1st Advent Sunday - Hope

Speaker #1

The Advent wreath is a way for us to remember the story of God’s promises and how they have been fulfilled in God’s coming live as a man among us.

Each candle represents an aspect of God’s story, played out in history. It is the story of God’s purposes to save, restore, redeem and comfort his people.

The first candle of the wreath represents **hope**. The people of Israel who believed the words of the prophets were looking for a coming king who would rule them faithfully and powerfully.

Speaker #2

**Isaiah 11:1-10** (CEV)

 1Like a branch that sprouts from a stump,

   someone from David's family will someday be king.

    2The Spirit of the LORD will be with him

   to give him understanding, wisdom, and insight.

   He will be powerful, and he will know and honor the LORD.

    3His greatest joy will be to obey the LORD.

   This king won't judge by appearances or listen to rumors.

    4The poor and the needy will be treated with fairness and with justice.

Speaker #3

The answer to the hopes of God’s people came in a visit from an angel. God’s messenger Gabriel came to a young woman named Mary.

**Luke 1:30-33** (CEV)

30Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, 31and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. 33He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Speaker #4

O God, who makes all things holy

Remind us of your servant lowly

Who was king in heaven above

But came to earth to serve in love

Through this candle we now light

In our hearts your hope ignite

[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lights the Purple candle]

2nd Advent Sunday - Joy

Speaker #1

Last week we lit the **hope** candle. Jesus was the fulfillment of the hope of the Old Testament – the coming king, God’s anointed one, who would perfectly obey God in all things. [re-light purple candle]

Today we light the candle that represents **joy**. After so many long years the Messiah’s birth was announced. This is cause for celebration! God’s promises bring **joy** whenever they are proclaimed, but this extra special – it was the announcement of a birth unlike any other. Emmanuel – “God with us”. Not distant, but accessible, familiar, approachable. God had come to live among his people.

Speaker #2

Listen to these words of **joy** from Mary, the mother of Jesus, when she began to understand what God was doing through her child.

**Luke 1 (NLT)**

46 Mary responded,

   “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
    47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
      and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
 49 For the Mighty One is holy,
      and he has done great things for me.
 50 He shows mercy from generation to generation
      to all who fear him.

Speaker #3

And also these words from Zachiarias, the father of John the Baptist, when he regained his speech:

**Luke 1 (NLT)**

68 “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,
      because he has visited and redeemed his people.
 69 He has sent us a mighty Savior
      from the royal line of his servant David,
 70 just as he promised
      through his holy prophets long ago.
**…**

 78 Because of God’s tender mercy,
      the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,
 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
      and to guide us to the path of peace.”

[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lights the pink candle]

3rd Advent Sunday - Peace

Speaker #1

On the first Sunday of Advent we lit the hope candle. [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lights the purple candle] Israel’s hope was in a coming king who would bring justice and peace. Last week we lit the **joy** candle. [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lights the purple candle] Jesus’ birth is a cause for celebration! God was coming to live among his people. And he would come to bring **peace**.

Speaker #2

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the coming Messiah would be a special kind of ruler:

**Isaiah 9:6-7 (NLT)**

6For a child is born to us,
    a son is given to us.
The government will rest on his shoulders.
    And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
    Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*.
7His government and its *peace* will never end.
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.
The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will make this happen!

Speaker #3

God’s peace means not only the absence of violence but being in right relationships to God, to our neighbour, and with God’s creation. God’s peace restores what is broken and heals what is sick.

**Isaiah 52:7-9**

7What a beautiful sight!
On the mountains a messenger
    announces to Jerusalem,
“Good news! You’re saved.
There will be peace.
    Your God is now King.”
8Everyone on guard duty,
    sing and celebrate!
Look! You can see the Lord returning to Zion.
9Jerusalem, rise from the ruins!
    Join in the singing.
The Lord has given comfort to his people;
    he comes to your rescue.

Speaker #4

Jesus brought God’s message of peace, and he also became our peace by breaking down the walls between us and God and between people who once hated one another.

**Ephesians 2 (NLT)**

13But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

14For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

Let us pray together:

Father God, we thank you that you are the great peacemaker, and that through your Son Jesus, you have made peace with us. We now ask that by your Spirit you make your peace real – in families, in communities, and between nations. We look forward to your perfect government when your peace will fill the whole earth. Amen.

