

Introduction:

- Generational Sunday and Advent
- Let's review what Advent is.

I. What is Advent?

- A. Advent comes out of the Catholic tradition. We know this because the Latin word *adventus* is used to translate the Greek word *parousia* which translated means 'the coming' or 'the arrival'. You won't find Advent in scripture but you will find *parousia*.
- B. For Christians, the season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ from two different perspectives.
 1. It is the time of year when we specifically look to the coming of Jesus Christ, first in his coming to bring our salvation. It offers the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah. Which the wise men were doing, and Simeon and Anna.
 2. And it also alerts us to be looking for his Second Coming when Christ will return to reign in glory.
 3. In Advent, we're reminded of how much we ourselves also need a Savior, and we look forward to our Savior's second coming even as we prepare to celebrate his first coming at Christmas.
- C. How the traditions works.
 1. The Advent begins four Sundays before December 25th so the actual start date changes each year.
 2. The tradition also revolves around an Advent wreath.
 - a) The wreath is typically a circular candle holder that holds five candles. During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday until all of the candles, including the fifth candle, are lit on Christmas Day.
 - b) Most Advent wreaths use three colors of candles - 3-purple, 1-pink, and 1-white. However, some may use blue in place of the purple.
 3. The candles
 - a) 1st CANDLE - November 27 (purple-repentance and royalty) THE PROPHECY CANDLE or CANDLE OF HOPE. We lit this one last week.
 - b) 2nd CANDLE - December 4 (purple-repentance and royalty) THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION and Peace. You get ready to welcome God.
 - c) 3rd CANDLE - December 11(pink-joy) THE SHEPHERD CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF JOY. It was the message of the angel...Joy to the World!
 - d) 4th CANDLE - December 18 (purple-repentance and royalty) THE ANGEL CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF LOVE. I bring you good news!
 - e) 5th CANDLE - December 24 (white) CHRIST CANDLE

4. Each Sunday a new candle is lit until the Christ candle is lit on Christmas day. Today we light the second candle. The Bethlehem candle or the candle of preparation/peace.
- *“Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:”* (Luke 1:67, NLT) Prophecy gives hope! *““And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because **you will prepare** the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.”* (Luke 1:76-77, NLT) See also Malachi 3:1 *“Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to **guide us to the path of peace.**”* (Luke 1:78-79, NLT)
 - Today marks the lighting of the second Advent candle. It is called the Bethlehem candle or the Candle of Preparation it is also called the Candle of Peace. It follows the lighting of last week’s candle which was the Candle of Prophecy or the Candle of hope.

II. Prepare the Way

- A. The whole of Advent is to call us to prepare for the arrival of Jesus. We prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth or our salvation. And we prepare for the second coming of Christ. Both require preparation. One who has hope logically moves to the next step of preparation. Hope brings a sense of expectation. And expectation brings a desire for preparation. And the preparation is to lead us to peace. Let’s look again at our scripture again.
- B. *““And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because **you will prepare** the way for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:76, NLT) *““Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will **prepare the way** before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.*” (Malachi 3:1, NLT)
- C. When we talk about preparing we are speaking about two things.
 1. One we are talking about ‘making ready’. Making ready is about doing what you have to do to prepare. IE. Hurricane is coming get ready...shutters, food, water, gasoline...
 2. Two we are talking about be in a state or readiness. Readiness is about preparing and then being watchful to not lose the state of being ready. Hurricane coming ready! Hurricane season has begun...ready.
 3. Therefore we are preparing or we are staying prepared. Advent is about preparation for the celebration of Christ’s birthday or about His second coming. Each day we are reading scriptures that have to do with either His first or second coming. Sometimes it’s both. I like that! This I know, that after one week of reading our scriptures my heart is being drawn into the season based on truth and not on Amazon or advertisements.

