

ADVENT 2008

Readings and Questions for Church and Family

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Advent Readings and Exercises for 2008

November 30, 2008

First Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Hope

Scripture for week # 1: **Isaiah 8: 20-9:7**

Scripture for Sunday: **Isaiah 8:21-9:2** (Reader #1)

(Reader # 2) Long ago the people of Israel lived in bondage and fear. They had given up hope and they found themselves in great despair.

From the beginning of time God spoke through those who would listen and respond. He spoke through Noah, through Abraham, through Moses, the judges and the kings. He spoke through the prophets of long ago. And now God speaks to His people through Isaiah the prophet and a dim light of hope is kindled. “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light,” and they began to look ahead and hope that this “Light” would come in their life time.

Today we light the candle of Hope to remind us that Jesus, the Light of the world, did come and is still our only hope.

(Light the Candle)

Prayer: (Reader #3) Lets bow in prayer.

“Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; thank-you for your faithful servants of long ago who spoke your words of hope into a dark world.

Thank-you that today we know that hope was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus who brought light into darkness. Thank You that you are a God who keeps His promise and people still find hope in Jesus.

It is in the Holy Name of this Jesus we pray, Amen”

Scripture Readings and Suggested Exercises for week #1 of Advent 2008

If possible have an advent wreath at home where each day or evening you relight the candle of the week during this time of interaction.

Monday: Read Isaiah 8:20-9:1 (Light the candle of Hope)

Discuss the feeling of hopelessness and how people deal with life when there is no hope. What makes us feel hopeless and what gives us hope? Note the words in Isaiah 9:1 that stir up hope. Younger children may be asked to draw two pictures; one without hope and one with hope.

Tuesday: Read Isaiah 9:2, John 1:1-5 (Light the candle of Hope)

Talk about the affect of even a small light in a totally dark room (You may wish to turn off all the lights before you light the candle). Discuss light and darkness and how we feel different when we have light – it gives us hope and opportunity. Talk about how the people of Israel must have felt when they heard Isaiah's words. After reading **John 1:1-5** thank God for the way Jesus brought hope and light into the world.

Wednesday: Read Isaiah 9:3-5, Luke 4:16-21 (light the candle)

After reading both scriptures discuss how Jesus fulfilled the Isaiah scripture and how we can continue to carry out the work of Jesus in our world today. Decide on a practical assignment where you will bring hope into someone's life.

Thursday: Read Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:21 (light the candle)

Discuss the meaning of the names of those in your family. Talk about how the names for Jesus listed in Isaiah 9:6 brought hope and how the name "Jesus" brings hope. What is the meaning of the name "Jesus"?

You may wish to do an acrostic with your names and do one with the name of Jesus. ie: "Jesus eternally saves us securely" or "Jesus erases sins, understands sadness".

Friday: Read Isaiah 9:7, Luke 1:32&33 (light the candle)

Discuss the meaning of an unending, peaceful government(or kingdom) of Jesus.

How does the reign of Jesus in our lives bring hope and peace?

What does this look like in practical ways?

No reading for Saturday. Use this evening for family celebration or a specific service project.

Advent Readings and Exercises for 2008

December 7, 2008

Second Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Peace

Scripture for week # 2: **Isaiah 9:6, Ezekiel 34:25-31, Luke 1:78&79, Phil 4:6-9**

Scripture for this Sunday: **Isaiah 9:6 & Luke 1:78&79** (Reader #1)

(Reader #2) One of the names for the coming Christ was “The Prince of Peace”. Prince Jesus would have the task of showing the world what peace would look like. After the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah, spoke these words: “. . . the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us . . . and guide us to the path of peace.” He was referring to Jesus who would come as the Light of the world. He would move people from the dark pathway of fear and frustration onto the pathway of peace. He would walk along side His people and calm them by His presence. So, on this second Sunday of Advent we light the candle of Peace.
(Light candle of Peace)

(Reader # 3) Let’s pray.

