

## What is Advent?

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### Luke 2:1-20

So what is Advent? If you're wondering what Advent is, what it means, or why we keep using this term, then the best starting point for us is to define what the word Advent means.

Advent: the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

“The arrival of a notable person, thing or event.” I bet at this point you can probably guess who that person is, namely Jesus. We celebrate and observe Advent because it beckons us to do two things: reflect on Jesus's first advent, when he came to our earth to live the life we couldn't live and die the death we deserved. But Advent doesn't stop there. The second thing Advent calls us to do is too long for the second Advent of Jesus. When he will return and make all things new. If we thought the first Advent of Jesus was glorious, can you imagine what the second Advent will be like?! In Advent there are four themes that are celebrated: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. Tonight we are going to look at the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel and see the four themes of Advent in this text.

**Main Idea:** The advent of Jesus provides us with hope, joy, peace and love.

Luke tells us the Christmas story in three sections: the setting & story line of the birth of Jesus V1-7, the meaning of the birth V8-14, and the response to his birth V15-20.

#### - *The Setting & Storyline (V1-7): Hope*

In verses 1-2 we can tell that Luke is presenting the birth of Jesus not as legend but as history and as a fact. All throughout the Bible we see that God gets involved in our world. We see this all throughout the Old Testament. Think of the story of the Exodus story. The Israelites were in captivity to the Egyptians for over 400 years. So what does God do? He raises up Moses through the house of Pharaoh. Moses leaves Egypt after killing an Egyptian official. Moses eventually comes back to Egypt to command that Pharaoh let the Israelites go. As we know Pharaoh refuses to let the people of Israel go and the Lord sends the plagues and the Israelites finally leave Egypt. They travel to the Red Sea and the Egyptians follow them so they can kill them. What does the Lord do? He parts the Red Sea and allows the Israelites to cross, while protecting them from the Egyptians. This is a huge display of God intervening and getting involved in our world. He's not just a God who created the world and left us in our sin. He intervened in Exodus and all throughout the OT and we see him getting involved here at the beginning of the story of the birth of Jesus.

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- So we see the Lord getting involved in our world through the decree from Caesar. Caesar's decree required everyone under the power of the Roman Empire to be registered. Registration was a way to make sure that everyone was accounted for. This was big for taxes in the Roman Empire. You've heard your parents talk about taxes right? Well they aren't fun for your parents, for me or for Mary and Joseph! So what do Joseph and Mary do? They travel from Nazareth all the way to Bethlehem. So why is this significant?
  - Micah 5:2 says "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."
- So based on Micah 5:2 we know that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. God is orchestrating his plan and working his plan through Caesar's decree for registration. Isn't it good to know and remember that God has a plan and is working his plan - even through people who aren't aware of it.
- Let's read Verses 6-7 again, "And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." We see that Jesus is born in the humblest of ways. The creator of the universe, the one who has set all of this in motion, could have come to this world in the most magnificent of ways, yet he chose to come by way of a manger. This shows us that God is not only involved in the world we live in, but he is also incredibly humble.
- So what do we know from this first section?
  - We have HOPE because God got involved in the world. Everything that was wrong with the world now has a HOPE to be redeemed because the Lord sent Jesus to our world. We have HOPE because God is still involved. He was involved before the foundation of the earth, all throughout the Old Testament, through the birth of Jesus and even now, he is still involved in our world and in our lives.
- ***The Meaning of the Birth (V8-14): Joy & Peace***
  - Let's take a closer look at Verse 10-11. "Fear Not for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
  - So in these two verses we see that the angels appear to the shepherds and make a huge announcement! The angel immediately tells the shepherds to "Fear Not!" Well why

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would you not be terrified?! Not only is the angel suddenly in front of you (and this had to stun the shepherds! They were simple men!), but Verse 9 says “the glory of the Lord shone around them.” The appropriate response to suddenly seeing the glory of the Lord would be utter fear. But instead of fear the angel appeals to the shepherds that they bring “good news of great joy.” I can imagine the shepherds were stunned and had to be thinking “go on....what is this good news of great joy?”

