

December Teaching Theme: Advent

讲员 Speaker: Dr. Hamilton / Pastor Tian

题目 Topic: The Advent of Joy

经文 Scripture: Luke 1:26-56 / 2:8-20

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. So this week, we are reflecting on Jesus’ birth and Christian Joy.

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](#) (Chinese Service - Pastor Tian)

[Sermon Slide](#) (Chinese Service - Pastor Tian)

[Sermon Video](#) (English Service - Dr. Hamilton)

[Sermon Slide](#) (English Service - Dr. Hamilton)

[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)

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

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

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian):

Pastor Will:

- (1) Read Luke 1:26-45 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage? How does the Angel that came to Mary identify Jesus? How does this help us understand who Jesus is?
- (2) Re-read Luke 1:46-56. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage? This is traditionally known as Magnificat (Mary’s Song) and is significant in early church liturgy. What does Mary’s song of praise reveal about the scope of the Good News about Jesus the Messiah?

- (3) Read Luke 2:8-20. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage? Why is the news brought to the shepherds “news of great joy for all people”?
- (4) What do you believe it looks like to live in this Christian joy amid the ups and downs of life?

Pastor Tian:

- (1) 天使见到马利亚后，向她传达了什么信息？马利亚的反应是什么？最终马利亚的决定是什么？这对今天的基督徒有哪些提醒？After seeing Mary, what message did the angel convey to her? What was Mary's reaction? What is Mary's decision in the end? What reminders does this have for Christians today?
- (2) 当马利亚说到“我是主的使女，情愿照你的话成就在我身上”这句话后，在她的生活中将会面临哪些挑战？这对今天的基督徒有哪些启发？When Mary said, "I am the Lord's handmaid, I would rather do it in me according to your words," what challenges will she face in her life? What inspiration does this have for today's Christians?
- (3) 马利亚决定顺服上帝的旨意后，她知不知道自己将会面对各种不同的挑战和困难？如果知道，为什么她能够在生命和生活中表现出“我灵以神我的救主为乐”？这对今天的基督徒有哪些帮助？After Mary decides to obey God's will, does she know that she will face various challenges and difficulties? If you know, why can she show in her life and life that "my spirit takes pleasure in God and my Savior"? How does this help Christians today?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes of Q1: We see in Luke 1:32-33 that Angel identifies Jesus as “the Son of the Most High” who will sit on the “throne of his father David” “reigning over Jacob’s descendants” with a kingdom that will never end. Jesus is identified as the King who would reign forever, prophesied to bring about the redemption of all creation. Jesus is the Messianic-King that will fulfill both Israel’s hoped-for redemption. For the Christian, this identity of Jesus grounds us in an expanded vision of what it means that Jesus is the Savior who came to save the world from sin. Jesus offers us personal salvation and freedom from sin and is working to bring about redemption for all of creation.

Notes of Q2: As we read on into Mary’s Song, we gain a more robust picture of the full redemption this Messiah-King Jesus will bring. The scope of God’s salvation and deliverance through Jesus is ALL of creation. Through the coming of Jesus, the Kingdom of God has arrived and will arrive in full. This Kingdom will bring about reversal as “the proud of scattered,” “ the rulers are brought down from their thrones,” and “the hungry are filled while the greedy ungenerous rich” are sent away. This is a beautiful hope that the Good News of Jesus brings - that he will right what is wrong, he will do away with corruption and unjust hierarchies, and his mercy will be extended to all people. When we put our faith, trust, and allegiance in Jesus the Christ, we are invited into both personal transformation and salvation and invited to partake in a new way of community life in the vision of the Kingdom of God to come. This is what the Church is called to be as we are made new in Jesus. (So I guess Mary did know :)) Advent, we celebrate the start of something new, something beautiful, the hope of all the world being made right! (Really, sit with how wonderful this news is.)

Notes of Q3: We saw in the Angel's word to Mary and Mary's Song that Jesus would be the great hoped-for deliverer for Israel, and when the Angel speaks to the shepherd, we learn that this great-hoped for Messiah would also be "joy to all the people." He is "a Savior," the "Messiah," the "Lord." The deliverance of God is offered to all people through Jesus the Messiah.

Notes on Q4: Christian Joy is unique. It is a chosen attitude followers of Jesus adopt not because of happy situations or circumstances but because of their sure hope in God's love and promise to bring complete deliverance and salvation for all creation. This rejoicing despite your circumstance does not negate human emotion or the need to lament evil and suffering, but it grounds the Christian in a forward-looking posture that rejoices in their future destiny of the New Heaven and New Earth and God's work now that gives us a glimpse and taste of this Kingdom. We can have joy in the wait because Jesus the great deliverer is walking with us on the journey towards the fullness of redemption. This good news grounds us in a paradoxical joy in a world of suffering.