Ruthie)

Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount:

[7]

Matthew 5:9 (NLT)

9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

His brother James tells us:

[8]

James 3:17–18 (NLT)

17 ...wisdom from above is... peace loving, ... 18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

(Jeff)

How can we live this way? Again the Apostle Paul helpfully instructs us:

[9]

Romans 8:6 (NLT)

6 ...letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

[10]

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NLT)

11 Dear brothers and sisters,... Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

[11]

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NLT)

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.

Let us allow the Prince of Peace to govern our lives. He has called us to walk in His peace, live in His peace, and spread His peace.

[12]

Second Sunday of Advent - HOPE

(Ruthie)

The second Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of Hope. The season of Advent is a time of waiting and hoping. We are preparing our hearts to celebrate the first coming of Jesus our Messiah, when He was born in Bethlehem. We are also looking forward to His second coming. So, it is very much a time to think about hope.

(Jeff)

Through the long centuries of waiting, Israel kept their hope that a Messiah would come, because of the promises God gave them through the prophets. Jeremiah said.

[13]

Jeremiah 33:14–15 (NLT)

14 “The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them. 15 “In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line.”

Sometimes we too feel as if we are waiting for centuries for God to keep His promises, especially when we experience ongoing pain or suffering.

Paul says,

[14]

Romans 8:20–24 (NLT)

20 ...with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay.... 23 And we believers also groan, ... for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 We were given this hope when we were saved.

(Ruthie)

Meanwhile, God has given us hope for life now. He has placed eternal value on our lives, and has communicated with us about how to spend our time on earth meaningfully. The everlasting God delights in us and has important, valuable things for us to do! And He has given us his Spirit to guide and empower us.

Let's celebrate the hope this gives us.

[15]

Ephesians 1:18 (NLT)

¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

[16]

Hebrews 10:23 (NLT)

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

[17]

(Jeff)

1 Peter 1:13 (NLT)

¹³ So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

[18]

Romans 15:13 (NLT)

¹³ I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Question: Christmas is supposed to be a time when we celebrate hope, but not every experiences that sense of hope this time of year. For some it's a very lonely time. Why do you think that is?)

[19]

Third Sunday of Advent - JOY

(Ruthie)

On the third Sunday of Advent we lit the candle of joy.

Once more, Predicting Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah said,

[20]

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NLT)

⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and his peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.

Announcing Jesus' birth, the angel said,

[21]

Luke 2:10–11 (NLT)

¹⁰ ...“Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

(Jeff)

Celebrating Jesus' birth, the hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote, "**Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her King!**"

How is receiving a king a cause for joy? It means letting someone else reign in my life. It means welcoming Jesus' rule in my heart, and letting him use my life to build His kingdom instead of mine.

What kind of kingdom did Jesus bring?

(Ruthie)

Jesus said,

[22]

Matthew 13:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

What kind of reign does He want in my heart?

[23]

(Jeff)

He told us,

John 15:10–11 (NLT)

¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

[24]

(Ruthie)

Jesus' rule in our hearts brings an improvement! Our discord for His beauty; our alienation for His love.

Jesus came to...

[25]

Isaiah 61:1–3 (NLT)

¹ "...bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. ² ...to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come... he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair..."

Thank you Jesus for bringing us something so much better than we could ever work out for ourselves. Thank you for healing our brokenness and teaching us how to live in love and harmony instead of in discord and despair.

Rule in our hearts, Lord Jesus. We make room in our hearts for Thee. (E.S. Elliot - 1864)

(Comment: Interesting how joy and peace are so connected)

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Fourth Sunday of Advent - Love

(Ruthie)

On the fourth Sunday of Advent we lit the candle representing the gift of love.

[27]

John 3:16 (NLT)

16 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

[28]

God's most ancient thought towards us is love.

He created us to be His family. The delight of parents over a newborn baby is a small picture of God's delight in us. From the immensity of His heart of love, He gave the most precious gift possible — part of Himself, His own Son born as a baby, so that we also could be His children.

(Jeff)

[29]

1 John 3:1 (NLT)

1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

[30]

God's love is transformational, leading us from fear to wholeness.

[31]

1 John 4:16 (NLT)

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

[32]

1 John 4:18 (NLT)

18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.

[33]

"Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, Hail Thee as the Son of Love." — (Henry Van Dyke - 1907)

(Ruthie)

Until finally,

[34]

1 John 4:19 (NLT)

19 We love each other because he loved us first.

Jesus told His disciples,

[35]

John 15:9 (NLT)

9 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

It is God's love that meets our deepest needs and gives us a solid foundation for life.

[36]

(Jeff)

Ephesians 3:14–19 (NLT)

14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

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18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

(Comment: link between knowing and experiencing God's love, and trust - it completely removes all fear)

[38]

Advent reading for Christmas Eve 2016

(Ruthie)

On Christmas Eve we celebrated the fulfillment of Advent, the season of waiting, preparing our hearts to celebrate Jesus' birth. We lit the centre candle; this one represents Jesus. As we lit it, we remembered His birth. The time of waiting and preparation had ended and we welcomed Jesus with worship and adoration.

We also read the Christmas story from the Gospels.

Stories have more than concepts or philosophies. Stories have settings, plots, and definitely characters. It's hard to imagine a story without characters.

Stories have real live people. We can see them, watch them, and get to know them through their life. We can see what they are like and how they impact their world.

Stories involve change, and have surprises.

God didn't just tell us about His love or His desires for us by speaking to us in a big loud voice from heaven. He embodied Himself in a living breathing person who came into our setting and spoke our language.

In living out His story, Jesus surprised His family, His friends, and His followers -- repeatedly.

Everything about His birth, and His life is surprising. He is not finished surprising us.

Over the last 4 Sundays, we have lit candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. Jesus brings all of these.

He brings HOPE, and purpose in life;
...PEACE, and the invitation to be peace-makers;
...JOY, through His gracious reign over our heart and life;
...LOVE, and the commission to love others.

Jesus came to change our story.

(Jeff)

As we think about the Christmas story, let's bow our hearts before Him,

... let Jesus reign...
... let Him change you...
... let Him lead you...

...until at last,

[39]

"We cast our crowns before Him, lost in wonder, love, and praise." - John Wesley