



## **Worship Service Theme: First Sunday of Advent: **HOPE****

### **Helpful Elements:**

Christmas hymnal and sing-along recordings  
Purple table covering  
Advent stand and electric candles  
Advent banner

**Welcome:** Welcome! My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word "adventus," which means "arrival" or "coming." Advent is the season before Christmas when the church remembers and celebrates the coming of Christ to Earth and looks forward to his return in glory.

**(Turn on the candle of Hope – or have someone in the front row "light" it.)**

Each week of Advent has its own theme: hope, peace, joy, and love. Today we light the first **PURPLE** candle that represents **hope**, remembering the hope that Christ brought into the world. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening prayer:** God of hope, who brought love into this world,  
be the love that dwells among us.  
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,  
be the peace that dwells among us.  
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,  
be the joy that dwells among us.  
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,  
be the center, the focus of our lives  
always, and particularly this Advent time. We pray in your holy name. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm](http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm)

**Hymns:**

**Joy to the World**

**O Come O Come Emmanuel**

**Angels from the Realms of Glory**

**First reading:** Isaiah 11:1-6

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup>And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

<sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth ...

<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat ...  
and a little child shall lead them.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**

**The First Noel**

**Second reading:** Mark 13:32-37. This is how Jesus described his eventual return to his followers:

<sup>32</sup> “But concerning that day or that hour [when I return], no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— <sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**Angels We Have Heard on High**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem**

**Good Christian Friends, Rejoice**

**Interactive Homily:** Let's talk together a bit about waiting and hope.

- What sorts of things do you wait for?
  - Birthdays; holidays; Christmas morning; a visit from someone you love; a baby; your next meal 😊
- How does waiting feel?
  - Sometimes exciting or fun
  - Also can be difficult! Slow, agonizing, distracting
- What sorts of circumstances or feelings make waiting even harder?
  - When you're worried or anxious
  - When you're in pain
  - When you're alone
  - When something is a long way off
- What makes waiting easier to bear?
  - Waiting with someone else or others; sharing the burden, encouraging each other in the wait
  - Praying for patience
  - Knowing that what you wait for *will* come
- In the Bible, the Isaiah passage we read predicts a time when righteousness and equity are realities, and "the wolf will dwell with the lamb." How do you think would the world be different than it is today, if righteousness and equity were the norm and enemies were at peace?
  - This is the image of the *promised* kingdom of God, how it *will be*.
- Jesus said that waiting for the fulfillment of God's kingdom is like when a master leaves the house "and puts his servants in charge, each with his own work." What do you think we can do to help bring God's kingdom to where we live, here and now? What is our work to do while we wait for the master to return, for God to bring *shalom*, his wholeness and peacefulness?
  - Prayer for ourselves and for the world. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven."
  - Help others – even loving and blessing our enemies.

- Treating others with kindness and humility, not with prejudice
- Learn. Listen to wise words and teachings; act on them!
- “Stay awake.” What do you think “staying awake” means in terms of faith?
  - Don’t get lulled into thinking you have nothing to do or that the master will never return!
  - Don’t give up; look around for what God is doing and your role in partnership with God.
  - Be with others to wait and work together, to bring peace and justice.
- Advent is all about waiting for an arrival. The first is waiting for the Christ Child on Christmas morning. This certainty – Jesus was born! – is a guarantee of our ultimate hope: his Second Coming to establish God’s kingdom of *shalom*, wholeness and peace.
- Advent is a time of looking back *and* looking forward, both in an attitude of waiting in confident HOPE.

... Let’s pray to God silently for a moment, for endurance to wait and work for God’s kingdom in faith and hope.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

**Lord’s Prayer:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

### **Hymn: Go Tell it on the Mountain**

**Third Reading:** A Season of Hope, by Raymond A. Foss

We are waiting, expectantly  
for the coming of the angels,  
His parents,  
the shepherds, the animals,  
the Star, the Babe,  
and the wise men, the coming  
of the Christmas miracle,

the telling of the same story,  
never old in the remembering  
of the moment when Mary gave birth  
to the one who was to come  
to save His people, the one God  
the only begotten son  
to rescue us all from our sin,  
from the divide we created  
between us and God, the father, the mother  
the holy mediator, arbitrator,  
sacrificial lamb of God  
Waiting as they did, even in the retelling  
because it is a timeless story  
of infinity love and good  
that we need to hear,  
until we all get the message  
and believe

#### **Hymns:**

**Away in a Manger**  
**What Child is This**  
**Silent Night**

#### **Fourth Reading:** An essay: “Whom Do We Await?”<sup>2</sup>

Whom do we await this Advent? What special things come at this time of year? Holly, ivy, Christmas trees, parties, candy, food, crafts—all these things are special. But *who* is coming? A baby was promised and was delivered many years later. He, Jesus, the Messiah, centered his ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles. This land had been overrun by the Assyrians who took captive the northern kingdom. It is to this very land that the Light would dawn.

Imagine what those people had seen, what they had gone through, yet God had not forgotten them. Their land would be restored, and the Messiah would come and walk on that currently desolate ground someday.

But that is also the problem for them and for us. Because *someday* is a long time away. The people waiting for the Messiah stood between the desolation and the promised Light much as we stand between the Messiah’s first coming and His

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from LaVerne Heights Presbyterian Church Advent Devotions, by Sue Nordine, LaVerne, CA

promised return. Some days all we can see is the desolation, and some days we get so caught up in the cleanup that we forget the promise.

So, for whom do we wait? We are waiting for the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor, the victor over every battle inside us and outside us. This is the one who came and who is coming again, the one who died for us, the one who is alive and dwells in our hearts.

It is by Immanuel—God with us—that we are sustained in hope.

**Hymn:**

**Hark the Herald Angels Sing**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Closing Hymns:**

**O Come All Ye Faithful**

**We Wish You a Merry Christmas**

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**Extra material:**

Poem: What We Heard on Christmas Day *with a line from Longfellow*, by Julie L. Moore

Silence like early morning, like indigo  
deepening at the bottom of the sea.  
For hundreds of years.  
No voice to say *this is the way*.  
Or *tomorrow, he comes*. They raised  
their questions, rose each morning, found  
no answers. Unless you count  
*Wait*. But after the hush  
of prophecy, the long line of law,  
exile centuries ago just a bitter aftertaste  
in their empty mouths, sting  
of dust on their ribs dulled, almost imperceptible,

a baby wailed. And if you listened close,  
you knew your ears did not deceive you.  
He had entered the ebony tomb  
of Earth, loosening at last his long-held tongue,  
the star a halo of song blaring overhead,  
*God is not dead, nor doth He sleep.*