

# The Promise of Advent



**ADVENT WORSHIP SERVICE**

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# Notes


# Epiphany

This comes on the 12th day of the celebration.  
Light a three-pronged candle in honor of the kings.

**Father (or Reader 1):** Read the scripture Matthew 2:1-11.

*Sing: "What Child is This" (the following verse)*

*"So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come, peasant, King, to own him;  
The King of kings salvation brings,  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.*

*This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The babe, the Son of Mary."*

*--William C. Dix*

Like the wise men, we celebrate Christmas with gifts. Pray together an offering or blessing, dedicating your gift box to baby Jesus. Open it, count the contents and decide where it should be given, in His name.

If there are other gifts to be given, this would be a good time. You might like to say: "I give you this gift remembering that the wise men gave gifts to Jesus and because I love you."

*Sing: "We Three Kings"*

Sing first verse and chorus. If there are three men present, let each one take a verse and read it and all sing the chorus.

Discuss as a family the taking down of the tree and trimming off all the branches. Save the trunk to be cut in half and lashed together to make a cross for Holy Week.

Close with prayer.

*Talk about how all the light in the world won't do me any good if I keep my eyes closed up tight!*

The true light has come into the world. Some who see it prefer the darkness. We must receive the light to really see. To all who receive Him (the Light), He gives power to become children of God.

*Sing "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"*

Consider a time of silent prayer to give opportunity for praying a prayer of recommitment of your life.

*Thought for the day: Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the Lord is streaming from you...the glory of the Lord will shine from you." Isaiah 60:1-2.*

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Today is the first day of Christmas! This is traditionally a 12-day celebration. Sometime during the afternoon, the shepherds and the sheep should arrive in Bethlehem at your stable.

Read together the scripture that recorded the angels announcement and their arrival. Luke 2:8-20.

*Sing: "While Shepherds Watched"*

Talk about this event. It reminds us of our responsibility to share what we have seen and heard. The shepherds who received the news of the Savior's birth left their work and hurried to see the Christ Child and then returned to tell others about what they had seen and heard. It says, "they glorified God." They weren't changed suddenly into great speakers, but they simply told others- shared the good news concerning what they had seen and heard from their own experience. No doubt it was an enthusiastic reporting!

Take time to think of Jesus as "the Good Shepherd" who cares for us, His sheep, remembering the prophecy of Micah 5:4, "...and he will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord..."

The three kings and their camels should appear today, too, maybe on the window ledge in the kitchen. Each day they move toward the stable as they make their way to the scene.

# A Family Worship Service for Advent

A beautiful custom that Christians have established to celebrate this season is the use of the Advent wreath. It focuses our attention on the birth of the Christ Child.

If your family has decided to observe the tradition of celebrating the four Sundays of Advent, arrange an Advent wreath on a tabletop or wherever it seems comfortable and mark that place as your family's worship center.

The ring or circle of the wreath has no end which reminds us of the never-ending love of God. Make the wreath of evergreen branches, symbolic of the everlasting life and the eternalness of God.

Around it, place four large candles. Candles are a very important part of the observance of Christmas. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

Traditionally, three candles are purple, 1 pink and a taller white candle is in the center. It represents Christ and His light.

This very lovely custom began a long time ago. After December 25th was established as the date to celebrate the birth of Christ, people felt the need to prepare themselves spiritually for the festival. As families gather together, prayer, Bible reading, and carols brought a special measure of love into the home. Sunday by Sunday, the ceremony was continued with a new candle lit each week. The lighting of the Christ candle was saved for the birthday celebration. (Prior planning pays. Mark the passages. Have matches close-by. Be prepared!)

*"Now while the people were in a state of expectation..." Luke 3:15*

# The First Sunday in Advent

## A Time of Preparation

*Sing together:*

*Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set the people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.  
--Charles Wesley*

**Father (or Reader 1):** Today is special because it is the beginning of a new season. We call this season “Advent.”

**First Child:** What does that mean?

**Father (or Reader 1):** “Advent” is a word that means “to come.” It is a time when we get ready, preparing ourselves for the coming of the Christ child.

**Mother:** What are some things that we might be doing to get ready?

**Second Child:** We should get our hearts ready by thinking about Him.

**Another Child:** We should become “expecters”.

**Another Family Member:** What we are doing right now around the Advent wreath is a way of preparing for Christmas.

# At Advent Wreath

**Father (or Reader 1):** Jesus is in the manger this morning. The Word became a human being and lived among us. His life is the light that shines through the darkness...and the darkness can never put it out.

**First Child:** (Relighting first candle) I’m glad we lit this candle and began to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ Child.

**Second Child:** (Relighting second candle) Thank you Jesus for coming to show and tell us about God’s love.

**Another Child:** (Relighting third candle) Thank you Jesus for filling our hearts with joy.

**Another Child:** (Relighting fourth candle) Thank you, God, for giving us your Son.

**Mother (or Reader 2):** (Light white middle candle) I light this candle to remind us that Jesus is the Light of the world.

Father reads scripture: Isaiah 60:1-7.



# Christmas Eve

Begin this service when someone in the family sees the first star in the night sky. Go out and look and remember the other Holy Night. As the family gathers together at the stable, Mary and Joseph, and the little donkey are added to the scene.

Father (or Reader 1) reads the scripture: Micah 5:2-5 and Luke 2:1-5.

*Sing: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"*

# Christmas Morning

Mother try and wake up first! Place the infant Jesus in the manger and light a candle beside the scene to announce to the family that Christ is born! LIGHT has come into the world! Gather the family together around this scene.

Father (or Reader 1) reads the scripture: Luke 2:6-7 and John 1:1-14.

