

## SLIDES

I think I almost like Advent more than Christmas.

I love

- the preparation,
- the leading up to Christmas,
- the expectation.

## SLIDE

I like the decorations:

- the good ones
- not necessarily the over the top, garish ones!

Music is another story

- There is some good stuff,
- but also a lot of sappy nonsense

## SLIDE

& then there are Christmas movies,  
there are some must sees every year

- It's A Wonderful Life
- A Christmas Carol
- Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street

& then the delightful smells & tastes of Christmas baking

**SLIDE**

Some of you have Advent Calendars – fancy ones  
Or maybe the one we handed out last Sunday

Or do you remember making those red & green paper chains,  
you made in grade school?

& you tear off a link every day in December  
that chain seemed like it was a mile long!

- That anticipation
- that expectancy  
is what made the season so much fun.

**SLIDE**

The anticipation  
the expectancy  
really is such a big part  
of what makes this time of the year so great  
In fact, it's really what this season is all about.

For followers of Jesus  
this time of the year isn't just about celebrating a holiday  
it's about participating in an entire season  
the season of Advent.

**SLIDE**

The word **Advent** comes from the Latin word **adventus**,  
which means "*the coming*"  
or the "*arrival*"

and for hundreds of years  
Christians have been using this time  
to not only celebrate the birth of Christ  
but to also anticipate the return of Christ.

## SLIDE

You see at the heart of our faith  
is the belief that God has started something *new*  
right smack dab in the middle of this world  
with all of it's  
pain  
& messes  
& violence

- & through the birth,
- the life,
- the death,
- the resurrection,
- the ascension of Jesus,
- & that one day Jesus will return  
to finish what was started.

## SLIDE

For followers of Jesus  
this season is when we take some time  
to remind ourselves of the greater story  
that we are a part of  
and the hope that we have in Jesus  
because it's so easy to lose touch with it

and so for the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas  
we enter into a time of

- longing,
- expectation
- and anticipation for that which is yet to come.

## **SLIDE**

Advent is reminding us that

The life of Jesus is all about the incarnation

About God taking on human flesh

About Jesus moving into the neighbourhood

This year we are going to engage into the advent season  
through the eyes of several of the ordinary people  
that we run into in the story of Jesus.

As it unfolds

we will see that this story is indeed about a great big thing  
that God is doing in the world,

but at the same time

the hopes and fears of ordinary people like you and me  
are not forgotten or brushed to the side.

As we meet these people

we will find that their stories are also our stories  
and that like them

we will discover that the fulfillment of our deepest longings  
are found in this God who was born in a manger.

So the goal of this season  
isn't to just celebrate what happened 2,000 years ago  
but to experience Jesus in a fresh new way.

**SLIDE**

Meister Eckhart who was a German theologian & philosopher,  
during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, said about the birth of Jesus,

*We should ask ourselves:*

*If it doesn't happen in me,*

*what good is that birth after all?*

*What ultimately matters is that God's birth  
should happen in me.*

So we are going to zero in on the lives  
of some of the ordinary people  
who encounter Jesus  
in order to see how we can make room in our own lives  
to experience the miracle of Christmas.

**SLIDE**

If you have your bibles or your phone or tablet  
turn to **Luke chapter 2**.

**SLIDE**

The first character that we will look at is a man named *Simeon*.

He shows up a bit later in the Christmas story, but he is a great place for us to start because experiencing the miracle of Christmas begins with expecting the miracle and Simeon is a model of what a posture of expectancy and anticipation looks like

**SLIDE****Luke 2:22-35**

We will put the **NLT** on the screen while I read from the **Message**

<b>MSG</b>	<b>NLT</b>
<p><sup>22-24</sup> Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took him [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God's Law:</p> <p>"Every male who opens the womb shall be a holy offering to God," and also to sacrifice the "pair of doves or two young pigeons" prescribed in God's Law.</p>	<p><sup>22</sup> Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.</p>
	<p><sup>23</sup> The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD."</p>
	<p><sup>24</sup> So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of</p>

