
EMBRACE | EMBODY | EXTEND



ADVENT
HOUSTON

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

FEBRUARY • 4 • 2024

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

REFLECTIONS

In Christianity, the moment we believe, God imputes Christ's perfect performance to us as if it were our own, and adopts us into His family. In other words, God can say to us just as He once said to Christ, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

— **Timothy J. Keller**

Are there sins you wish God affirmed? Beware, Satan has a doctrine for you. Is there a political philosophy that resonates with you? Beware, Satan has a doctrine for you. Do you live in poverty and long to be prosperous? Beware, Satan has a doctrine for you.... The curse of Ham is a form of the prosperity gospel that provides theological justification for pride, greed, racism, and partiality.

— **Pastor Garrett Kell**

Prayer: Almighty and loving God, we bless you for the sheer privilege of joining freely with others to hear your word, receive your sacrament, and sing your praise.... Help us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, to encourage, challenge, and correct us, that we leave equipped to be faithful servants in your Church, through the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

— **"A Prayer in Preparation for Worship,"**
transformingmission.org

But, as we wait for him to come again, we wait with hope. And as we wait, we in light of that hope – pray 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. God has sent the Holy Spirit to us, to help us to remember all that he taught and accomplished (John 14:26) to help us as we follow his faith. And Jesus tells us to follow him in the same way that he himself came. We are to leave our own comforts 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 be witnesses to the coming of the Kingdom of God in its fullness in the future. And, we want to minister as the mouthpiece of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21).

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

We are so glad that you are here with us!

SERVICE OF THE WORD

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Adapted from Psalm 84:1-4; ESV

Leader: How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD;

People: my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Leader: Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,

People: Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!

*SONG

Agnus Dei/King of Kings

Agnus Dei words and music by Michael W. Smith

© 1990 Sony/ATV Milene Music

King of Kings words and music by Brooke Ligertwood, Scott Ligertwood, and Jason Ingram

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Verse 1

Alleluia alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia Alleluia

For our Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia

Chorus 1

Holy holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

You are holy holy

Are You Lord God Almighty

Worthy is the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb

Amen

Verse 2

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
Till from heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the Word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

Chorus 2

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

Verse 3

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the Cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake You died

Chorus 2

Verse 4

And the morning that You rose
All of heaven held its breath
Till that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

Verse 5

And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

Chorus 2

Ending

Praise forever to the King of Kings
We Praise forever to the King of Kings

PRAYER OF ADORATION

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 25:31-40

[31] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. [32] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33] And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. [34] Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ [40] And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ (ESV)

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise be to you Lord Christ.**

STORIES OF MISSION & MERCY

*SONG

Your Labor Is Not In Vain

Words and music by Isaac Wardell, Paul Zach, and Wendell Kimbrough

© 2017 Wendell K Songs

Verse 1

Your labor is not in vain
Though the ground underneath you
Is cursed and stained
Your planting and reaping are never the same
Your labor is not in vain

Verse 2

Your labor is not unknown
Though the rocks they cry out
And the sea it may groan
The place of your toil may not seem like a home
But your labor is not unknown

Chorus

For I am with you I am with you
I am with you I am with you
For I have called you
Called you by name
Your labor is not in vain

Verse 3

The vineyards you plant will bear fruit
The fields will sing out and rejoice with the truth
For all that is old will at last be made new
The vineyards you plant will bear fruit

Chorus

Verse 4

The houses you labored to build
Will finally with laughter and joy be filled
The serpent that hurts and destroys will be killed
And all that is broken be healed

Chorus

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

The Apostles Creed

Leader: Christian, what is it that you believe?

ALL: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Anonymous Source, but Adapted by Advent Houston

ALL: We have not sought freedom for the oppressed, even though
you freed us.
We have not bound up the broken even though you healed
us.
We have not forgiven others even though you forgave us.
We withhold kindness from the needy even though you freely
gave us your own Son.
We are without excuse, but not without hope.
By your power and grace, account our sins to Jesus' death,
give us life through his glorious resurrection, and help us to
amend our ways by your Spirit.
We pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Lamentations 3:21-24 (NIV)

Leader: But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

People: **The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion; therefore I will hope in Him.**

*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 (1ST - 5TH GRADES)

All children, 1st through 5th 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 *Book of Common Prayer, Collect for Epiphany*

Leader: Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

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

People: **Amen.**

[18] The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) [19] These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

[20] Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. [21] He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. [22] And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. [23] Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. [24] When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, [25] he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

[26] He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.

[27] May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.”

[28] After the flood Noah lived 350 years. [29] All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD

People: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

“The Origins Story: The Curse of Ham”

Rev. Taylor Leachman



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. 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 -
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-communicating 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.



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

From The Depths of Woe

Words by Martin Luther and music by Christopher Miner

© 1997 Christopher Miner Music

From the depths of woe I raise to Thee
The voice of lamentation;
Lord, turn a gracious ear to me
And hear my supplication;
If Thou iniquities dost mark,
Our secret sins and misdeeds dark,
O who shall stand before Thee? (Who shall stand before Thee?)
O who shall stand before Thee? (Who shall stand before Thee?)

To wash away the crimson stain,
Grace, grace alone availeth;
Our works, alas! Are all in vain;
In much the best life faileth;
No man can glory in Thy sight,
All must alike confess Thy might,
And live alone by mercy (Live alone by mercy)
And live alone by mercy (Live alone by mercy)

Therefore my trust is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit;
On Him my soul shall rest, His word
Upholds my fainting spirit;
His promised mercy is my fort,
My comfort and my sweet support;
I wait for it with patience (Wait for it with patience)
I wait for it with patience (Wait for it with patience)

What though I wait the live-long night,
And 'til the dawn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in His might;
It doubteth not nor feareth;
Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;
And wait 'til God appeareth (Wait 'til God appeareth)
And wait 'til God appeareth (Wait 'til God appeareth)

Though great our sins and sore our woes
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.
Our Shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow (All their sin and sorrow)
From all their sin and sorrow (All their sin and sorrow)

***CLOSING PRAYER**

***BENEDICTION**

Richard Halverson, Former Congressional Chaplain

Leader: You go nowhere by accident. Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you find yourself, God has a reason for your being there. Christ who lives in you by the power of the Holy Spirit has something he desires to do in you and through you wherever you find yourself. Believe this and go in His grace, His love, and His power.

ALL: AMEN.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, Feb. 4th 12:00 – 1:00 P.M.

Join us for our second annual Congregational Meeting. All are welcome to attend. A light lunch will be provided. Childcare will be provided

Location: The Leachman's 4517 Evergreen St.



STUDENT LUNCH

Sunday, Feb. 11th 12:30 P.M.

Calling all college students ... join Advent's monthly lunch for undergrads, graduate, and medical students. Register at Adventpres.org/events so we can have a good headcount.

Invite a friend to meet your friends.

Location: The Price's 2202 McClendon St.



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Wednesday Feb. 14th 12:00 P.M.

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.



Media Release

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ADVENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON

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TO THE TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER, RICE
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