[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lights the blue candle]

4th Sunday of Advent - Love

1st Reader:

Today we light four candles: The Hope Candle reminds us of promises fulfilled in Jesus as we look forward to His coming again.

*[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ light the purple candle.]*

The Joy Candle reminds us of the joy of Mary and Elizabeth as they heard and believed God’s promises.

*[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ light the pink candle.]*

The Candle of Peace reminds us that in Jesus, God was making peace with his creation, and through Jesus, we can be at peace with one another.

*[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ light the blue candle.]*

2nd Reader:

Thank you Lord for the Hope, Joy and Peace that You give. We invite You now, to come and meet with us.

Today we light The Candle of **Love**, signifying that the fullest expression of God’s love is found in Jesus.

 *[\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ light the red candle.]*

“Indeed, every one of us has shared in his riches—there is a grace in our lives because of his grace. For while the Law was given by Moses, love and truth came through Jesus Christ. It is true that no one has ever seen God at any time. Yet the divine and only Son, who lives in the closest intimacy with the Father, has made him known.” *[John 1:16-18 (Phillips)]*

3rd Reader:

We believe that nothing is impossible through God’s love. The Psalmist has said:

“I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.”

We will declare the steadfast love of the Lord. His promises never fail.

4th Reader:

Jesus shows us God's perfect love in human form. The writer of 1 John has said it this way:

“We know and, to some extent realise, the love of God for us because Christ expressed it in laying down his life for us. We must in turn express our love by laying down our lives for those who are our brothers. But as for the well-to-do man who sees his brothers in want but shuts his eyes—and his heart—how could anyone believe that the love of God lives in him? My children, let us not love merely in theory or in words—let us love in sincerity and in practice!” *[1 John 3:16-18 (Phillips)]*

5th Reader:

Dear friends, if God’s love was fulfilled in his birth, life, death and resurrection as a human being, let us believe and obey through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus would also be born in us. What shall separate us from God’s love? Nothing!

May our lives of love be the true reflection of our Saviour, the Christ-child, the fulfillment of God’s love, and may we know the fullness of God’s promise, not only in this life, but in the life to come.

Christmas Eve Candle Lighting

Reader #1

Over the past four weeks we have remembered the promises God made through the Old Testament prophets of a coming king who would rule with justice and restore God’s relationship with his people. This was represented by the purple candle – HOPE. We were also reminded of our hope that Jesus will one day return to earth. Pastor Jenn spoke about God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah and how God fulfilled it in his time. In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul reminds us how God has fulfilled his promises in Jesus:

“20For ***all*** of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!” And through Christ, our “Amen” (which means “Yes”) ascends to God for his glory.”

It is in Jesus that we find our HOPE!

[light purple candle]

Reader #2

The second candle was about the JOY that came through the angel’s announcement of the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Mary learned to have faith and obey, and learned the JOY of God’s favour. Velma reminded us of Rahab and how God took her from being a prostitute to a princess. God’s JOY is in doing the impossible.

In the Gospel of Matthew, when the wisemen

10… saw the star, they were filled with **joy**! 11They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

It is in Jesus we find our JOY!

[light the pink candle]

Reader #3

The third candle is a reminder of PEACE. Jesus is our prince of peace, and his Spirit brings peace. God’s loving plan was to make peace with his rebellious creation and so through Jesus we can experience peace with one another. Pastor John-Mark spoke about Naomi and how her heart that knew no peace, until she was honest with God and allowed his possibilities into her heart. Jesus said,

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” [Jn 16:33]

It is in Jesus we know PEACE!

[light the blue candle]

Reader #4

The fourth candle is the candle of LOVE. God’s love is his motive for coming into the world as Jesus Christ. His love fulfilled the plan of salvation so that we can know him as father, saviour and friend. God’s gift to us at Christmas is himself: What great love!

“See how great a **love** the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” [1 John3:1-2]

[light the red candle]

The final candle is the candle of nativity – the birth candle of the Messiah. Jesus came into the world – not in a myth, not in fairytale “once upon a time”, but in the fullness of time, into the history of this real world. God became man and dwelt among us and knew our sorrow, our pain and our weakness. Jesus’ life, teaching, death and resurrection opened our way to know God once more. And we do know him through Jesus! Thank you God for pursuing us – coming to us and making a way for us to know you. Thank you for the gift of yourself – servant, saviour and Lord.

[light the white centre candle]