Almighty, Prince of Peace,
With grateful hearts we come to you today. Thank you for providing for us the pathway of peace. We long to know you more deeply as our Prince of Peace. Please give us wisdom to follow Your prescription for peace in our daily lives.
Give us wisdom to be peace makers in our home, at school, in our work place and in our community. We pray for those who have no peace because of war and persecution. Bless those today who bring the hope of peace into their troubled world.
We ask this in your strong name of Peace.
Amen

Scripture Readings and Suggested Exercises for Week #2 of Advent 2008

Monday: Read Isaiah 9:6 and Numbers 6:22-27

(Light the candle of Hope and Peace)

Read Isaiah 9:6 and discuss how Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Consider what your responsibilities might be if you were chosen to be the Prince of peace in your home. When the Old Testament laws were being established God gave Moses a prayer of blessing for the people (**Read Numbers 6:22-27**). Memorize this prayer of blessing (24-26) and bless each member of your household with this prayer each time you meet during this week.

Tuesday: Leviticus 26:6 and Ezekiel 34:25-31 (Light the candles)

After reading these two portions of Scripture make a list of things that take away our peace. List also the situations where God promises to give us peace. How do we claim the peace of God so as to sleep at night even when things are unsettled for us? Young children may wish to draw pictures of wild animals or make a colorful collage showing animals at peace. Pray the Levitical blessing.

Wednesday: Matthew 2:1-12, Ephesians 2:17-21 (Light the candles)

When Jesus came into our world it was anything but peaceful yet Jesus, as a baby, knew nothing about the turmoil around him. Talk about the peaceful scene surrounding his birth and then contrast it with the actions of Herod the Roman ruler. Talk about how the coming of Jesus brought peace not only to early Jews and Gentiles but also to us today. How are we able to be peaceful even when things around us are filled with chaos and pressure? Close by holding hands and praying for God's peace to reign in your home.

Thursday: Mark 9:50, Philippians 4:6&7 (Light the candles)

Jesus taught his disciples to have a positive impact in their world and encouraged them to live at peace with each other. Encourage each person to share a recent story of being able to stimulate peace in a troubled situation. Re-read Phil. 4:6&7 and write the prescription for peace. Have each person write their own definition of peace. To simplify this just finish the sentence: "Peace is" Conclude with the Levitical blessing.

Friday: Philippians 4:6&7 (Light the candles)

Individually, or in pair's act out a peaceful scene. This could be a scene from the Christmas story or a scene of how you experience peace. Pray the blessing from Numbers 6.

Advent Readings and Exercises for 2008

December 14, 2008

Third Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Joy

Scripture for week #3: **Luke 2:8-14, Philippians 4:4&5, 1 Peter 1:8, Nehemiah 8:10**

Scripture for this Sunday: **Psalm 96:11-13, Psalm 100:1-3** (Reader #1)

(Reader #2) When Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, the angels sang with joy. The shepherds rejoiced with excitement. The Messiah; the hope of God's people had arrived! He was to be their Prince of Peace and their fountain of joy. Mary and Joseph relaxed with joy for their long wait was over. The shepherds came, saw with their own eyes and returned to their sheep praising God. Years later Peter wrote in I Peter 1:8, “. . . Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.” Today, we have a deep joy because we know the story. We celebrate His birth, His life, His death and resurrection. We also look ahead to His return and rejoice together as we light the candle of Joy. (Light the candle of Joy)

(Reader #3) Let us pray

Our loving Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to our world to show us the true meaning of joy. Our hearts delight in knowing that it gave Him joy to do Your will.

Dear Lord Jesus thank you for coming to show us what God is like. Thanks also for leaving the Holy Spirit so we in turn can shine forth your love and joy to those around us.

With joyful hearts we pray,

Amen

Scripture Readings and Suggested Exercises for Week #3 of Advent 2008

Monday: Read Luke 2:8-14

(Light the candle of Hope, Peace and Joy)

Discuss the message of the angels and the response of the shepherds to their good news. Share a message of good news that brought you joy and happiness. What is the difference between joy and happiness?

Draw a picture depicting joy. Write a prayer of joy or make a list of what gives you joy.

Tuesday: Nehemiah 8:9&10, John 15:10&11 (Light the candles)

After reading these two portions of Scripture discuss how both Nehemiah and John encouraged the people to experience God's joy.