MSG	NLT
	turtledoves or two young pigeons.”
<p><sup>25-32</sup> In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him.</p>	<p><sup>25</sup> At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him</p>
<p>The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died.</p>	<p><sup>26</sup> and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.</p>
<p>Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple.</p>	<p><sup>27</sup> That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required,</p>
<p>As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:</p>	<p><sup>28</sup> Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,</p>
<p><sup>29</sup> “God, you can now release your servant;</p>	<p><sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised.</p>
<p>release me in peace as you promised.</p>	<p><sup>30</sup> I have seen your salvation,</p>
<p>With my own eyes I’ve seen your salvation;</p>	<p><sup>31</sup> which you have prepared for all people.</p>
<p>it’s now out in the open for everyone to see:</p>	<p><sup>32</sup> He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!”</p>

MSG	NLT
<p>A God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations, and of glory for your people Israel.”</p>	
<p><sup>33-35</sup> Jesus’ father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words. Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,          “This child marks both the failure and the recovery of many in Israel,          A figure misunderstood and contradicted—the pain of a sword-thrust through you—          But the rejection will force honesty, as God reveals who they really are.”</p>	<p><sup>33</sup> Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him.</p>
	<p><sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him.</p>
	<p><sup>35</sup> As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”</p>



**SLIDE**

Not long after Jesus was born  
 his parents brought him to the temple in Jerusalem  
 in order to participate  
 in some of the traditions & customs of the people

- one involved a purification ritual for the mother,
- but Mary and Joseph also went there  
 to consecrate or to dedicate Jesus to God,  
 which was customary to do with the first born son.

**SLIDE**

While they were there,  
 they ran into this man named Simeon.  
 We get the sense that he is pretty old.  
 In fact, there's a tradition that dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century  
 that he was 112 years old when this took place.

- Which means  
 no one here this AM is eliminated  
 because you think your are too old!

According to Luke  
 it had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit  
 that he would not die until he had laid eyes on the Messiah  
 the anointed one

And then through the leading of the Holy Spirit  
 Simeon makes his way into the temple  
 at just the right time  
 and as soon as he lays eyes on Jesus  
 he knows immediately who he is

the one he has been waiting for  
the one the whole world has been waiting for  
and he takes him in his arms  
and he prays this beautiful prayer.

## SLIDE

Can you imagine what that must have felt like for Simeon?  
He was old enough to witness some really important  
and yet very difficult history for his people.

- He was alive  
when the Romans conquered his homeland
- He saw a bloody civil war not long after that
- He had witnessed numerous revolutions  
crushed by the Romans  
and **yet he held out hope**  
year after year  
that God had not quit on them  
that the Messiah  
the deliverer was still on his way.

Now what makes this so remarkable  
is that as you read through the gospels  
the majority of the people who run into Jesus  
have a hard time recognizing who he is  
in fact, almost everyone missed him all together.

**SLIDE**

**John 1:11** says,

*He came to that which was his own  
but his own did not receive him.*

It's actually a stronger word than that

*They rejected him*

The people who had been waiting for Jesus  
didn't recognize him—  
they missed the miracle,  
but not Simeon—

Simeon was able to see in this 6-week-old baby  
the fulfillment of his deepest longings.

Simeon lived with this **sense of expectancy**  
that was **birthed** out of a **deep longing**  
and **desperate need** for God's **presence** and God's **comfort**.

**SLIDE**

Look back at **Luke 2:25b** with me.

*He was waiting for the **consolation** of Israel,  
and the Holy Spirit was on him. NIV*

*He... was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come  
and **rescue** Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him NLT*

*a man who lived in the **prayerful expectancy of help** for Israel.  
And the Holy Spirit was on him. MSG*

**SLIDE**

That word for consolation NIV is the Greek word *paraklesis*, which some of you have heard before— means encouragement or comfort.

So he was waiting for the *comfort* or better the *comforter* or *encourager* of Israel.