4. Readiness gives the Christian life a distinctive dynamic character as expectation of the promise or the goal of salvation. And an openness to the possibilities of action determined by this salvation/goal.
- D. Preparation is a statement of faith! IE. Our MyHOP leadership team planned for Justin and Naomi to be with us this weekend. We had hope that they would come. Because we had hope that they would come we started preparing by making calls, getting confirmations, scheduling flights, buying food. The preparation came because we had the hope they would come. We prepared because we believed that they were coming.
1. The first Advent candle was about hope that was given through the prophetic scriptures.
 2. Today's advent candle is about preparation. If I have hope then that leads me to prepare for what I am expecting. That preparation is an act of faith in itself! IE. It is like giving an invitation for people to be saved after service. They have a hope of salvation, they come forward in preparation and that preparation in itself is an act of faith. As we prepare our hearts through the reading of the Word we too are mixing hope and faith. Hebrews 11:1 "*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*" (Hebrews 11:1, NLT)
 3. What are we hoping will happen? We are hoping to find Peace! "*Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.*" (Luke 1:78-79, NLT) JTB came to prepare the way for Jesus so that we could prepare to walk in peace.

III. Walk in Peace

- A. Zacharias prophesied over his son, you will prepare the way of the Lord. And the Lord will guide us to the path of peace. Luke 1:79
1. Gr. "*To guide the feet or to direct the feet.*" To point in the right direction so as to reach a specific place.
 2. "guide us to" literally reads 'guide us into'
 3. '*a road, or a manner of life.*' And that manner of life is peace! Peace... "*implies well-being as distinct from every form of evil. a state of well-being or wholeness, so that one can even be said to die in peace.*" Kittle
 4. The goal of preparation is to find the place of peace. So, as we prepare for Christmas we are to find the place of peace as well...if we have prepared. So that leads to the next question: How did JTB prepare the people for Jesus. How did he clear the road for Him to gain access to Israel's heart.
- B. John the Baptist, JTB, came to prepare Israel for her Messiah! How did he do that? Four things come to mind from the Word.
1. He made the announcement that what everyone had been hoping for all of these years is happening now! What is that announcement? Messiah is here! This is no longer a future event it is happening as I speak! *Kingdom of heaven is at hand!* "*I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will*

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Matthew 3:11, NLT) Next day "...behold the Lamb of God." Jn 1:29

2. He called people to repentance he was calling people to clean up their act/heart. **"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."** (Matthew 3:2, NLT) Repentance is not just a turning away from sin but it is a turning to God.
 3. He called people to live in righteousness. **"Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God."** (Matthew 3:8, NLT) Create enough evidence to be convicted of being Christian.
 4. "He confronted the lies that people were believing so that they would come into the truth. **"Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones."** (Matthew 3:9, NLT)
 5. IE. In our house it looked like this:
 - a) Announcement was made! Rizzo's are coming! They will be here Thursday night Dec 1st.
 - b) Lies were confronted. "Don't say we can clean house on Thursday Dec 1st. That means nothing!"
 - c) We were called to clean up our act. There must be a turning away from dishes left in the sink, and clutter placed upon the counters and a turning to a spotless home."
 - d) Call to a higher standard. Prove by the way you live...that you have embrace mama's ways!
 - e) JTB came to prepare Israel with those calls and challenges.
- C. What does it look like when we prepare to meet Him?
1. **"Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure."** (1 John 3:2-3, NLT)
 2. **"Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God."** (2 Corinthians 7:1, NLT) Cleansing, turning away and also a turning to.

Conclusion:

- JTB was sent to prepare the Way for Jesus. We to must prepare the way by preparing our hearts for Him.
- Let's reflect on what changes we should make in our own lives to prepare, not just now but in the year that is to come. What kind of person would I like to be? What kind of person should I be? What kind of person could I be? What kind of person do I think God would like me to be?
- JTB clears the road for Jesus and Jesus clears the road for us!
- When Jesus clears the road and we put our feet on that road we find peace.
- This second Sunday of Advent is about us embracing hope, preparing our heart, and entering into the place of peace that only the Prince of Peace can give.