

Exploring the Themes of Advent 2023

The Synod of the Covenant Preaching Workshop 9/6/23

Offered by Chip Hardwick

If Advent moves us *from* brokenness *to* joy, what do your listeners despair about? What would characterize the joy of the Gospel for them? Why difference does Jesus' coming make in their lives?

Lectionary Themes (Advent in Advent)

- Week 1: Christ's Return
- Week 2: Repentance/Forgiveness
- Week 3: [Good News to the Oppressed]
- Week 4: God's Incarnation
- Christmas Eve: God breaks into our world!

Explore Lectionary Texts and Brainstorm Connections

Possibilities for Non-Lectionary or Christmas in Advent

- Advent in Plain Sight (Jill Duffield)
- A Surprising God (Tom Long and Donyelle McCray)
- Every Valley: Advent with the Messiah (various authors)
- Songs for the Waiting (Magrey R deVega)
- Celebrating Abundance: Devotions for Advent (Walter Brueggemann)
- Jesus: The Prophecy Fulfilled
- Who do you say that I am? Titles for Jesus in the New Testament
- Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes (Cynthia Campbell)
- Mary Had a Baby (Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Marilyn E. Thornton)
- Rise up Shepherd! (Luke Powery)
- Christ in the Carols
- Luke 1-2
- The Characters of Christmas (David Kern)
- The Women of Advent (Sheila Archley)
- Word Studies (Bible Project)

Advent 2023 Revised Common Lectionary Scriptures

Old Testament Texts

1. The person whose birthday is next is the moderator of the group.
2. Introduce yourselves BRIEFLY
3. Skim the texts for major themes and possible sermon claims.
4. Brainstorm how the themes/claims might work together from Advent 1 to Christmas Eve. The more ideas, the better!

Week 1 Isaiah 64:1-9

64:1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence--

2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

4 From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

5 You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

7 There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Week 2 Isaiah 40:1-11

¹ Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

*² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

³ A voice cries out:

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*

*⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field.

*⁷ The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.*

⁸ The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news;

lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news;

lift it up, do not fear;

Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

¹⁰ See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him and his recompense before him.

*¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms
and carry them in his bosom*

and gently lead the mother sheep.

Week 3: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

*¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners,*

*² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,*

*³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.*

*⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.*

*⁸ For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.*

*⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nation
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.*

*¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

*¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.*

Week 4: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

7 Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³ Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."

⁴ But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, ⁵ "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶ I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷ Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'

⁸ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, ⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

Christmas Eve: Isaiah 9:2-7

9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. 3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. 4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Advent 2023 Revised Common Lectionary Scriptures

Gospel Texts

1. The person whose birthday is next is the moderator of the group.
2. Introduce yourselves BRIEFLY.
3. Skim the texts for major themes and possible sermon claims.
4. Brainstorm how the themes/claims might work together from Advent 1 to Christmas Eve. The more ideas, the better!

Week 1: Mark 13:24-37

*²⁴ “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,*

*²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*

*²⁶ “Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and
glory. ²⁷ Then he will send out the angels and gather the elect from the four winds,
from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

*²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts
forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things
taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this
generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and
earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

*³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the
Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time
will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his
slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the
watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house
will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may
find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep
awake.”*

Week 2: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way,

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;

make his paths straight,’ ”

⁴ so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Week 3: John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²² Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³ He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ” as the prophet Isaiah said. (continued on next page)

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, “Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” 26 John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal.” 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Week 4 Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”

38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Christmas Eve: Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

2:1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

2:8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.