What is that all about?

Well this is a reference to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the OT book of Isaiah. **Isaiah** chapters **40-66** are sometimes called the book of comfort.

**SLIDE**

In Simeon's day

Israel had been kicked around by the world's superpowers for centuries

as a result of their disobedience and rebellion toward God.

They had been conquered by

- the Assyrians,
- the Babylonians,
- the Persians,
- the Greeks
- and most recently they had been conquered by the Romans.

So they were used to being kicked around and oppressed, but there were these people who they called the prophets who delivered to them these promises of God— promises that said:

*it wouldn't always be like that.*

**SLIDE**

At some point

God was going to act on their behalf,

at some point

God was going to do something  
about all their suffering and oppression,

at some point

God was going to set everything right.

**SLIDE**

More specifically the prophets said

that God would do this through **someone**

who came to be known as the Messiah—

this is the one

who would bring in

what they called the **comfort** of God.

**SLIDE**

This is what the second half of Isaiah is about.

Listen to how it begins: **Isaiah 40:1-2**

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,*

*and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed,*

*that her sin has been paid for,*

*that she has received from the Lord's hand*

*double for all her sins.*

Words of comfort in the midst of persecution

Words that God's people will be redeemed

**SLIDE**

Then in chapter **49:13** it says,

*Shout for joy, you heavens;  
rejoice, you earth;  
burst into song, you mountains!  
For the Lord comforts his people  
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.*

This is such good news  
God's redemption, his comfort, his compassion  
extends to all creation

**SLIDE**

Then I love this from chapter **51:3**

*The Lord will surely comfort Zion  
and will look with compassion on all her ruins;  
he will make her deserts like Eden,  
her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.  
Joy and gladness will be found in her,  
thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*

God will make everything right  
& what looks like ruins & deserts  
will be rebuilt & turned into beautiful gardens

**SLIDE**

So when Luke says that Simeon was waiting for the **consolation** of Israel this is what he is talking about—  
the day in which God  
through the Messiah  
would set everything right  
and bring comfort and restoration—  
healing to his people.

**SLIDE**

The word that Luke uses for **waiting** is the Greek word *prosdechomai* pros-dekh'-om-ahēe

& honestly, **waiting**,

is kind of a mild & tame way to translate it.

- It literally means to give access to one's self
- it is often translated as to **cherish**  
or to expect **eagerly**
- it is a kind of **active waiting**  
that one does with a high level of **involvement**
- it's the kind of waiting one does  
from the deepest parts of themselves.

**SLIDE**

You see there is the kind of waiting you do  
 when you are re-heating a cup of coffee in the microwave  
 that's sort of casual and half-hearted

Anyone do that?

...& then totally forget about it

& then discover the cup of coffee

still in the microwave later in the day

Come one... be honest!

**SLIDE**

You see, there's that kind of waiting  
 and then there is *prosdechomai*  
 which reminds us of what we are seeing right now  
 it's *waiting forwardly*  
 it's with real expectation

Maybe you're thinking

***waiting forwardly***

is that a real thing?

I don't know, I thought I made it up

Until I googled it!

- Author & pastor Max Lucado uses it in his book

***Waiting Forwardly: A Day to Anticipate***



Simeon's expectancy  
was birthed from this deep longing & desperate need  
for God's comfort—for God's healing.

One of the biggest reasons  
why we miss out on truly experiencing the miracle of Christmas  
is because we lose touch with our desperate need for it.

## SLIDE

The ancient prayer of Advent is "*Come, Lord Jesus, Come.*"

Those are some of the final words of the Bible  
in the book of **Revelation**  
*Come Lord Jesus Come.*

How badly do you want that?  
How aware are you of your need for...

- God's comfort
- God's healing
- God's deep presence in your life?

## SLIDE

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, the German pastor & theologian  
said of Advent,

*The only ones who can celebrate Advent  
are the people who carry restlessness around with them...  
whose souls give them no peace,  
who know that they are poor and incomplete  
and who sense something of the greatness  
that is supposed to come.*

**SLIDE**

Advent is about embracing our need  
for God's healing and presence in our lives.

