

2.1 Peace Devotion

Peace

S A Y Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope and promise of peace he brought to a world ravaged by sin.

A S K What is peace?

E X P L A I N Peace is the end of hostility and fighting. It's when all is as it should be. It's harmony. It's rightness and wholeness.

L I G H T the first and second candles of your wreath.

S A Y These candles represent hope and peace. When Jesus came, he brought peace between God and humanity.

R E A D & D I S C U S S Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-7

P R A Y O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to make everything right between us. We're grateful for the peace that comes through knowing Him. Help us to be champions of your peace. May we be peacemakers in a world torn by sin and strife. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

F U R T H E R D I S C U S S I O N Why is it so hard to "keep the peace?" How does knowing that Jesus came to bring peace between us and God m

2.2 Advent Conspiracy

**Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David.**

Luke 1:68-69

In this passage, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. His words are a song of praise, recognizing the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The phrase "horn of salvation" is symbolic of strength and victory. In ancient times, a horn represented power and authority, and here it signifies the strong Savior who would redeem His people.

Zechariah's proclamation is both a declaration of joy and a reminder of the faithfulness of God. For generations, Israel had awaited the coming of a Savior, and now that hope was being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God had not forgotten His people, and in His perfect timing, He intervened in human history to bring salvation and restoration.

As we reflect on this during Advent, we remember that the same God who fulfilled His promises to Israel is still faithful today. In the midst of our struggles and waiting, we can trust that God is at work. Just as He sent Jesus to redeem His people, He continues to reach out to us, offering salvation, peace, and hope.

Reflect

What are you waiting for in this season of your life? How does the promise of God's faithfulness encourage you as you wait? Consider where you need the 'horn of salvation'—Jesus' strength and redemption—today. How can you make room in your life for God to work, even in the midst of uncertainty?

Pray

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for sending Jesus, the strong and faithful Savior. In this season of Advent, help me to trust in your promises and to rest in your faithfulness. Teach me to wait with hope, knowing that you are always at work, even when I can't see it. May your salvation be my strength today.

Amen.

2.3 Wycliff (Joseph)

JOSEPH

Joseph, to whom [Mary] was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ... When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

— Matthew 1:19-21, 24 (NLT)

Out of all the characters in the nativity, there is one we don't know much about: Joseph. The most we hear about him comes from Matthew's account of Jesus' birth; there, we learn that Joseph was greeted by an angel of the Lord in a dream and was told that he should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife. Joseph woke up and believed the angel.

We learn some important things about Joseph in this short passage:

Joseph was a “righteous man.” Not a lot of characters in Scripture are noted especially for their righteousness. Joseph is. When he could have made a public spectacle about Mary's perceived infidelity, Joseph showed kindness by choosing privacy. He had plans to honor Mary as a person by divorcing her secretly. Instead of shame for Mary, Joseph was willing to take the path of dignity

Joseph was also fearful. Normally, angels scare people so much that they tell people not to fear them; however, the angel of the Lord tells Joseph to not be afraid of something different: to take Mary as his wife. Joseph was likely worried about public disgrace, humiliation and maybe even being cut off from his family. God knew that and met Joseph in the middle of that fear.

Joseph chose to believe the unbelievable. It was an unbelievable circumstance, but Joseph chose faith in God's direction over trusting the voices of his family and community. What do you think that cost him? Joseph was willing to lose a lot in order to follow God's direction — he likely risked his reputation and relationships with friends and family.

When we look around at our world, it's tempting to think about all we risk losing if we follow what God tells us to do. And Joseph most likely had doubts and questions; he was human after all. But his questions and doubts led him back to the truth that God is in control. He was Joseph's ultimate source of truth and assurance.

God's words spoken through the angel were the only reason why Joseph was willing to take such a huge risk. God's words to you through Scripture are the reason you can step out boldly to obey him.

Questions

- » What did you know about Joseph before this study? Have your perceptions about him changed? Why or why not?
- » What can Joseph's response to his dream teach us about trusting God?
- » What is one thing God's prompting you to do but might require a risk?

2.4 Frontier Fellowship

SMELL

“They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the

LORD.” Leviticus 23:18b NIV

He was born to humble circumstances.

Influenced by versions of the Christmas story we have heard from childhood, we might hold our noses regarding the smells of stables, shepherds, and animals. They seem like overpowering odors for both mother and child, particularly a child accustomed to the courts of heaven, not rural Israel!

But think again. The room where the Savior was born was more likely a part of a relative’s home, not a remote stable. And the manger would have been clean and cushioned, much as we might prepare that makeshift dresser drawer bed for our little one when traveling. Perhaps the dominant scents were those of a rich stew and clean linen

The sacrifices of God’s people, made in obedience, also have an aroma that is “pleasing to the Lord.” God welcomed the Israelites’ incense, made from earthy oils and herbs, as well as the burnt sacrifices and grain offerings. He welcomed the gifts of the Magi and Mary’s costly gift of anointing oil. God welcomes our gifts, too, and is also pleased by our generosity to others.

In Bangladesh, Christians must exercise caution in their celebrations, but their generosity still prevails as they distribute blankets to those in need. Bangladesh is home to more than 170 million people and is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Frontier Fellowship’s Bangladesh Initiative is exploring partnerships with trusted indigenous ministries and strategic projects that will enable people groups in Bangladesh to access the Gospel.

2.5 Advent Conspiracy Family (Spend Less)

SPEND LESS

WE'LL SPEND A LITTLE LESS ON OURSELVES AND
USE THE MONEY WE SAVED TO HELP OTHERS THIS CHRISTMAS.

Christmas is about celebrating the gift of Jesus, not a big pile of presents under the tree. One of our goals this year is to spend less so we can save up money and help someone else who needs it. When we have grateful hearts and share our blessings with other people, that makes Jesus proud.

SCRIPTURE:

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” Matthew 6:21

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, help me to remember all the ways you have blessed me and my family. I want to have a grateful heart this Christmas. Amen.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- *What is one thing we can pray for this week?
- *What are 3 things you're thankful for?
- *Who are 3 people you're thankful for?
- *What are some ways you can save up money?
- *How can you spend less this week?

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Collection Jar. Part of our Advent Conspiracy plan is spending less money on ourselves and saving some to give to others. Decorate and create a special collection jar. At the end of the month you can use all the money you saved up to donate to your church or help someone in need. Grab a tin can, glass jar, or plastic bin and decorate it. As a family, talk about ways you can collect money for the donation (look for spare change, collect from neighbors, chores and helping around the house, a yard sale, etc.)

Gratitude Chains. Cut some paper into long strips. Have the kids write or draw pictures on the paper. Ask them to write down something they are grateful for. It could be people they love, pets, toys and books, activities, or special memories. Create a paper chain with all of their ideas. These can be hung up around the house or wrapped around your Christmas tree. Let it be a reminder to your family of all the ways God has blessed you.

Treasure Chest. Use the treasure chest coloring sheet and have your kids write or draw pictures of things that they love. Talk about Matthew 6:21 and the idea of sharing our treasures and blessings with other people we love.