

ADVENT 2021

This Sunday, November 28th, we begin the Church New Year. As a part of the tradition of the season called ADVENT, we will begin each of our services between now and Christmas Day with the lighting of the Advent wreath. Each Sunday (each candle) has a particular theme associated with it and these can vary from denomination to denomination and even within a particular expression of the Christian faith. This year, I would like to use the following themes for Sundays in Advent and offer a brief reflection which I hope you might use for a jumping-off point for some personal reflection during the week: HOPE, PREPARE, JOY, LOVE and ADORE.

With this in mind, here is the reflection for the First Sunday in Advent November 28th, 2021

HOPE

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish it. (ISAIAH 9:2, 6-7)

What a powerful beginning to the Advent season for us. Isaiah was writing for a people who had been sent into exile in the land of Babylon and they were a people sans homeland, sans hope. Isaiah reveals the Master's Plan by speaking of the gifting by the Creator of the great Light in the darkness and the promise from God that all will be well; not just well, but perfect. We too are living though a time of darkness both globally and in our personal lives as COVID continues to stalk us and it is so ever-present that many have lost all hope of any return to any sense of either normalcy or betterment. We too seek light in the shadows, life in the midst of death and hope in the heart of our despair.

Some of us have lost family and friends to this insidious plague while others see just helpless captivity in the throes of the epidemic. Some have lost all faith while others have had their trust in God tested to the limit of their capabilities and they see nowhere to go, no place to turn for comfort or solace or a future. When I read these words, I always bring to memory the very beginning of the "biblical story" in Genesis which reads, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void. And the Spirit breath hovered over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. And God saw the light and said, "That's good." As I walk Kahla first thing every morning, I try to get out just as the sun rises so I remember that a new day has dawned filled with all the possibilities and hopes I can imagine and more. So too is the season of Advent – it is God saying to us, "I am the Light and have placed within you a portion of that light so that you may shine before others and give light to those who dwell in the land of darkness, including yourself

As you move through this week, think of the moments of light which have entered your life and dwell in the glow of God's promise, once made to a people who dwelt in darkness, and seek again the Light.

Additional Readings: Psalm 122 Isaiah 2: 2-5 Romans 13: 11-14

Reflective Prayer for the Week:

LORD, as we enter this holy and blessed time called Advent, help us to see in you and in the gift of your Son, our Brother Jesus the hope of the world. We have been through so much Lord, and many have lost all hope that there is light in the darkness known as COVID. Help us to hope for all our todays and tomorrows, that life in you will fill us with a deep sense of your presence, leading us and guiding us along right pathways so we may discover hope in the seeming impossibilities we face. May we share our hope with others as you continue to bless us; we pray this in the name of the Blessed Hope of the World, Jesus. Amen