**SLIDE**

You and I,  
we don't like to feel that need—that emptiness,  
& so we try to drown it out with all of those temporary fixes.

- We try and smother it with all of these things  
that in the end really don't satisfy.
- That's why we spend way too much money  
on stuff that we really don't need,
- That's why we go to the computer screen  
when we are feeling lonely.
- That's why we look to food or substances,  
or stuff to make us feel ok
- it's all just an attempt to drown out our longing  
and our need for God

**SLIDE**

Friday was Black Friday  
That day when people stand in line  
for 3 hours to save \$20 on a TV  
or some such thing

**SLIDE**

**REI** – an American outdoors store  
did a great thing – they closed their stores on Black Friday  
& said, *“Go outside & play”*

**SLIDE**

It's so easy to get sucked into buying stuff  
or looking to food or substances,  
or whatever  
to make us feel OK

It's all just an attempt to drown out our longing  
and our need for God

**SLIDE**

But **Adventus – advent** is our divine invitation  
to get in touch with our greatest need  
our need for God.

Advent is about embracing that need

- & refusing to settle for the artificial
- reminding ourselves  
that the reality of what we truly long for  
can only be found in Jesus.

But for some its become more a matter of complacency  
Jesus has become that cup of coffee  
that we forgot we left in the microwave.

**SLIDE**

The saying goes

*familiarity breeds [leads to] contempt.*

The more familiar you are with something  
the less you appreciate it—

- so when we get complacent
- or it all becomes so familiar  
then we tend to forget just how good the good news is
- and then we become blind  
to all of the places that we haven't let  
God's comfort in  
to heal as deeply as he could & wants to.

So, we think, yeah sure,  
God, may have rescued us from some of the big things  
He's saved me

but what about the less obvious things—

- like how we treat the people closest to us.
- or the people who get under our skin,
- or what about things like gossip,
- or the subtle ways we exaggerate the truth  
to make ourselves appear better  
than we really are...
- what about our motives
- what about what we say  
when people aren't around to defend themselves?
- what about how we shift blame & responsibility  
to let ourselves off the hook?

At the same time,  
if we've lost sight of our own need  
we most certainly won't be able to feel the need  
of a world gone cold.

**SLIDE**

We'll forget that what the world needs most is Jesus—  
that the gospel is the only way out of this mess.

I know people often say

What the world needs now is love

But love is a word that is so distorted in our culture

**SLIDE**

**1 John 4:16-17** says:

*We know how much God loves us,  
and we have put our trust in his love.  
God is love, and all who live in love live in God,  
and God lives in them.  
And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.*

It's like with what is going on  
in so many places around the world

- violence
- displaced peoples
- suicides among 1<sup>st</sup> nations people

that should break our heart.

Our hearts should be broken  
by the things that break the heart of God

So what do a lot of Christians do?

- They jump online  
& add to all of the nonsense  
with just more volatile comments
- Or they freak out over a red Starbucks coffee cup

**SLIDE**

We should be on our knees praying  
*Come Lord Jesus Come!*

& not so much

*Come Lord Jesus & take me out of this mess*

But rather, instead of complaining  
we should be listening to the creative God  
about creative solutions

**SLIDE**

God, through his people,  
is showing the world a different way of living and relating

**SLIDE**

So here's something I want you to do during Advent,  
carve out space to spend time in reflection & prayer  
Check out the verse for each day of Advent

**SLIDE**

Advent calendar

- on our facebook page
- on our website

**SLIDE**

Simeon also teaches us  
 that expectancy is more than just wishful thinking  
 and that Advent is more than just a countdown to Christmas  
 but is an invitation to live with a confident certainty  
 in God's promised future.

Simeon held onto hope  
 at a time when it would have been really easy  
 to give into despair.