Discover together:

1. Why God's people had lost their joy (Nehemiah)
2. What God asks of us so as to experience true joy.

Complete the following sentence: "I experience the joy of Jesus when"

Wednesday: Philippians 4:4-7 (Light the candles)

Discover and discuss how the situation in Nehemiah and in Philippians were similar. Both Nehemiah and Paul were encouraging people who seemed to have lost their joy. Talk about "joy robbers" in your life. Think of ways (and discuss) to encourage each other to stir up or recapture the joy Jesus came to bring. Sing "Joy to the World"

Thursday: Luke 1:39-49 (Light the candles)

Discuss the joy that Elizabeth and Mary shared. How did this joy show itself? How does the family know about your joy? How do your friends know about your joy? How do you remind yourself of the deep joy inside?

Friday: Luke 2:10 and 1 Peter 1:8 (Light the candles)

Revisit the scene of the shepherds coming to discover the Christ Child. (You may wish to dramatize the shepherd scene)

The shepherds actually saw the baby Jesus.

How does Peter encourage the early Christians (and us) to maintain the joy even when they could not see Jesus with their natural eyes?

Discuss ways of introducing joy to those who do not know the joy Jesus offers.

Remember to take every opportunity to celebrate together!

Advent Readings and Exercises for 2008

December 21, 2008

Fourth Sunday of Advent – The Candle of Love

Scripture for week #4: **Luke 2:16-20; 2:30-35, John 1:14; 3:16, Eph 1:4-6, Jer. 31:3**

Scripture for this Sunday: **Luke 2:16-20, John 3:16** (Reader #1)

(Reader #2) The night Jesus was born in Bethlehem Mary wrapped him tenderly in strips of cloth and laid him into a manger bed. This was not how she had imagined the birth of God's Son. Like any new mother her heart was filled with love and concern for this little one. After the shepherds left she must have been overwhelmed with love for Jesus. What deep love God must have for her, to choose her to mother this child. How could she help her son fulfill God's plan? She must have wondered how he could become the Savior of the world. This was only the beginning of her journey as the earthly mother of God's Son. Love would see her through each day! (Light the candle of Love)

(Reader #3) Let us pray

Oh loving Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to our world to show us the depth of Your love. Our hearts delight in knowing that it gave Him joy to do Your will.
Dear Lord Jesus thank you for coming to show us what God is like. Thanks also for leaving the Holy Spirit so we in turn can shine forth your love and joy to those around us.
With hearts filled with love we pray,
Amen

Scripture Readings and Suggested Exercises for Week #4 of Advent 2008

Monday: Read Luke 2:16-20

(Light the candle of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love)

Talk about what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph in that stable birth place. Jesus is born, wrapped in long strips of cloth and placed in a manger. How did Mary feel? How did Joseph feel? How did their feelings change after the shepherds came? What questions would they have asked?

Use the figures of the Nativity scene to recreate the story. With younger children have them rearrange the figures so as to create a scene showing love.

Sing "Away in a Manger"

Tuesday: Luke 2:25-35 (Light the candles)

Discuss how Simeon rejoiced at seeing the baby Jesus. How do you think he felt when he took the Christ child in his arms? How does he express himself? What prophetic words does he speak? How is love expressed here?

Wednesday: John 1:14 and 3:16 (Light the candles)

Jesus is referred to as "The Word". He came not only to tell us but to show us how much God loves us. He was full of love and faithfulness. Talk about how Jesus might have shown love for his Father when He was a child. How did His Father show love for him? According to John 3:16 how do we receive this love? Memorize John 3:16.

Thursday: Ephesians 1:4-6 (Light the candles)

Discuss when God started loving us. How does God adopt us into His family? How does God see us? What gives God pleasure? How should we respond?

Friday: Jeremiah 31:3 (Light the candles)

The birth of Jesus was all part of God's big plan to reveal His incredible love for mankind. Draw a time line showing God's plan of love being fulfilled in your life. (Begin with God's choosing of you before He created the world and end with His second coming when we will see Him face to face.)

Conclude with a short prayer of thanks for the unconditional, eternal love God has lavished upon us.

Christmas Eve 2008

The Christ Candle

This evening all four candles are lit. We now light the center candle which is the Christ Candle. (light candle)

The Hope of the ages, the Prince of Peace, the Fountain of Joy and the King of Love has come. Tonight we join together to celebrate His arrival into our world. For over two thousand years we have rejoiced together and celebrated His coming. We will continue to celebrate and we will share the Good News of His coming into our world. We will celebrate His birth, His ministry, His death and resurrection and we will look forward to the day when He returns as a glorious King who reigns forever.

The King of Love has come! Come, let us adore Him!