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EMBRACE | EMBODY | EXTEND



**ADVENT**  
HOUSTON

**Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany**

FEBRUARY • 11 • 2024

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Advent means “arrival” or “coming.” Many of us have a temptation to believe that we can live a good enough life or do the right things to make our way to God. We think that if we do enough of the right types of things, then God will allow us into His home. But the Bible tells us again and again that we are never the first movers in this relationship. God is always the initiator. He spoke all things into being; He created; and He pursues. He is the one who arrives. And we see this in the first advent of God.

John begins his gospel by saying, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (ESV). God the Son came to us in the first advent: what the church calls the incarnation. He didn’t wait for us to try and make our way to his heavenly abode. He didn’t stand above us to lecture us or condemn us. He came to us. In fact, he became one of us, taking on flesh, pain, sorrows, and death.

And God hasn’t stopped there. After Jesus came into this world to inaugurate the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven, after he died on the cross to atone for our sins, and after he was raised from the dead to defeat sin and death, He ascended to heaven to assume the throne. Scripture tells us that he will come again. And when he comes again, he is bringing the new heavens and the new earth with him.

It is in this second advent, that Jesus promises to make all things new. Though he has already dealt with sin and death, it isn’t until he comes again that death will be eradicated.

## EPIPHANY

The season of Epiphany is a time of enlightenment. The word Epiphany comes from the a Greek word meaning “to bring of light.” The season is a five to nine week period celebrating and remembering the time that God manifested Jesus as the Son of God as the Savior to and for the world.

During Christmas we joyfully celebrated the coming of [the] light in the birth of Jesus. Now the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6 brings this theme to culmination - the light of Christ made manifest to the whole world as symbolized by the Gentile Magi from the East. Thus the day of Epiphany and the season that follows complete what is sometimes called in the liturgical year the Cycle of Light.

Twenty centuries after the birth and ministry of Jesus, we can take it for granted that Jesus was not just the Anointed One for Israel, but that He was the promised Messiah (meaning anointed one) that would bring salvation to all peoples, all tribes, and all nations. So, the season of Epiphany is a time when we remember that Jesus was made manifest to the Wise Men who came to worship him. It is a time when we remember that manifests his ministry and power to the world around him. And it is a time when we begin to more fully contemplate what it means for us to participate in extending his light to the nations. Allow for this season, to be a time when you think more about how you might be able to make Jesus’ story manifest in your own life and to the lives of others.

\*Robert E. Webber, Ancient Future Time

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## REFLECTIONS

The hatred of anonymity drives men to heroic feats of valour or long hours of drudgery; or it urges them to spectacular acts of shame or of unscrupulous self-preferment. In its worst forms it tempts men to give the honour and glory to themselves which properly belong to the name of God.

— **Alan Richardson**

Paul's vision of the body of Christ is of a unity which consists in diversity, that is, a unity which is not denied by diversity, but which would be denied by uniformity, a unity which depends on its diversity functioning as such - in a word, the unity of a body, the body of Christ.

— **James Dunn**

But, as we wait for him to come again, we wait with hope. And as we wait, we live in light of that hope - praying for and acting in the knowledge that God's Kingdom will come in bits and pieces even now, offering us glimpses of the way that it is supposed to be, the way it will ultimately be.

In the middle of these two advents of Christ, there is a third advent. There is the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us, to help us to remember all that he taught and accomplished (John 14:26), and to help us as we follow him by faith. And Jesus tells us to follow him in the same way that he himself came. We are to leave our own comforts and to come into the places that he has called us. And so, in that way, we want to take the example of Christ's first coming to enter into the lives of our community. We want to bear witness to the coming of the Kingdom of God in its fullness in the future. And, we want to minister as the mouthpiece, the hands, and the feet of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21).

So, Advent Houston is a **coming** of a group of Christians to the Texas Medical Center, to Rice University, and to the surrounding neighborhoods to embrace, embody, and extend the grace of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

We are so glad that you are here with us!

