



ADVENT WEEK 2 | PEACE

December 3, 2022

PRELUDE | *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* (All songs found on the [Advent Resource Page](#))

WELCOME | Announcements (Homeless, Fast, Resources, Email) & (Re)Introducing Advent

"Faith," wrote Fredrick Buechner, "is a way of paying attention." Perhaps there is no season more favorable to faith than Advent. In all the unique things that make up Advent's build to Christmas morning—the wreath of candles counting down the days with a sure hope, the tree of peace all decorated and lit, the stockings of joy awaiting gracious provision and freedom, carols filling our ears and airways, speaking of love, the Love, alive and with us, filling all that will hear—these and more draw our attention and our faith to the wonderful and ever-new reality of life with Jesus. For Advent "calls us to a posture of alertness...watchful and ready...to what Jesus is doing—in us and the world... the signs of hope[, peace, joy, and love]...**waiting** for the light of Christ,"¹ as one author put it, to shine in and over all the earth.

"Faith," too, wrote Buechner, "is *waiting*." Waiting not in passivity but letting our hearts and heads and hands be disburied by "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen." Like no other time of year, we are attentive to the truth that *Jesus has come*, born of woman, swaddled under the expanse of angels singing. And that *he will return*, as the Lamb slain and risen, King of kings, arriving once more to complete what he started in us and the world. All the while calling attention to the truth that *he has never once left us*, and we can expect that he never will.

Advent is a season of paying special attention, a season when, if we are open to it, we might be converted by faith. Advent is when—especially Gathered like we are—through song and scripture, carol and collect, poem and prophecy—we look back and dream forward even as we hone our attention upon the flickering flame already alight in the world around us, even within us, expectant of a fresh and continued stoking.

And so today, a week into this repeated yet always new cycle of light, let us quiet our hearts and minds so that our souls might see and know the richness and satisfaction of waiting on the once, again, and ever-arriving Jesus. Let's pray.

¹ Bobby Gross, *Living The Christian Year*, 47.

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 85:8-13

*Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for **he will speak peace to his people, to his saints**; but let them not turn back to folly.*

*Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; **righteousness and peace kiss each other**. Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.*

***Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.** Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.*

SONG #1 | *Do You Hear What I Hear*

ADVENT WREATH | Sam Barrett

“There was a young girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Joseph was the great-great-great-great grandson of King David. One morning, this girl was minding her own business when, suddenly, a great warrior of light appeared—right there, in her bedroom. He was Gabriel, and he was an angel, a special messenger from heaven.

When she saw the tall shining man standing there, Mary was frightened. ‘You don’t need to be scared,’ Gabriel said. ‘God is very happy with you!’ Mark looked around to see if perhaps he was talking to someone else.

‘Mary,’ Gabriel said, and he laughed with such gladness that Mary’s eyes filled with sudden tears. ‘Mary, you’re going to have a baby. A little boy. You will call him Jesus. He is God’s own Son. He’s the One! He’s the Rescuer!’

The God who flung planets into space and kept them whirling around and around, the God who made the universe with just a word, the one who could do anything at all—was making himself small. And coming down...as a baby. Wait. God was sending a baby to rescue the world?

‘But it’s too wonderful!’ Mary said and felt her heart beating hard. ‘How can it be true?’ ‘Is anything too wonderful for God?’ Gabriel asked.

So Mary trusted God more than what her eyes could see. And she believed. **‘I am God’s servant,’ she said. ‘Whatever God says, I will do.’**²

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, amongst us and until all know what we know, **peace, goodwill among mankind.**”

HYMN/CAROL | *Silent Night*

² “Get Ready” found in the *Jesus Story Book Bible*, 178-179.

DISMISS KIDS

SCRIPTURE READING | Isaiah 11:1-10

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump, from his roots a budding Branch.

The life-giving Spirit of God will hover over him, the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding, The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength, the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-God.

Fear-of-God will be all his joy and delight. He won't judge by appearances, won't decide on the basis of hearsay. He'll judge the needy by what is right, render decisions on earth's poor with justice. **His words will bring everyone to awed attention.** A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.

Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots, and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

The wolf will romp with the lamb, the leopard sleep with the kid. Calf and lion will eat from the same trough, and **a little child will tend them.** Cow and bear will graze the same pasture, their calves and cubs grow up together, and the lion eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens, the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent. Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on my holy mountain. **The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive, a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.**

On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

SONG #3 | *Baby Son*

SERMONETTE | Peace

We said last Sunday that we are “Somewhere between the fact of darkness and the hope of light.”³ Indeed that is not only *where* we are but *who* we are. “We are the people who walk in darkness as to one degree or another people have always walked in darkness.”⁴ Maybe that’s what makes Isaiah’s prophetic poem so outrageous.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and...The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion...together, and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:1, 6)

The world we know, the world we experience every day, looks very different from the world Isaiah envisions will come when the sprout of Jesse’s rooting stump breaks forth from the buried roots of hope long forgotten.

After all, we live in a world where wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, calf and lion all share the same space. Predators and prey together. Those prepared to take what is needed from life for life, always ready to strike at an opportunity, inhabiting the same places as the vulnerable and tamed, taking what is given, going where they are led, and always looking out for what might be taken. One roaming in natural strength, instinct, and hunger, the other restricted in natural weakness, intuition, and anxiousness. Both run into each other in our everyday world and even within us. Yet when they come close to one another, the scene is anything but the picturesque precious moment of Isaiah. More often than not, when predator and prey collide, hurt and destruction, pursuit and fatigue, losing out or loss of life is the result. Our worldly experience feels different than the portrait of Isaiah: a harmonious and restful dwelling of seeming enemies, or at least opposites in the food chain, in mutual submission to a child’s leading.

“The new world of God,” one Old Testament professor contends, “is beyond our capacity and even beyond our imagination. It does not seem possible” that those which “naturally” seem opposed, that which feels like the destined struggle of daily life —the daily cycle of chasing down and avoiding—would live in harmony, would be at peace. “In our fatigue,” continues the professor, “our self-sufficiency, [or fearful survival] and cynicism, we deeply believe that such promises could not happen here. Such newness is only **poetic fantasy**.”⁵

And yet, the language of faith is “full of poetry and symbol...The danger,” contends Buechner, “is either we dismiss [such language] as mere fairy tale [something only valuable for entertainment or a passing feeling, a seasonal aspiration], or we become so caught up by its fairy tale power to enchant us with its beauty that we forget that its whole point as poetry is to point us to its truth.”⁶

The master student of the Psalms, Walter Brueggemann, reminds us of the truth of Isaiah and Advent’s language of faith. He says,

³ Friedrich Buechner, “Light and Dark,” *The Clown In The Belfry*, 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Celebrating Abundance*, 7.

⁶ Buechner, 122.

“In Advent...we receive the power of God that lies beyond us. This power is the antidote to our fatigue and cynicism...that imagines there is no new thing that can enter our world.”

Advent's arrival is not merely God with us, but God for us—all of us and us all. Advent's arrival is a recognition that, in the poetic words of Isaiah, “Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots, **and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.**” (Isaiah 11:5). In the place where He dwells.

Yes, the poem is outrageous and the arriving world unimaginable, but perhaps only because we still think of Jesse's shoot as a tiny green sprouting up rather than a great tree under which we shelter—despite what the story of Christmas invites us to see every year, “the little child who will lead [both predator and prey together] is the one born in Bethlehem.”⁷ Whose power was exercised in humility and sacrifice and love—even for apparent enemies, opposites in the hierarchy of life and culture.

The power in poetry is that it can “show us something we think we already know, and in that showing, show us ‘something more’.”⁸

So, I want to read us a poem, drawing out a bit of the “something more,” and then take advantage of this second Sabbath day of Advent to rest in faith, reflecting on our place and person in the fact of darkness that we might be led and tended into peace.

ADVENT GOOD WISHES | *David Grieve*

Give you joy, wolf,
when Messiah makes you meek
and turns your roar into a cry that
justice has been done for the poor.

