

ADVENT GUIDE

AGAPE HOOD

Jesus. Mission. Community.

AH

Our military congregation is a Family that humbly extends the invitation offered to us by Jesus. We want to welcome you on your journey to a pathway of following Christ. In a world full of options there is One way that leads to life and peace.

Find out more about Agape Hood at agapehood.com or facebook.com/agapehood

CHAPTER 1

HOPE



Romans 8:24-25

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

The Christmas season brings hope, but it can also be a source of stress as we work hard to create the perfect 'magical' experience. We are drawn to the hope of the season, yet that hope is often tied to specific experiences. The busyness and anxiety that accompany this time of year stem from our fear of not being able to deliver the ideal 'Christmas experience' or meet the perceived expectations of others.

As believers, our hope extends far beyond the idea of a perfect holiday experience. Our hope is woven into the very fabric of Scripture, prophesied and promised by God. The biblical authors and prophets spoke of the fullness and restoration that would come to God's people. Isaiah, in particular, warned Judah about their self-reliance and pride, while also offering a vision of renewed hope. Like us, Judah had turned away from God and relied on themselves, and faced the looming shadow of judgment. Yet, their hope

endured. Look at this description of hope in Isaiah 2:1-5 (ESV)

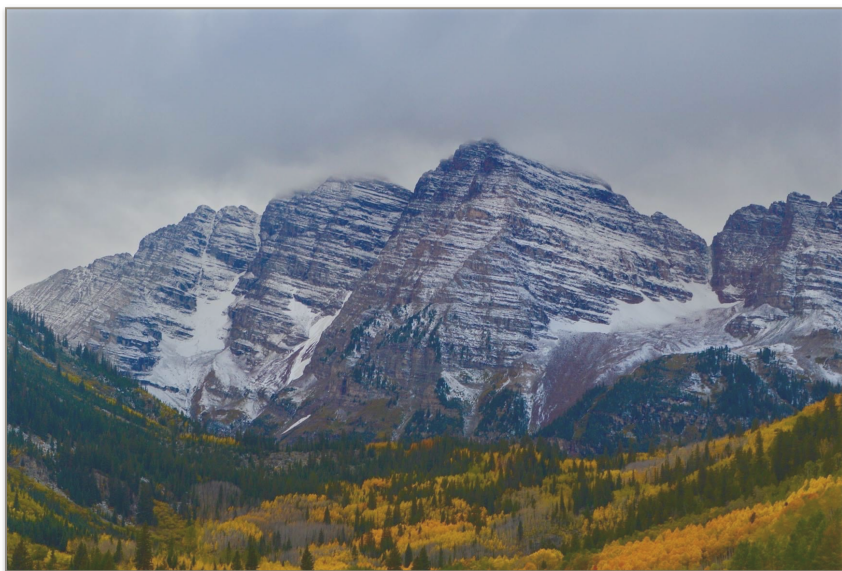
“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Here, Isaiah speaks of a day ('latter days' or end times) when the house of the Lord, the Kingdom of God, will be exalted and all nations flow to it. Isaiah's timeline ('latter days') speaks to an unknown future when all things will be made right and the Messiah will be exalted forever. During the Advent season, we remember that God fulfilled a promise, a promise of the coming Messiah to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ and we look forward to a day when God will fulfill his future promise of a returning Savior. Isaiah prophesies about Jesus in Isaiah 9:2-7

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; ‘those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden,

and the staff for his shoulder; the rod of his oppressor; you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this”

We find the end of our hope is a person and his work. Though we may enter this Advent Season in the dark we have hope in Jesus. Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, is God's Son who has come and paid the penalty of sin, was raised from the dead, and is the firstborn of a new creation.



He ascended into heaven and will return for us, his people, and make all things new.

Our cultural moment has formed us as consumers, even consumers of 'religious goods and services.' We have been led to believe that technology or a new product will solve our problems. We are deceived to think these things are the answers we long for. We often think that the Advent of Christ is a means to our own ends. We believe that Christ will give us the blessed life that our culture esteems.

Christmas morning is a representative longing of that desire. We hope to give our kids a great Christmas, maybe like the one we had or the one we lament we never had. No Christmas morning will fulfill our needs and there will never be a 'perfect Christmas' that will satisfy your deep longings. Only Christ, our promised hope, will fulfill our hearts and we wait eagerly for his return when we will ultimately experience the restoration and true joy for which we long.

