
EMBRACE | EMBODY | EXTEND



ADVENT HOUSTON

First Sunday After Christmas Day

DECEMBER • 31 • 2023

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.

CHRISTMAS

The season of Christmas is a 12-day period between Advent and Epiphany in which we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Christian church affirms that the God who spoke in the Milky Way into being is the same God who was born as a helpless babe. The God who created man and woman by the Word of His power is the same God who was nursed and cared for by earthly parents. So, we celebrate and remind ourselves of that beautiful mystery over a 12-day season.

Our world sees Christmas day as the climax of the full holiday season, but we know that one day is not enough to celebrate that God became a man. One day is not enough to contemplate the self-giving love of Jesus Christ. Historically, Christmastide has been celebrated with feasting, dancing, and celebrating in addition to regular worship.

Given that our cultural celebration of Christmas looks so different from the celebration affirmed through the church calendar, it can be pretty challenging to observe the twelve days as our brothers and sisters in Christ used to do. And that’s okay! But in whatever small way you can, take the opportunity this year to keep the celebration going beyond December 25. Take the opportunity to daily read and pray about the beauty of God’s becoming one of us. Take the opportunity to feast and to rejoice with others. Take the opportunity to give gifts to others. Reflect on how God “moved into the neighborhood,” as Eugene Peterson so famously translated John 1. And as you see how Christ has loved you, share that love with someone else.

This is what it means to celebrate the full twelve days of Christmas. May our extended celebration draw us closer to the God who continues to draw close to us!

REFLECTIONS

"Could it be true, this Bethlehem story of a Creator descending to be born on one small planet? If so, it is a story like no other. Never again need we wonder whether what happens on this dirty little tennis ball of a planet matters to the rest of the universe. Little wonder a choir of angels broke out in spontaneous song, disturbing not only a few shepherds but the entire universe."

-Philip Yancey

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

-Corrie Ten Boom

"He who counts the stars and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting His own children. He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature He ever made, or the only saint He ever loved."

-C. H. Spurgeon

"Oh! it is not my remembering God, it is God's remembering me which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant's laying hold on me."

-C. H. Spurgeon

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

1 Timothy 3:16

Leader: Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

All: **He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels,**

Leader: proclaimed among the nations,

All: **believed on in the world, taken up in glory.**

*SONG

All Creatures of Our God and King

Words by Words by St. Francis of Assisi and music from German hymn tune Lasst Uns Erfreuen

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Verse 1

All creatures of our God and King

Lift up your voice and with us sing

Alleluia alleluia

Thou burning sun with golden beam

Thou silver moon with softer gleam

Chorus

Chorus

O praise Him O praise Him

Alleluia alleluia alleluia

Verse 2

Thou rushing wind that art so strong

Ye clouds that sail in heaven along

O praise Him alleluia

Thou rising morn in praise rejoice

Ye lights of evening find a voice

Chorus

Verse 3

Thou flowing water pure and clear
Make music for thy Lord to hear
Alleluia alleluia
Thou fire so masterful and bright
Thou givest man both warmth and light

Chorus

Verse 4

And all ye men of tender heart
Forgiving others take your part
O sing ye alleluia
Ye who long pain and sorrow bear
Praise God and on Him cast your care

Chorus

Verse 5

Let all things their Creator bless
And worship Him in humbleness
O praise Him alleluia
Praise praise the Father praise the Son
And praise the Spirit Three in One

Chorus

PRAYER OF ADORATION**FIRST SCRIPTURE READING**

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

[10] I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

[11] For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

[62:1] For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,

until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.

[2] The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

[3] You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD

People: **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:22-40

[22] And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord [23] (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) [24] and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” [25] Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26] And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. [27] And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, [28] he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

[29] “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

[30] for my eyes have seen your salvation

[31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

[32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

[33] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

[34] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed [35] (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

[36] And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, [37] and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. [38] And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

[39] And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. [40] And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. (ESV)

Leader: The Gospel of the LORD
People: **Praise be to you, Lord Christ.**

*SONG

Joy To The World

Words by Isaac Watts and music by George Frederic Handel

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Joy to the world the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing
And heav'n and nature sing
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing

Joy to the earth the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods
Rocks hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as far as the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders wonders of His love

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Adopted from Belgic Confession, Article 18: The Incarnation

Leader: Christian, what is it that you confess?