Give you joy, lamb,
when Messiah saves you from jeopardy
and all fear is overwhelmed
by his converting grace.

Give you joy, wolf and lamb together,
as Messiah brings worldwide peace and,
side by side, you shelter
under Jesse's spreading shoot.

⁷ Malcolm Guite, *The Word Within The Words*, 65.

⁸ Guite, *Waiting On The Word*, 111.

Grieve invites us not to observe the wolf and lamb in some distant future but to see that “We are the wolves and the lambs, who, even after all this time, haven’t yet learned how to dwell together in peace”⁹ with each other or with ourselves. But we can! He does, through the presence and power of the humble child King, who “will speak peace to his to his saints” (Psalm 85:8), if only we are willing to “Be still before the LORD and wait” (Psalm 37:7).

Give you joy, – a full, whole life given even to the—wolf,
when Messiah **makes**—(re)shapes, re(forms) your inward parts, overcomes “your predator nature”—
you meek – gentle tempered, yet still passionate and strong in the proper moments for the right
reasons to the good end.
and turns your roar – your sign of might-- into a cry that
justice has been done for the poor – into the heralding means of God’s good intent for the least in
strength and in spirit.

Give you joy, lamb,—same full life as the other, not something more—
when Messiah **saves**—protects, rescues, and overcomes your ‘natural’ limitations—you from jeopardy—
from the fear of what is or what might be or what could be that becomes “as destructive as the thing [or
persons] you fear”¹⁰.
and all fear is overwhelmed—not dissipated, but weakened, losing its strength
by his converting grace.—by his transforming power for and within you.

Give you joy, wolf and lamb together, -- we do not escape those we use or those we are used by
as Messiah brings worldwide peace and, -- what is done for you and within you, is being done for the
whole world
side by side, you shelter – abide, find a large enough place for a home together
under Jesse’s spreading shoot.

⁹ Buechner, 122.

¹⁰ Ibid., 123.

REFLECTION / POEM

Let's take a moment to quiet our hearts and minds and still our bodies so that the words we know might draw our attention to something more.

In the silence of this space and the solitude of your seat, prayerfully **breathe in: "God speaks" and breathe out: "peace."**

- Allow the Spirit to lead you to one stanza.
- Ask the Spirit, "Show me something more."
- Re-read, listen and rest in what God speaks.

Now in the quieting of mind and heart, in the stilling of the body, let the Spirit lead you into one of the stanzas in the poem—seeing yourself as

- the wolf (confident and hungry for life) or
- lamb (anxious and protective for life) or
- the hardly-imaginable wolf/lamb at peace and a part of the peacemaking in Jesus.

When you arrive at the particular stanza, simply ask the Spirit, "Show me something more," as you re-read the words, opening your soul to hear what God speaks as you **rest in the waiting** on the once, again, and ever-arriving Jesus.

Give you joy, wolf,

when Messiah makes you meek
and turns your roar into a cry that
justice has been done for the poor.

Give you joy, lamb,

when Messiah saves you from jeopardy
and all fear is overwhelmed
by his converting grace.

Give you joy, wolf and lamb together,

as Messiah brings worldwide peace and,
side by side, you shelter
under Jesse's spreading shoot.

COLLECT & COMMUNION

COLLECT | *Second Sunday of Advent*

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us again as you did once before—in humility and sacrifice and love—and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever.

Through the body, blood, and life everlasting of Jesus, amen.

SONG #4 | *Lo He Comes, With Clouds Descending*

SCRIPTURE READING | Micah 5:2-5a

But **you, O Bethlehem, who are too little** to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he **shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord**, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

And **he shall be their peace.**

SONG #5 | *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

SONG #6 | *This Wild Earth*

BENEDICTION | 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

May all the gifts and benefits that come from God our Father, and the Master, Jesus Christ, be yours. Every time I think of you—and I think of you often!—I thank God for your lives of free and open access to God, given by Jesus.

There's no end to what has happened in you—it's beyond speech, beyond knowledge. The evidence of Christ has been clearly verified in your lives.

Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! **All God's gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale.** And not only that, but **God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus.**

God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.