

Advent Family Devotional: Week 1

by: Eric Turner

Tradition and liturgy are almost always steeped in symbolism and meaning. The advent season and wreath are no different. The first advent wreath appeared in Germany in 1839 and was eventually made from evergreens to symbolize the everlasting life offered in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The circle has come to symbolize God's ceaseless love. Often there are red berries in the wreath that are used to point to Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross. Pinecones have also come to symbolize the new life Christ brings and the new life we have in Christ.

While different denominations and traditions have slight variations of the advent season and wreath, many observe Advent by lighting one candle on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Another candle is lit each of the following Sundays until Christmas. Most often, the first three candles are purple, the fourth is rose colored and the middle candle is white. The fifth candle placed in the middle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day and symbolizes Jesus' birth.

Sunday, December 2, 2018

HOPE

(Light the first purple candle and share the following)

Traditions are sometimes different, but the first purple candle often symbolizes hope. Hope is one of the few things the people of God could hold onto as the consequences of their sins caused heartache and even exile. The prophet Isaiah is seen as especially hopeful for the awaited Messiah to come and deliver his people.

The Bible relates a lack of hope to being in a world without God (Eph. 2:12). The implication being, as long as there is still a God, there is hope. The Prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah knew this and knew that no matter how bad the current situation was and seemed, God was still in control. Which meant there was hope. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for hope is often the same word that means, "to wait" and conveys a sense of waiting with great anticipation. Not unlike a child trying to fall asleep on Christmas Eve, anxiously awaiting the next morning and the hope of getting a wonderful gift.

ASK: What is something you are waiting for with great anticipation?

Why is waiting so hard sometimes?

What can make waiting easier?

What do you think it was like to wait for something as big as the Messiah and Savior?

Read Isaiah 25:9

It will be said on that day,

“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

These verses show us Isaiah is hoping and waiting with great anticipation for a Messiah that would not just come to help them but bring eternal salvation.

Have you ever thought about Jesus waiting for something? Does Jesus ever have to wait for something? If so, what do you think would it be?

Read Hebrews 10:12-14

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

According to this verse, what is one thing Christ is doing right now? *Waiting for that time until his enemies are defeated once and for all.*

The Bible teaches us that Jesus came the first time to set us free from our sins and to die the death we deserved to die. It also teaches us that Christ will come again to finish what he started and defeat evil forever, ushering in a new earth and new heaven (Rom. 8:22-25, James 5:7, 2 Peter 3:11-13)!

If you read the Bible cover to cover, you will discover there is a lot of waiting done by God’s people. Think of Abraham, the people of Israel in Egypt, David waiting to be King, and the prophets waiting for the Messiah just to name a few. Even though God made them wait, He didn’t allow them to wait without hope. He made covenants, anointings, and promises with his people while they waited, which gave them hope. Because one thing we can learn about God is that no matter how long the wait is, He always delivers! ALWAYS! The biggest proof of this is Christ the Messiah being born just as God had promised to the prophets.

So, this season, we celebrate that the hope of the prophets was fulfilled in Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection, but we also hope in anxious anticipation, just like they did, for the day when Christ will come again. Knowing that God has kept all of His promises in history and will certainly keep this final one. Where He will end all pain and suffering and usher in His eternal kingdom where we will worship Him forever!

Pray together as a family, thanking God for sending his Son who saved us from our sins. Pray that God would allow us to wait with eager hope and anticipation well as we look forward to Christ’s second advent, when he comes again, once and for all!