



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

OUT OF CONTROL CHRISTMAS

Welcome to the Advent Season!

Advent is a Latin word that literally means “coming or arrival”. It’s the season leading up to Christmas in which we explore our longing for more, our longing for God, and we celebrate how he came in Jesus, the baby born of a virgin in Bethlehem. As we do this, we look back with wonder at Jesus’ first coming and eagerly anticipate his Second Coming. Each Sunday in Advent we’ll be reading passages of scripture that teach us of a God who comes after us in our wandering and wondering, restoring our hope through the coming of his Son. Though we may have heard of these events many times, the magic of the Christmas season invites us to see the old story with fresh perspective. Let us experience the wonder of God coming to live among us.

For many of us, Advent may be a new rhythm in our walk with Christ. It may feel a little strange or uncomfortable to sit in the ‘already/not yet’ feeling as we step towards a deeper understanding of what Jesus coming to live among us really means. Every devotional will have action steps for the week, with the intention that you would act on them daily, to help focus your thoughts on the wonder of Christmas, and how amazing God’s love is for us.

Glory to God Alone,

Pastor Bree

Week 1

HOPE

“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.” - Isaiah 9:6

“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.” - Luke 19:10

Have you ever felt like your life is out of control? If so, you're not alone. We live in a world that is broken, chaotic and unpredictable. Even as we enter into a time that is supposed to be 'the most wonderful time of the year,' it can often be a time where everything feels out of control. You may even find yourself losing hope and forgetting the powerful promises of Jesus.

I don't know what you're facing today, but I do have some incredible news for you. God has everything you need. He is Sovereign and He is in control even when it seems like things are out of control. Today I invite you to place your hope in Jesus and anchor yourself to His promises in the midst of all that you're facing.

Isaiah 9:6 gives us a picture of this hope: "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us." Jesus isn't some seasonal figure or a decoration on a holiday card. He's our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. These aren't just names - they're reminders of who HE is and what HE is capable of doing. Instead of focusing on a 'me, myself & I' lifestyle this holiday season, let's choose to fix our eyes on our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. In Christ, you will find all the answers you have been searching for.

- Pastor Michael

Action Steps:

1. Daily Hope: Take 5 minutes each morning to remind yourself of one of Jesus' names - Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, or Prince of Peace. How has God displayed these attributes in your life?
2. Daily Surrender: Write down anything that feels out of control in your life. Surrender each item to Jesus in prayer, and trust Him to handle what you can't. This simple act of releasing control can bring peace, even in the chaos.

Week 2

PEACE

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf. And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord’s strength, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. And he will be the source of peace.” - Micah 5:2,4-5

Peace can be hard to come by. To look at your life and be able to say ‘I’m at peace’ doesn’t seem to be a regular occurrence for most people! More often than not the response to ‘how are you’ is ‘fine, busy, okay’, especially in today’s culture. Peace can seem to be a luxury for those who have life figured out.

All throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites were waiting on the promised King. They had heard about Him, and all the things that he would do, and how he would deliver them from their enemies. But I would bet that during that extended period of waiting they wouldn’t describe life as ‘peaceful’! They were constantly going back and forth with God, sometimes serving Him well, sometimes disregarding His call and pursuing their own gains and desires. This tug-o-war resulted in many prophets coming forward to proclaim the Lord’s words to the people.

Micah prophesied hundreds of years before Jesus arrived that he would be the source of peace – and when Jesus came to earth He fulfilled that scripture! During Jesus’ ministry on earth, he said this: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)” The world tries to give us peace through so many things, but the only peace that will truly settle our hearts and help us thrive is the peace that comes from Jesus. And because the source of peace is here with us, we can find peace in our hearts, no matter what is going on around us.

- *Pastor Bree*

Action Steps:

1. Read Psalm 29. As you read, reflect on how the psalmist describes the power and presence of the Lord, and then closes the chapter with a blessing of peace.
2. When you find yourself overwhelmed this week, pray this prayer:
Jesus, I receive your peace. Calm my troubled heart and wash away my fear.
Jesus, I receive your peace.

Week 3

JOY

“But the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!” - Luke 2:10-11

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!” - Luke 2:29-31

It’s not uncommon for the Christmas season to be a sore topic for many who have experienced hardship. Whether there was a loss of a loved one, a traumatic event, or simply the stress of navigating the holidays, sometimes we don’t always feel the Christmas cheer we hope to experience. Like many, this feeling was true for me. As I grew in my knowledge of Jesus, I came to the realization that I needed to truly believe to grasp the effects of His birth, death, and resurrection! You see, when we fully immerse ourselves in who Jesus is, we experience a Joy that heals and covers wounds.