Discussion:

1. What expectations do you have this Christmas season, what are your plans? Hopes?
2. How is Jesus your hope and answer this Christmas?
3. Have someone in your family pray for Christ's second coming.

Advent Wreath:

Light a candle at home! This can be a great way to prepare for Christmas in the Advent Season as a Family. Create a wreath and candle set up that is special to your family. The wreath, typically a circular garland of evergreen branches, symbolizes eternity and unending love. Five candles are arranged on the wreath; one is lit each Sunday as a part of Advent, and then one is lit on Christmas Eve/Morning. Purple is the primary color of Advent, as it symbolizes repentance and fasting. It is also the color of royalty pointing toward the King of Kings and the sovereignty of God. Purple in the use of the Advent

Wreath symbolizes the preparation and reception of Christ the King. You can use purple candles on the first, second, and fourth Sundays. On

the third Sunday, pink is often used as the third candle representing joy or rejoicing. This also signifies a shift from repentance and preparation toward celebration. A white candle is the last, as it represents purity and light. Christ is the sinless, spotless and pure Savior. He is the light coming into the dark world. So to prepare, gather up a wreath, three purple candles, one pink candle, one white candle, and five candle stands (one in the center holds the white candle).



First Sunday:

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16; Romans 8:24-25

Candle Lighting: Light the first candle (purple) of hope and expectation. Say: "Today we light the candle of expectation and hope. We are reminded that God has made a great promise to us. We remember His first coming and look forward to when He comes again."

Pray: "Father, during the Advent season may we be reminded of your great promises and your faithfulness. Help us prepare for your coming and revealing in our lives this season. Help us look forward to when you come again and make all things new. "

CHAPTER 2

PEACE



Luke 3:4

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’ make his paths straight.”

The act of preparation is as much a part of life as hoping. Note the connection between hope and preparation. If we hope for peace then we should prepare for peace; especially if we are confident in our hope. Our preparation demonstrates our confidence, and we should be confident because the object of our hope is the eternally begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

If you are from Florida, you might know how to prepare for a hurricane. If you are from Oklahoma, you know how to prepare for a tornado. Some of you are adept at making financial decisions that look into the future and anticipate needs and future plans. How does a person prepare for the Lord? The gospel narrative gives us some insight in the story of John the Baptist.

The first story we read in Luke is the birth of John the Baptist. God sent an angel to Zechariah and said to him, "for

your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John." (Luke 1:13) Zechariah's promised son was going to have a specific call and a unique purpose. "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." (Luke 1:16-17)

John was going to "make ready for the Lord a people prepared." So the question is how was John supposed to prepare the people for Jesus? The Scripture records that John preached repentance. Luke 3:7-16 (ESV) He said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, *"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might

be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John preached repentance and urged those in attendance to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. In the same way, the key to our preparation is a life of repentance. Repentance is a turning away from sin. John uses the example of sharing and proper collection because each of those sins, like all, elevate our property, money and resources as our hope. If money is a person's hope, then that person will not be generous and will even take it from you if they are more powerful. Repentance is a rejection of false hopes, which prepares our hearts to yearn for the authentic hope of Jesus Christ. In that hope we find peace.



Our hearts, left unsatisfied by the objects of our hope apart from Christ, long for fulfillment. History is a narrative of this destructive longing. Augustine says, "our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." This restless unfulfilled longing is the opposite of peace and rest. False hopes create needs for self-justification, and self-justification pursues its end at all costs. We long for an external justification in Christ that will give our hearts rest and will give our hearts and the world peace. We prepare for this peace by abandoning these false hopes and justifications, leaning toward Christ, and receiving Him joyfully.

In Western Christianity, we have a lot to which to repent. We tend to find our hope in many things like money, notoriety, recognition, appreciation, or experience. We long to be made much of in a variety of ways. Sin comes in many forms, including addictions and deceptions. How could repentance of sin help us as a greater family and even your immediate family celebrate Christmas with joy this season? Over a decade ago, some local pastors were lamenting that they had come to the end of the Advent season exhausted. They sensed that they had once again missed the point of the season they were longing for the 'soul-satisfying mystery of the incarnation.'