# SERVICE OF THE WORD

## \*CALL TO WORSHIP

From Psalm 50:1-6

Leader: The Mighty One, God the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.

**ALL: Our God comes; he does not keep silence;  
before him is a devouring fire,  
around him a mighty tempest.**

Leader: He calls to the heavens above  
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:  
“Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

**ALL: The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge!**

## \*SONG

## Holy Holy Holy

Words by Reginald Heber and music by John Bacchus Dykes  
© Words and Music: Public Domain

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

## PRAYER OF ADORATION

### GOSPEL READING

John 3:13-17

[13] No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. [14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (ESV)

Leader: The gospel of the Lord.  
People: **Praise be to you Lord Christ.**

## STORIES OF MISSION & MERCY

### \*SONG

Let Me Find Thee

Words by Joachim Neander and music by Matthew S. Smith  
© 2012 detuned radio music

Behold me here, in grief draw near,  
Pleading at Thy throne, oh King.  
To Thee each tear, each trembling fear,  
Jesus Son of Man I bring.  
Let me find Thee, Let me find Thee.  
Let me find Thee,  
Lord of mercy, King of grace.

Look down in love, and from above,  
With Thy Spirit satisfy.  
Thou hast sought me, Thou hast bought me,  
And thy purchase Lord am I.  
Let me find Thee, Let me find Thee.  
Let me find Thee,  
Here on earth and then on high.

Hear the broken, scarcely spoken,  
Longings of my heart to thee  
All the crying, all the sighing,  
Of Thy child accepted be.  
Let me find Thee, Let me find Thee.  
Let me find Thee,  
Wounded healer, suffering Lord.

### **\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Ignatius of Antioch. (Taken from a letter written in 107 A.D. Ignatius was a Syrian pastor who became a bishop in present day Turkey.)

**Leader:** Jesus Christ was descended from the family of David and born of Mary.

**People:** **He is a man.**

**Leader:** He truly was born both of God and of the Virgin. He truly took a body; for the Word became flesh and dwelt among us without sin.

**People:** **He is God.**

**Leader:** He ate and drank truly, truly suffered persecution under Pontius Pilate, was truly [and not in appearance] crucified and died.

**People:** **He suffered for us.**

**Leader:** He was also truly raised from the dead and rose after three days as his Father raised him up.

**People:** **He rose for us.**

Leader: After having spent forty days with the Apostles, he was received up to the Father, and sits on his right hand, waiting till his enemies are put under his feet.

People: **He reigns over us.**

ALL: **Amen.**

## **CONFESSION OF SIN**

Leader: Heavenly Father, you have created all things which means you created humanity in all its diversity.

All: **But we constantly try to recreate others into our own image. We try to write history or form ideologies that make certain cultures seem more valuable than others. We fear the confusion**

Leader: Lord Jesus, what we really want is to have righteousness that is our own. We want some part of us that does not need you.

All: **Whether it's the history of our region, our family, our ethnicity, or our religion, we want to cling to it as something better than others, something un-tarnished by the evil in us, or our people. In longing for things to be right, we refuse to look at things that are wrong. And all this leads to a foolish audacity that can only be preserved with anger and defensiveness.**

Leader: But we don't just overvalue our stories, we undervalue them as well.

All: **Shamed by our own people's sin, we distance ourselves from the redemption you are bringing in them. Committed to color-blinded-ness, we refuse to see and celebrate the beauty and dignity of ourselves or others. Fearful of what others might think, we minimize, chide, and distance ourselves from our own people—leaving us unfit for caring for either ourselves or others.**

## **\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

John 3:16 (ESV)

Leader: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

## **\*Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)**

Words: Luke 2:29-32; Music: LAND OF REST, American Folk Melody  
Arranged by David Lutes, 2010

Lord, bid your servant go in peace,  
Your word is now fulfilled.  
These eyes have seen salvation's dawn,  
This child so long foretold