*Sing: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"*

*Share some other preparations for hearts and home.*



**First Child:** (Light the first candle)

"I light this candle on the first Sunday in Advent to remind us that we must prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ child.

Father reads the Scripture, Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Talk about the preparation in the Old Testament for the coming of the Messiah through the words of the prophets.

**Father (or Reader 1):** This candle is symbolic of the long years of waiting and hoping. The prophets, inspired by God, kept reminding the people to look forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to redeem the people from their sins. The Hebrew word for Jesus also means salvation.

*Sing together the first verse of "Joy to the World."*

Joy to the world! The Lord is come,  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing.  
-- I. Watts

**Prayer Time:** Ask God to help us make room for Jesus in our hearts and in our homes.

*Thought for the week: "Prepare a road for the Lord through the wilderness, clear a highway across the desert for our God. Thus shall the glory of the Lord be revealed." Isaiah 40:3,4; Luke 3:4-6*

# The Second Sunday in Advent

## God's Love

*Sing together:*

*Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set the people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.  
--Charles Wesley*

**Father (or Reader 1):** This is the second Sunday in Advent. Do you remember why we are taking time out from the business of the day and this season to be together in this circle around our Advent wreath?

**First Child:** (Relight first candle) Last Sunday, we lit the first candle to remember that advent is a time of preparation. During these days we are getting our hearts ready for the coming of the Christ child.

**Father (or Reader 1):** This Sunday we are remembering that Jesus came to Earth to tell us of God's love for us.

**Mother (or Reader 2):** Our family knows that love is coming. Love Is Christmas. God has become involved with us. Love asks us to be open, to be honest, and especially to trust.

**Mother (or Reader 2):** God has given us many gifts. Sometimes we try and count our blessings and the list is always long. But of all His gifts, none is greater than the gift of His Son, Jesus. In giving us His Son, He gave us Himself.



Father reads the Scripture,  
2 Corinthians 4:6 (Phillips Translation)

*Talk about love turning into a specific person.*

Christ, the Gift, expresses Himself in love. What can we give Him? Find ways to give ourselves with our gifts.

*Sing the third verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem"*

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.  
--Phillip Brooks*

**Prayer Time:** Ask God to help us understand real giving...the gift of ourselves. Offer to be available to Him as a package to be given again and again wherever He needs us for His service.

*Thought for the days between now and Christmas: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23*

*While we are wrapping gifts, let's be reminded of God's gift to us.*

**Another Child:** (Light the fourth candle)  
"I light this candle on the fourth Sunday in Advent to remind us of God's Gift."

# The Fourth Sunday in Advent

## God's Gift

*Sing together:*

*Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set the people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.  
--Charles Wesley*

**Father (or Reader 1):** We have gathered together today to light the fourth candle on our Advent wreath. But before we do, let's relight the other three and be reminded of each message.

**First Child:** (Relight first candle) On the first Sunday, we lit a candle to remind us to get our hearts ready for the coming of Jesus.

**Second Child:** (Relight second candle) On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of love.

**Another Child:** (Relight third candle) We lit the third candle to remind us that the angels sang "News of great joy."

**Father (or Reader 1):** Today's candle makes the whole wreath bright. This candle reminds us of the giving part of Christmas.



Father reads the Scripture, John 3:16,  
John 15:9-12; Phil. 1:9

*Talk together about love.*

Love has many voices and it speaks in many places. What are some of the voices of love? (Smiling at a friend, etc.) Where might love be spoken? (Raking leaves for an elderly friend, making a card for someone who is ill, etc.)

*Sing three verses of "Away in a Manger"*

**Prayer Time:** Ask God to help us love one another. Thank Him for his gift of Love which is what Christmas is all about.

*Thought for the week: "Be sure that you act on this message (of love) and not merely listen to it." James 1:22*

"And may the Lord make your love to grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love does toward you."  
1 Thess 3:12

**Second Child:** (Light the second candle)  
"I light this candle on the second Sunday in Advent to remind us that Jesus came to earth to show and tell us of God's love."



# The Third Sunday in Advent

## The Joy of the Lord

*Sing together:*

*Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set the people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.*

*Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.  
--Charles Wesley*

**Father (or Reader 1):** We have come together again to light another candle on this third Sunday in Advent. Let's review our first two candles.

**First Child:** (Relight first candle) On the first Sunday, we lit a candle to remind us to get our hearts ready for the coming of Jesus.

**Second Child:** (Relight second candle) On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of love.

**Father (or Reader 1):** When we open our hearts and let the love of Jesus enter, we know JOY! Today's candle is for joy.

**Mother (or Reader 2):** Some people knew the joy -- like the shepherds. After visiting the stable, they went back to their sheep glorifying and praising God. But a lot of people living right in Bethlehem missed it. They slept right through the whole thing and never knew it happened.



Father reads the Scripture,  
Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Phil. 4:4-9

**Another Child:** (Light the third candle)  
"I light this candle on the third Sunday in Advent to remind us that the angel said, "We have news of great joy!"

*Talk about joy.*

As we walk through these days leading up to Christmas, how much joy do we see in the faces of people around us? In each other? Nehemiah 8:10 tells us: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." We can't buy it by the pound or order one dozen joys for Christmas.

*Sing "Joy to the World"*

**Prayer Time:** Let's pray each day that the joy we really know-- the joy that is in our hearts--will be reflected in our faces. "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." Psalms 144:15

*Thought for the week: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace." Isaiah 55:12*

*For those who have decided to portray the events of Bethlehem in a sequence or procession, this would be a good time to set up the little barn or stable. Place it in a prominent location where it will be noticed often. Put in it a cow and the manger filled with straw, which was the cow's fodder.*