We often spend the month of December (sometimes the months leading up to December) preparing for the Christmas season. Concerts, dinners, parties, gifts...it can all be a bit overwhelming. Yet, we falsely believe that we must do more, and if we do more, we will experience more. The pastors decided to do something a little different and called it the Advent Conspiracy movement. This movement had four central tenets: Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All. They hoped that as people and

congregations embraced these tenets, money would be given for life-saving ministry worldwide.

One particular cause that the leaders of the Advent Conspiracy movement adopted was the hope of bringing clean drinking water to everyone in the world through organizations like Living Water International.

Research tells us that the world spends 1 Trillion dollars on Christmas yearly. Is it worth it? What if we spent less and gave more and lived in a manner in keeping with repentance and blessed the world? What if instead of focusing on getting presents we received God's presence in the person of Christ? Let's spend time together, love our neighbors and enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ as a family!

Discussion:

1. What are some things of which you need to repent? Is there someone you can talk to or confess to? How would that look?
2. Do you long for the Advent (Coming) of Christ in your life?
3. How can your family prepare for the coming of Jesus this holiday season?
4. As a family, maybe have the kids do a craft together (if you are patient :)). Ask them to specify all the steps of preparation as a fun way to introduce this topic.

Second Sunday:

Read: Isaiah 40:3-5; Acts 3:19-26

Candle Lighting: Relight the first Advent Candle and then the second (both purple). *Say:* "This Sunday, we relight the candle of hope and expectation. Let it remind us that we have great hope in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and in the promises of God. Now, as we light the candle of preparation and peace let it remind us to prepare our hearts through repentance for the coming of Jesus."

Pray: Father, guide us in the confession of our sins. We know that because of your Son and the love you have demonstrated, you are faithful to forgive our sins. Cleanse our hearts and prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

JOY



Luke 2:10-11

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord

There are a lot of great things about the Christmas season. Christmas movies, songs, food, and decorations may get you in the holiday spirit. I am writing this in the middle of November and I have already watched Home Alone 1 and 2. I love Christmas. However, I am fairly confident that when Luke records the angels' words here in Luke 2, he was not saying that the 'great joy that will be for all people' would be annual traditions full of seasonal delights. Instead, he was proclaiming that the joy to come was the birth of a Savior, Christ the Lord.

Joy is not just some benefit to the Christian life. It is central to the Christian life. This may be a weird statement for some because we often equate joy with happiness, and satisfaction with some bright, cheerful, fake way of being.



You may be all over the place on this understanding based on prior experiences and the way you grew up. Some of you grew up in a Christian culture where seriousness was essential and joy feels like lightweight, bubble gum faith. Christmas and talk of joy may sound too sweet to the taste. The joy of which Luke is speaking is a deep abiding joy that is consistently spoken of in Scripture. It is also a joy that is to be pursued. The reason great joy is good news is that it is an answer to what we all have longed for. We want to be happy and have joy and make our decisions to pursue it. So, the news of great joy is, in fact, good news.

C.S. Lewis has a famous quote in *The Weight of Glory*, "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by

the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

Here, Lewis highlights something of great importance. Our desire and longing for joy is too weak. We are far too easily pleased and miss out on the deep-abiding joy offered to us. I recognize that this is complicated. Many of you have tried to pursue joy in the Christian life, but it is hard to imagine what that looks like. If you don't know the target, how do you know how to pursue it. Some have poured everything into radical service, community, bible studies, and more, only to find people who were hard to love and a bible that was sometimes hard to understand. These things are good, but they are not your Savior. If you misallocate your hope, these good things will cause you to miss Jesus.

Does that sound familiar? It is often the greatest challenge of the Advent Season. We labor to create an experience for ourselves and others and do good things. Yet, at the end of the 'busy' and when all the cleanup is complete, we often feel like we missed Jesus. How can that be? The entire season is about him, right? Yet, time and time again, year after year, we long for more.

Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 3:18 *"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."*

Our path to joy this holiday season lies here. Paul states in Romans 8:28-29 that *"All things work together for good" and that good is that we would be 'conformed to the image of His Son, that we might be the firstborn among many brothers.'*

These passages allude to the same principle, that we are transformed into the image of Jesus by beholding and

exulting in his glory. By setting our gaze on the beauty of Christ, we are transformed into his image, our greatest good. I want to break this down because it may appear like church talk. First, "All things work together for good" is a powerfully strong statement. Paul means what he says here, All Things. Nothing is to be wasted or overlooked; all things are an opportunity to see and savor Jesus Christ. If you encounter suffering, setbacks, and rejections, you are afforded the opportunity to suffer with Christ and join in the fellowship of his sufferings. That joining in the context of your suffering is an act of beholding Christ, and that act produces resurrection joy. When I speak of suffering in this context, I am not saying or suggesting that you will be receiving physical violence but that you are actively engaged in futility as in "he subjected all things to futility in hope." Jesus fully encounters that futility in his birth and incarnation. When we experience futility, we share with him.

Paul in Philippians 3 says, *"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."*

He believed that embracing the sufferings of his moment joined him with Christ. This helped him know Christ more, perceive the beauty of His Savior, and attain the resurrection from the dead. This resurrection is real in the eternal sense but in the moment as well, as it marks the

sanctification renewal process that each of us is going through moment by moment.

This Advent season, we should embrace the struggles, count them as joy, and in doing so, behold the wonder of God becoming a man that he might redeem and rescue. He is a beautiful Savior, and in him, we find joy.

Discussion:

1. What are some things in your life that bring joy?
2. How can we as a family see and savor the beauty of Christ, this season and experience joy regardless of circumstances?
3. Is there a way we can give ourselves to serve others in pursuit of joy in our lives?
4. Here is a great opportunity to have some fun as a family or with friends. Do a fun activity that doesn't require money. Just use creativity and spend some time together. I strongly recommend Christmas Karaoke...

Third Sunday:

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-17; Luke 2:8-14

Candle Lighting: Relight the first Advent Candle, then the second (both purple), and then finally the third candle (Pink)
Say: "This Sunday, we relight the candle of hope and expectation. Let it remind us that we have great hope in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and in the promises of God. We light the candle of preparation and peace and let it remind us to prepare our hearts through repentance for the coming of

Jesus. Finally, we light the third candle of our Advent wreath. The color of this candle is pink – the color of joy. It reminds us of the joy we will share in our coming celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas.

Pray: Father, we pray for joy that we might grow in seeing and savoring Jesus Christ. We ask that the joy of Christ fill us this season and grow in the hearts of those in our community and the world. Amen



CHAPTER 4

LOVE



John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus tells his disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." *John 13:34-35*

Jesus claims that his followers' most clear and identifying trait will be their love for one another. His followers would love one another just as he has loved them. Jesus' incarnational love is the model for Christian love in the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God loved by sending and going, and we are to model his love. John records Jesus in John 20:21-22 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." 22 And when he

had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The Advent Season shows us that Jesus loves us. The season reminds us and demonstrates how we can join Jesus and love all. First, you need to know that you are loved. For many, they have lived life in pursuit of love and admiration. It is a stunning revelation to hear that Jesus has loved and pursued you. The Scripture is clear, however, that God has loved the world and sent Jesus. Jesus' life testifies to his pursuit of sinners to call them back to himself. He heals, restores, and calls us to follow him. The biblical story of Jesus' love is remarkable. In Luke 15, Jesus tells parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and the prodigal son highlighting Jesus' desire to see and pursue the neglected and rejected. This is the character of the Savior who loves you, values and pursues you.

Jesus' love for us is demonstrated in his incarnation and in his pursuit of his people. The sum of this love and the sum of eternity is his presence. The story of the Bible starts with the presence of God and ends with the presence of God. Remember Adam and Eve's existence in the Garden of Eden? Genesis 3:8 says *"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day."* Look to the culmination of the Biblical story in Revelation 21:1-4, (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place¹ of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be

his people, and God himself will be with them as their God and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Jesus' coming, dwelling, and pursuing as love is the sum of our hope and joy this Advent season. It is also the model of the command to love our neighbor. We are to love by being present.

Being present this Advent Season is not merely just thinking of someone and getting them a nice gift, though that is thoughtful and kind. It is a more profound commitment to being present with our friends and neighbors and demonstrating Jesus' love by being on mission and in community in the lives of our neighbors. By being on mission and in community in the midst of our city, neighborhood and installation we are pushing the presence of God into the dark places and initiating God's presence in the lives of those who don't know him. We love because he first loved us.