This is the Savior of the world  
The Gentile's promised light  
God's glory dwelling in our midst  
The joy of Israel

ADVENTURERS

CHILDREN (1<sup>ST</sup> - 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADES)

All children, 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades, are invited to go to Adventurers, for a children's lesson and activity time during the sermon. The Adventurers will be escorted back to the Chapel during the Passing of the Peace.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

from "Prayers of the People 'D'", in the *Book of Common Worship*

Leader: Our God and Father, Empower the church throughout the world in its life and witness. Break down the barriers that divide, that, united in your truth and love, the church may confess your name, share one baptism, sit together at one table, and serve you in one common ministry.

*Leader Intercedes for the world, Church,  
and the needs of our congregation.*

People: Amen.



## SERMON READING

## Genesis 11:1-9

[1] Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. [2] And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. [3] And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. [4] Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” [5] And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. [6] And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. [7] Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” [8] So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. [9] Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD

People: **Thanks be to God.**

## SERMON

Rev. Taylor Leachman

“The Origins Story: Tower of Babel”



Do you have a question about today’s sermon? If so, click on the QR code for discussion at the next Question & Discussion time.

## PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you!**

### RETURN OF ADVENTURERS

During the Passing of the Peace, the teachers will bring the Adventurers back to the Chapel.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are glad to have you worship with us today. Please sign-in on the pad located near the center aisle and record your information there.

## OFFERTORY & PRIVATE PRAYER

All giving is a response to God's generosity to you in all aspects of life, but particularly through the person and work of Jesus. If you are not sure what you think about Jesus or Christianity, or if you are a guest, we would invite you to refrain from giving at this time.

Online giving is available at [adventpres.org/give](https://adventpres.org/give). You can also scan this QR code or place a gift in the offering basket near the entrance of the chapel.



# SERVICE OF THE TABLE

## CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

**ALL:** We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your abundant and great mercies. We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord, who always delights in showing mercy. Nourish us, therefore, gracious Lord, so that in partaking of this sacrament of your son Jesus Christ, we may walk in newness of life, grow into his likeness, and evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

**Leader:** All honor and praise be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator, ever-living God, through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord: for at this time we celebrate your glory made present in our midst.

In the coming of the magi the King of all the world was revealed to the nations. In the waters of baptism Jesus was revealed as the Christ, the Savior sent to redeem us. In the water made wine the new creation was revealed at the wedding feast. Poverty was turned to riches, sorrow into joy.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

ALL:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and might,  
Hea - ven and earth are full, full of your  
Bless - ed is He who comes in the name of the  
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Ho -  
Lord. san - na in the high - est.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Leader: Alleluia, Alleluia  
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
And we have seen His glory.

All: Alleluia

## COMMUNION AT ADVENT

Advent welcomes all baptized Christians to participate in the Lord's table. This includes all Christians, whether members at Advent or at another church. Children who have been baptized and admitted to the table by the elders of this church or the leadership of another church are also welcome to the table.

If you're still investigating Christianity, not sure what you believe, or simply choose not to participate, you may either remain in your seat or come forward, cross your arms over your chest, and receive a blessing. Feel free to use the prayers printed in the bulletin below. Non-communing children are encouraged to come forward to receive a blessing while their parents receive communion.

### ABOUT THE ELEMENTS

- We serve both wine and grape juice for communion.
- Grape juice is available in the center of the communion trays; wine is available along the edge.
- All communion bread is gluten free.



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### PRAYER FOR THOSE SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Give me the ability to follow you no matter what it might cost me. Give me an understanding for you that is coherent, convincing, and leads to the life that you promise. Amen. A prayer of belief: A prayer for those struggling against sin: A prayer for covenant children who have not yet made a profession of faith:

### PRAYER OF BELIEF

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever believed, but through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead and are now representing me at the Father's right hand in heaven, I turn from my sins and receive you as my savior. Amen.