Sure they had the promises of God  
 but those promises were hundreds of years' old  
 and things didn't seem like they were getting better...  
 things seemed like they were getting worse!

**SLIDE**

It would have been easy to give up but Simeon didn't—  
 he held onto hope—  
 in fact, in his prayer he even says,

*I have seen your salvation*

to which part of me wants to say ...

- You have?
- You have seen God's salvation?
- Are you sure about that  
 because it seems to me,  
 that the only thing you have seen is a little baby.

Simeon may not have seen the realization of God's salvation  
 but he held in his arms the one through whom it would come.

**SLIDE**

& that is a picture of what hope really is  
and what a life of expectancy looks like in practice.

**SLIDE**

You see hope doesn't take its cue from

- our past failures,
- our present frustrations,
- or our anxieties about the future.

No hope is about seeing all of these things  
through the lens of what God has promised  
that no matter how things look  
or how we may feel about it  
one day Jesus will return and set things right.

Hope, expectancy doesn't take its cues from

- our past failures,
- our present frustrations
- or our anxieties about the future
- how big the thing is
- or how difficult it is to sleep through the night

but think about how strongly  
these influence the way we live  
and what we believe is possible.



I think of someone whose greatest fear  
is turning out like his father.

He is a new father himself  
and he lives with this sort of fear  
that it is only a matter of time  
until he makes the same mistakes.

Or an acquaintance who constantly gives herself  
to men who don't love her  
because she doesn't feel like she deserves anything better.

Or another  
who is really struggling to believe  
that they will ever know freedom from their addiction.

Hope doesn't take its cue from

- our fears,
- frustrations
- or anxieties

### **SLIDE**

Hope is about living out of a concrete certainty  
seeing everything in light of God's promised future.

What have you given up on?

What is that thing that you say can't or won't happen?

This advent—  
ask God to give you the strength  
to re-imagine these things  
in light of the hope we have in Christ—  
that in in Jesus  
all things are possible to those who believe.

## **SLIDE**

### **ADVENT**

Here's the really amazing thing,

- when we do this,
- when we live according to God's promised future,

it moves from being

- this distant hope
- to a present reality.

You see,

- circumstances,
- people,
- possibilities begin to change
- when we live and act as if they already have.

## **SLIDE**

God's promises  
aren't simply something we are supposed to long for,  
they are something we are meant to live into.

All of this helps to remind us of why,

- as individuals
- as families
- as a community,
- as a church,
- we do some of the things that we do.

Why we make commitments

to live more simply  
so that others may simply live

Why we celebrate Christmas

the way that we do  
by giving to others  
by serving others  
by blessing others

As we do this

- we are making way for the miracle
- as we give, we are literally saving people's lives  
both physically and spiritually in Ethiopia
- we are hoping to launch a ministry that helps  
people who struggle with addictions  
& some mental health issues  
be set free from that,
- we want to come along side individuals and families  
and help them learn the necessary life skills  
to move toward into a better future  
for themselves and their family,
- every time we are involved in someone's life  
and see healing & freedom

- God's promised future becomes more and more of a present reality.

## SLIDE

### ***Come, Lord Jesus***

Thou Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace,  
be born again into our world.  
Wherever there is war in this world,  
wherever there is pain,  
wherever there is loneliness,  
wherever there is no hope,  
come, thou long-expected one, with healing in thy wings.

### ***Come, Lord Jesus, Come***

Holy Child, whom the shepherds and the kings  
and the dumb beasts adored, be born again.  
Wherever there is boredom,  
wherever there is fear of failure,  
wherever there is temptation to strong to resist,  
wherever there is bitterness of heart,  
come, though, blessed one, with healing in thy wings.

### ***Come, Lord Jesus, Come***

Savior, be born in each of us who raises their face to thy face,  
not knowing fully who they are or who thou art,  
knowing only thy love is beyond his knowing  
and that no other has the power to make him whole.  
Come, Lord Jesus, to each who longs for thee  
even though they have forgotten thy name. Come quickly.