

December Teaching Theme: Advent

讲员 Speaker: Dr. Ted Moon

题目 Topic: Advent: Hopeless or Hopeful?

经文 Scripture: Luke 2:1-19

Monthly Theme: This week is the second week of Advent season for the Western Church. Advent Season is the beginning of the Church Liturgical Calendar year. “Advent” simply means “coming” or “arrival” and is a season of expectation and preparation for the coming of Christ. And we as Christians celebrate three phases, so to say, of the coming of Christ: (1) Jesus birth in Bethlehem just over 2000 years ago, (2) the coming of Christ into our lives, when we place our trust in and give our allegiance to King Jesus, and (3) the second coming of Christ, when he returns to fully establish the Kingdom of God and make all things right. Traditionally in the four Sundays of Advent, the church meditates on these four ideas: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. This week Dr. Moon extended our reflections on Christian Hope.

十二月 December: 將臨節 Advent

December 5th – 神國的公義與平安 Kingdom Justice & Peace (將臨節 Advent)

December 12th – 基督徒在苦難中的喜樂 Christian Joy in Suffering (將臨節 Advent)

December 19th – 基督徒的愛 Christian Love (將臨節 Advent)

December 26th – 新造的人 Made New (新年 New Years)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (Dr. Moon)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Hope](#) (English)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Hope](#) 盼望 - Hope【字义研读】 (Chinese)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Peace](#) (English)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Peace](#) - 和平 - Shalom【字义研读】 (Chinese)

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne)

- (1) Read Luke 1:1-25 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) Re-read Luke 1:5-7. What Old Testament characters and story does this remind you of? Why do you think that connection is significant?
- (3) The angel says in Luke 1:15, that John the Baptist “will be great in the sight of the Lord.” Read Mark 1:1-8. What does this “greatness” in the sight of the Lord look like for John? How should this shape how we understand greatness?
- (4) Read Luke 1:57-80. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (5) What is the grand hope that the birth of John the Baptist brings to the people of God?

We will reflect on Jesus Birth in relation to John’s birth and Christian Joy next week.

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Note on Q1: Do not miss the significance of Luke 1:5. Luke wants to make sure you do not mistake this narrative as some mythical story, but an actual event that has historical context - “in the time of Herod king of Judea....”

Here is a helpful quote from Dr. Justo L. González on Luke’s telling of the Gospel:

“Much more commonly, many—perhaps even the majority in many traditionally Christian nations and cultures—would reduce the significance of Jesus to his teachings. For such persons, to be a Christian is to follow the teachings of Jesus, teachings that are often watered down and turned into generally accepted principles for social life within the existing values of the culture. In contrast to such views, Luke’s book is not primarily about the teachings of Jesus, but about the story of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus are important, not simply because they make sense or are useful, but rather because they are his teachings. At the very center of Luke’s understanding of the gospel stands this historical figure, this man of flesh and blood, whose life is part of history and yet has marked all of history.”

Notes on Q2: Luke frames the story in a way that shows the clear bridge between the story of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the Gospel story about Jesus. The Hebrew Scriptures contain a repeated theme of barren women being used to give birth to significant characters in God’s grand story - none more important than Abraham and Sarah, the patriarch and matriarch of the people of Israel. **Read Genesis 18:1-15.** The similarities in the account will become evident. We see similar stories of barren women among other matriarchs like Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah. How Luke tells this story makes it clear that Jesus is himself a part of this story and history. “That Jesus is born of the sterile woman par excellence—a virgin—makes him the fulfillment of the entire history of Israel.” (González, J. L.) The birth of John the Baptist leading to Jesus signifies a climax in the story of God’s people. God is bringing about something new, grounded in the long history of his faithful to the people of old.

Notes on Q3: Here are a couple of interesting quotes from Church Fathers on the nature of John the Baptist coming:

“He emerged from the desert clothes in a strange garment, refusing all ordinary social intercourse. He did not even share their common food. For it is written from childhood John was in the desert until the day of his public appearance to Israel. Indeed his clothing was made of camel’s hair! His food locust and wild honey!... it is understandable that they should have been alarmed when they saw a man with the hair of a Nazarite of God, and the divine face, suddenly appearing in the lonely wilderness dressed in bizarre clothing, after preaching to them, dispersed again into the wilderness, without eating or drinking or mingling with the people. Must they not have suspected he was a little more than human? How could a human being go without food? And so they understood him to be a divine messenger, very angel foretold by the prophet.” -Eusebius of Caesarea *Proof of the Gospel* 9.5

“He fed on locusts to make his soul grow wings. Sated with honey, the words he spoke were sweeter than honey and of more profit. Clothed in a garment of camel’s hair, he exemplified in his own person a holy life. ... For every snake puts off its signs of age by pushing through some

narrow place, and gets rid of its old apparel by squeezing it off. From then on, it is young again in body. So “enter in at the straight and narrow gate,” squeeze yourself through by fasting, break yourself away from perishing, “put off the old nature with its deeds.” - Cyril of Jerusalem
Catechetical Lectures 3.6

What is clear is that “greatness in the sight of the Lord” looks different from greatness in the sight of the world.

Notes on Q5: Zechariah’s Song in Luke 1:67-79 captures the hope John presents well. John is preparing the path for the fullness of salvation to come through the long-awaited Messiah who will “shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the path of peace.” John the Baptist is the sign that redemption and freedom are coming soon! As Zechariah paints this picture through the Holy Spirit, it is clear that this is not just spiritual renewal but complete comprehensive deliverance and salvation for all of Creation. Freedom from sin and the shadow of death is coming! (And has come in King Jesus).