### PRAYER FOR THOSE STRUGGLING AGAINST SIN

Lord Jesus, give me the ability to see in you the fulfillment of all my needs and desires, and help me to turn from every false source of satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely to me, and run with perseverance the race that you have set before me, looking only to you, the author and perfecter of my faith. Amen.

### A PRAYER FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE NOT YET MADE A PROFESSION OF FAITH

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving me the opportunity to grow up in a Christian family where I am surrounded by the good news of the gospel. Help me to grow in my understanding of who you are and what you have done for me on the cross. Help me learn what it means for me to turn from my sins and trust in you alone for my salvation. Teach me what it means to follow you as one of your disciples. Amen.

# COMMUNION SONG

# Blessed

Words and music by Andi Rozier, Jason Ingram, Jud Harris, and Vanessa Dalrymple

© All Essential Music

## Verse 1

Blessed are the poor in spirit  
Blessed are the ones in need  
For every thirst and every hunger  
You are everything  
Blessed are the worn and weary  
Blessed are the ones who grieve  
And every moment unexpected  
You are everything

## Chorus

To seek You is to find You  
And to know You is to want You  
And I want nothing more than You  
To see You is to love You  
And I can't believe I get to  
And I want nothing more than You

## Verse 2

Blessed is the mercy giver  
Blessed is the way of peace  
I will trust Your heart and head  
You are everything  
Yes I will trust Your heart and head  
You are everything

*Chorus*

## Bridge

Take this world, give me Jesus  
Take this life, give me Yours  
In every season You are the blessing  
Jesus You are my reward

*Repeat*

*Chorus*

**Ending**

Oh and I want nothing more than You

Oh I want nothing more than You

**\*CLOSING PRAYER****\*SONG****Benediction Song (Edelweiss)**

May the Lord, Mighty God  
Bless and keep you forever  
Grant you grace, sovereign grace  
Joy in every endeavor

Lift your eyes and see His face  
And His love forever  
May the Lord, Mighty God  
Bless and keep you forever

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

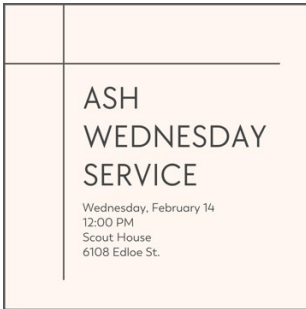


## STUDENT LUNCH

*TODAY, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> 12:30 P.M.*

Calling all college students ... join Advent's monthly lunch for undergrads, graduate, and medical students. It's not too late to register at [Adventpres.org/events](http://Adventpres.org/events) so we can have a good headcount. Feel free to come over at noon! Lunch will be served at 12:30.

Location: The Price's 2202 McClendon St.



## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

*THIS Wednesday, Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon*

Ash Wednesday starts the 40 days of the Lenten Season that ends with the Easter Celebration.

Join us for our Ash Wednesday service at noon.

Location: The Scout House in West U at 6108 Edloe St.



## NEW PARISH GROUPS ARE HERE

Interested in being more connected at Advent Houston? Join a Parish Group!

Click the QR code, complete the form.



## PICKUP SOCCER

*Friday, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.*

Join the monthly pick-up soccer game for medical sojourner families as an opportunity to have fun, run around, meet people, and share a meal. The January game was great fun!

Location: Weasley Family YMCA Soccer Field

Register at [AdventPres.org/Events](http://AdventPres.org/Events).



### **Media Release**

Advent Houston shares photos taken at our events in our monthly newsletters, on our website, or on social media for the purpose of promoting and highlighting the church's mission. By being present, you consent to being photographed and having these photos shared. For individuals who are not comfortable being visible in a shared photograph, please notify the church at [admin@adventpres.org](mailto:admin@adventpres.org) to opt out of the media release.

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**ADVENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON**

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ADVENT HOUSTON EXISTS TO EMBRACE,  
EMBODY, AND EXTEND THE GRACE OF JESUS  
TO THE TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER, RICE  
UNIVERSITY, AND THE SURROUNDING  
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