- This “good news” is the gospel! They are telling the shepherds that the savior of the world has come. Not some political figure that will save them from oppression by man, but save them from their oppression to sin. This “good news” brings “great joy” because it is the message that Christ the Lord has come to this earth and has brought peace and acceptance to God through his redemption.
  - So what does this mean for us? I think the Gospel Transformation Bible really sums this up for us really well! It says “To receive the good news of the gospel is to come to understand that, despite our background and failures, God reaches out to us with the loving message of peace. Receiving the gospel is not just understanding an abstract idea but it is believing by faith that the glorious God of the universe is now pleased with us and speaks peace into our personal lives. The result is release from fear (v. 10) and entry into freedom, joy, and an eager seeking after this Lord (v. 15).”
  - The gospel brings peace that casts out fear and invites us into freedom, joy and eagerly seeking the Lord.
  - We no longer have to worry about our standing with the Lord, because of what Jesus has done on our behalf.
  - So in this portion of the text I think we see the advent themes of PEACE and JOY.
    - We see the JOY in Verse 10. The message of the “good news” brought by the angels brings and ushers in ultimate joy. Joy that can only be found in the coming/ advent of Christ. This ultimate joy can be replaced by nothing other than Christ himself.
    - We see PEACE in the result of this message of “good news of great joy for all the people.” The message of good news and great joy is a message of peace. That God has come and has made a way for us to be acceptable in the sight of God. He has come and will bridge the gap.

- Tim Keller says “The peace of God is not the absence of negative thoughts, it’s the presence of God himself.” Peace doesn’t mean that everything is going to go according to plan. Peace is knowing that regardless of what happens, the Lord is present and he’s in control. We see this in the advent of Jesus. He has come to earth and brought ultimate peace with him.

- ***The Response to the Birth (V15-20): Love***

- In the remaining verses we see two responses to the birth of Jesus: the shepherd’s and Mary’s response.
  - First, let’s take a quick look at the shepherds response in Verses 15-18:
    - “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.”
      - The shepherds saw that what the Lord had said to them through the angel was true! They found baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger. And what did they do once they knew the Lord was telling the truth? They told others. “they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” To me, I don’t see anything in particular that is heinously wrong with this response. I think this is probably where the majority of us in the room would have landed. We would have confirmed what the Lord said to be true, we would have been amazed at what we had seen and then we would have told others about this. Then we would have returned to our everyday lives.
  - Now let's compare and contrast the shepherd’s response with Mary’s response in V19: “But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”
    - The text says that Mary “treasured” the birth of Jesus and pondered it in her heart. She didn’t just have an experience where she was so excited that she told everyone about what had happened, but she treasured them in her heart. This word “treasured” can be translated as defend, protect, preserve, keep or observe. So Mary “defended all these things, pondering them in her heart” or Mary “protected all these things, pondering them in her heart” or Mary “preserved all these things, pondering them in her heart.” We clearly see that Mary greatly valued, in the highest sense, what had happened. She had just given birth to the Messiah! The Savior of the World!

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- I hope that we can grow to a love for the Lord like Mary has here in this text. That we would treasure, protect, preserve and prize what the Lord has done for us and keep in our hearts. Not just a temporary experience, but keeping it at the forefront of our hearts.
- So treasure in your heart what the Lord has done for you, for me and for all who would believe in him!
- And share this love with others. Think of 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” The only reason that we can love others and share this love of Christ with others is because Jesus first loved us. He initiated this through coming to this earth.
- So in Verses 15-20, I think we see the Advent theme of LOVE. Mary puts this on billboard display for us to see.
- Let’s land the plane with a few points of application:
  - Have Hope because the Lord is involved in our world and in our lives.
  - Remember the Joy in the good news of the gospel.
  - Meditate on the Peace that we receive from Jesus through his coming and saving us.
  - Treasure the coming of Christ because he brings redemption.

I think this quote from Ray Ortlund sums up this passage really well:

“Make a mental list of everything you hate about your life - your regrets over the past, your anguish in the present, your fears for the future, every way in which we feel we’re missing out. Add to that list everything you hate about this world - the injustice and foolishness and sheer boredom and exhaustion. And when we make these mental lists, what we’re really doing is listing out all the ways that Jesus is relevant to us as our Savior, Messiah and Lord. It was for these very things that weigh us down that Jesus came - to lift us up. And he’s good at it. He’s successful. He’s winning. Our Savior, Christ and Lord is as massive as the full extent of our need. he lived the perfect life we’ve never lived and died the guilty death we don’t want to die. Then on the third day he rose up from it all, and he’s coming again to eradicate all evil and renew this world forever for all who have received him as Savior, Messiah and Lord. Let’s get all small thoughts of Jesus out of our minds, and let’s be cheered during this Christmas season by the magnitude of who he is at the level of *everything* that tears us apart. He is the complete Friend for the trapped, the angry and the fearful - for us.” - Ray Ortlund

The Point: The advent of Jesus provides us with hope, joy, peace and love.