Discussion:

1. Do you view Jesus' coming as a means to the good life (he gives good presents (gifts) or do you think that he has come to give his presence?
2. How have you enjoyed the presence of God this Advent Season?
3. How can we live and practice the incarnation in our community and neighborhood?
4. Do something creative for a neighbor that serves a need they might have. Invite them to dinner, cook them a present or do an act of service to demonstrate and practice loving well.

Fourth Sunday:

Read: Matthew 22:36-40

Candle Lighting:

Relight the first Advent Candle, the second (both purple), the third candle (Pink), and then finally, the last candle Say: "This Sunday, we relight the candle of hope and expectation. Let it remind us that we have great hope in Jesus

Christ, the Messiah, and in the promises of God. We relight the candle of preparation and peace let it remind us to prepare our hearts through repentance for the coming of Jesus. We relight the third candle of joy. It reminds us of the joy we will share in our coming celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas. Finally, we light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath the candle of love. We love because he first loved us.



Pray: Father, we thank you for your deep love for us and for demonstrating this love by coming to dwell among us and dying in our place. I pray that we would love our neighbor sacrificially and take God's presence with us to the ends of the earth. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

CHRIST



Romans 11:36

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen

The world's past, present, and future held their breath at the arrival of Jesus Christ. It was the ultimate act of war on sin and death for the hope of peace and life. Jesus is the famous one and the sweetest name we know. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus is pre-eminent.

Romans 11:36 says, "*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*" Colossians 1:15-20, "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all*

things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Hebrews 1:1-4, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

These Scriptures testify to the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God and the divine radiance of his glory. He is fully God. Jesus was born as a man, that in his human nature he would, on our behalf, obey the whole law and suffer the punishment that was due to us. He is fully God and fully man, two natures, one person. This mystery of Jesus is to be wholly cherished and embraced as the supreme grace of God. Listen to the words of one of my favorite Christmas Carols.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing - Mahalia Jackson

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King! Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies; With th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem." Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King! Christ, by highest heaven adored: Christ, the everlasting Lord; Late in time behold him come,

Offspring of the favoured one. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; Hail, th'incarnate Deity: Pleased, as man, with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!

*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King!
Hail! the heaven-born*

Prince of peace!

*Hail! the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all he
brings, Risen with healing in his wings Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die: Born to raise the son of
earth, Born to give them second birth. Hark! the herald angels
sing, "Glory to the new-born King !"*

*Glory to God who has sent his only begotten Son to the
praise of his glorious grace. Jesus is good, ultimately good and
we rejoice in him this season.*

Discussion:

1. Why did Jesus need to be both fully God and fully man? *That because of his divine nature his obedience and suffering might be perfect and effective.* (New City Catechism Question 23)

2. Why must the Redeemer be truly human? *That in human nature, he might on our behalf, perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin.* (New City Catechism Question 22)

3. Is Jesus enough for you this Advent Season? Have you truly experienced his true and real presence?

4. As a Family talk about Jesus, and if the kids are old enough, watch 'The Nativity' together (it could be a little scary for young ones.)

Christmas Eve Service/Day:

Read: Luke 1:27-38; Luke 2:1-21

Candle Lighting: Relight the first Advent Candle, the second (both purple), the third candle (Pink), the fourth candle (purple), and then the final Christ candle (white) *Say:* "This Christmas, we relight the candle of hope, and expectation. Let it remind us that we have great hope in Jesus Christ the Messiah and in the promises of God. We relight the candle of preparation and peace let it remind us to prepare our hearts through repentance for the coming of Jesus. We relight the third candle of joy. It reminds us of the joy we will share in our coming celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas. We relight the fourth candle of the Advent wreath, the candle of love. We love because he first loved us. And finally, we light the final candle of Advent, the Christ candle (white). We celebrate the light of the world who has come to push back darkness and win the war on sin and death.

Pray: We have been waiting for this day, Loving God. We have prepared ourselves for this special day. On this Christmas Day, let us live as those who let hope, peace, joy, and love reign in our lives. As the candles burn brightly and light our path, let us live as those who have Christ's light burning inside us today and everyday. Amen.

We encourage you to use the blank pages to come up with games, take fun notes and add personal thoughts and reflections. This is of course not a comprehensive guide and we encourage you to work through the material in a small group and community. Enjoy!

