



Advent is the season prior to Christmas. The word itself means arrival, coming or appearance. For us, Advent is an invitation to prepare for the coming of Immanuel -- God with us. It is preparing our hearts to once again celebrate the arrival of the Christ child...our hope and the hope of the world.

This morning we invite you to take time to prepare your heart to receive the fullness of His Spirit this holiday season. It is good that you are here. "For as often as you ready your heart, He keeps coming. He keeps breaking in."¹ May God break into your heart, mind and life in new ways today and throughout this season.

Preparing your heart:

1. Find a place quiet enough that you can hear the Holy Spirit.
2. Offload all of the "loud" stuff of your life -- calendar, finances, projects, needs, wants...
 - a. Write it down or speak it aloud -- somehow move those things from your mind to paper or just into the air.
 - b. There is time to deal with the loud stuff later -- it will still be there. (There is a time to clean your closet, but not as you're getting ready to go to dinner in your best dress!) You're meeting God here; deal with the other stuff later.
3. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you anew today. It is He who prepares your heart, mind and soul to hear and receive the One we are looking for. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches you to anticipate the gift that is Immanuel -- God with us.
4. The Scriptures here are promises of Jesus who will come -- who He is and how He is. Read and allow these truths to soften, fill and prepare your heart and mind. It is often helpful to Use your journal to answer the following questions and write out your meditations and prayers.

Scriptures:

Isaiah 9:6-7 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. ⁷ His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

Isaiah 7:14 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 11:1-5 Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. ² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him [Jesus] — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. ⁴ He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked. ⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 "For the time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line [Jesus]. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. ⁶ And this will be his name: 'The LORD Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

Luke 1:30-33 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

¹ Allison Hughes in CA Women's Christmas Devotional (found online at www.caeaglerock.com/women)

Luke 2:16-20 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

John 1:14 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.

John 3:16, 17 "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

Consider and Journal Your Thoughts:

1. What do these passages reveal about God the Father? God the Son? God the Holy Spirit?
2. What does it mean to you that God came to you and for you?
3. What can you do to live in that place of love, understanding and anticipation of Christ this season?
4. As you slowly read back through these passages, ask the Lord to speak to you. Is there a truth about God or a word or a phrase that seems to jump off the page? Write it down and consider what God is inviting you to – is there a truth he wants you to believe? A change he wants you to make? A person he wants you to encourage? An action he wants you to take?
5. Write a prayer of gratitude to God for who he is and all he does.

Listening Listening

Dec 1st
Descanso Gardens



It can be a challenge for some of us to fill almost two hours with quiet and listening. We encourage you to take this opportunity to truly experience solitude, quiet and listening – listen to how the Word might speak to you, listen for the Holy Spirit, listen to your own heart. This is a guide for your listening time --not homework! Take it slow and add or subtract from its content with the Scripture that fills your soul. If time permits you may want to read the account of Jesus' birth from Matthew 1:18-2:23 or Luke 1:26-2:40.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 9:00am | Get your Listening guide and head out into the Gardens; find a place to exhale and listen. We offer here some guidance but you are welcome to lean into God as you desire. |
| 11:15am | Meet at Theater Under the Oaks to connect and pray. (Pick up a map when you enter.) |