There was a shift in the atmosphere when word got out that the Messiah was here. That shift was followed by a sense of hope that Joy would come alive – and we get to experience Joy today! Even though our circumstances may not change, there is a living God dwelling inside of us ready to transform our hearts to experience the abundant life He promises.

Know that in this season, whether you are dreading it or excited about it, the biggest gift under the tree is waiting for you to unwrap it. It has a huge bow on top with that crispy wrapping paper we all love to rip through! As soon as you open it, you’ll realize it’s Joy, found in Jesus, waiting for you to take hold and immerse yourself in it.

- Pastor Noelia

Action Step:

1. Find some time to pray about one thing you will add to your Christmas routine that will remind you of the Joy we get from the Gospel. This gift didn’t come without a cost, it was expensive. It’s there ready for you to open because “The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!”

Week 4

LOVE

“All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).” - Isaiah 7:14

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” - Mark 10:45

This week, we focus on the theme of love—a love that comes in ways we could never orchestrate or expect. This season, marked by an “Out of Control Christmas,” can often feel overwhelming with the rush of preparation, shopping lists, and plans. But in the midst of this, we find a story that seemed equally out of control in the eyes of Mary, a young woman conceiving a child by the Holy Spirit, and Joseph, a righteous man committed to marrying her in a small town that whispered, doubted, and judged. And yet, in the center of this seemingly chaotic plan, God’s perfect love was unfolding.

Isaiah’s prophecy reminds us that God had this in his heart all along—a plan that would reveal his love so fully that we can experience it now, in Jesus. In Mark 10:45, we’re reminded why Jesus came, not to be served, but to serve. Jesus willingly entered this world, not for recognition or power, but out of a love that gave itself away for our redemption. This season, amidst all that seems out of control, we are invited to pause and recognize the love that anchors us: Immanuel—God with us.

This love is not just a concept or a feeling; it’s the embodiment of God’s presence with us, understanding our struggles and lifting us from sin and brokenness. Mary and Joseph experienced the extraordinary in the middle of the ordinary because they chose to trust in God’s plan. We, too, can choose to find our comfort and strength in this truth. Every Christmas tradition, every carol, every gathering is a reminder that Jesus came out of love and remains with us in love, offering hope in every circumstance, even the “out of control” ones.

- *Pastor Abbey*

Action Steps:

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on Isaiah 7:14. Consider what it means to you that Jesus, Immanuel, came to be “God with us.” How does that change the way you approach situations that feel out of control?
2. Spend five minutes each day reflecting on Mark 10:45. Ask yourself how you can embody Jesus’ love in a practical way this season. Who in your life could use a word of encouragement, an act of service, or a reminder that God is with them?

Week 5

CHRIST

“So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son. From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.” - John 1:14

“Holy holy holy moment

God has come to dwell with us

Glory to the Lamb the great I Am who came

On that night divine in the fullness of time”

- In the Fullness of Time - Matt Boswell & Matt Papa

The phrase ‘in the fullness of time’ essentially means that in the right time, whatever you are waiting for will come to pass. The Old Testament prophets foretold that a king would come that would make all things right, that would be the fulfillment of all the longings and desires of the people. When Jesus was born, the fullness of time had arrived! That long period of waiting was over. It can be easy to focus on what’s broken in the world, the unfulfilled longings and broken promises, the strained relationships and difficult moments. But when we take a step back from the pain and strife, the reality of God making his home among us can truly shine.

Jesus knows our every need. Do you need hope? He has it. Do you need love? He has it. Do you need joy, peace, forgiveness? He has all these in abundance. He, the God of the universe, came down, became human, and lived among us. He isn’t unaware of our struggles and difficulties, because he experienced them himself. And yet he is God, full of unfailing love, faithfulness, and grace unending. No sin or mistake or broken life is too much for him to make new. If you feel like you’re in a season of waiting, that your ‘fullness of time’ has yet to be fulfilled, know that God has come to dwell with us, and you can find everything you need, even in the midst of waiting, in Him alone.

- Pastor Bree

Action Step:

1. Listen to the song ‘In the Fullness of Time’. As you listen, let the truth of God living among us encourage you in whatever season you find yourself.
2. Read Galatians 4:4-7. Take a moment and reflect on what Jesus coming to earth means, and how your life has been changed forever because of it.