All: We confess that God fulfilled the promise made to the early fathers and mothers by the mouth of the holy prophets when he sent the only and eternal Son of God into the world at the time appointed. The Son took the “form of a slave” and was made in “human form,” truly assuming a real human nature with all its weaknesses, except for sin; being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, without male participation. And Christ not only assumed human nature as far as the body is concerned but also a real human soul, in order to be a real human being. For since the soul had been lost as well as the body, Christ had to assume them both to save them together. In this way Christ is truly our Immanuel – that is: “God with us.”

CONFESSION OF SIN

From Jeremy Taylor, a 17th century bishop in the Church of England. Modernized by Jonathan Gibson in *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

All: You have given me a whole life to serve you in, and to advance my hopes of heaven; and this precious time I have thrown away upon my sins and vanities, being improvident of my time and of my talent, and of your grace and my own advantages, resisting your Spirit and quenching him. I have been a great lover of myself, and yet used many ways to destroy myself. I have pursued my temporal ends with greediness and indirect means. I am revengeful and unthankful, forgetting benefits, but not so soon forgetting injuries; curious and murmuring, a great breaker of promises. I have not loved my neighbor’s good, nor advanced it in all things, where I could. I have been unlike you in all things. I am unmerciful and unjust, a foolish admirer of things below,

and careless of heaven and the ways that lead there. But for your name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my sin, for it is great. Amen

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Psalm 34:17-18; 22

Leader: When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.
The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

***Song of Simeon**

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 Augustus Toplady, a 18th century priest in the Church of England. Modernized in *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Leader: Be light to our darkness, wisdom to our folly, and manifest your strength in our weakness. Remember us according to the favor which you bear to your own people; stir us up to seek your face, and to lay hold on your covenant; and make us find that it is indeed good for us to draw nigh unto you, and to wait

upon you in and through the name and merits of Jesus Christ,
our only mediator and advocate.

*Leader intercedes in prayer on behalf of the world,
the Church, and our congregation.*

Leader: We pray all of this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray,
saying ...

People: **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

SERMON SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 103

- [1] Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
- [2] Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
- [3] who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
- [4] who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- [5] who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- [6] The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
- [7] He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
- [8] The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

- [9] He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
- [10] He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
- [12] as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- [13] As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
- [14] For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.
- [15] As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- [16] for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
- [17] But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to
everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
- [18] to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.
- [19] The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
- [20] Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word!
- [21] Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers, who do his will!
- [22] Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
- Bless the LORD, O my soul! (ESV)

Leader: The Word of the LORD

People: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

“The Faithfulness of God”

Rev. Jaime Jimenez



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: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to all in whom he delights.

Therefore, 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 so we have a record of your attendance. Sign-in on the blue 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 glory and honor be yours always and everywhere, mighty creator, ever-living God. We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who for love of our fallen race humbled himself, and was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit, and lived as one of us.

In this mystery of the Word made flesh you have caused his light to shine in our hearts, to give knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see. 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-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.



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

Words and music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend
© 2001 Thankyou Music

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

*SONG

All Glory Be To Christ

From a traditional Scottish tune; words and arrangement by Dustin Kensrue

© 2012 We Are Younger We Are Faster Music

Verse 1

Should nothing of our efforts stand
No legacy survive
Unless the Lord does raise the house
In vain its builders strive
To you who boast tomorrow's gain
Tell me what is your life
A mist that vanishes at dawn
All glory be to Christ!

Chorus

All glory be to Christ our King!
All glory be to Christ!
His rule and reign we'll ever sing,
All glory be to Christ!

Verse 2

His will be done, His kingdom come
On earth as is above
Who is Himself our daily bread
Praise Him the Lord of love
Let living water satisfy
The thirsty without price
We'll take a cup of kindness yet
All glory be to Christ!

Chorus

Verse 3

When on the day the great I am
The faithful and the true
The Lamb who was for sinners slain
Is making all things new
Behold our God shall live with us
And be our steadfast light
And we shall ere his people be
All glory be to Christ!

Chorus x2

***CLOSING PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & MISSION**

***BENEDICTION**

Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

Leader: The LORD bless you and keep you;
 The LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious
 to you;
 The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you
 peace.

People: **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS



YEAR END GIVING

Taylor said it best in his 2023 Stewardship Update email last week about Advent Houston ... “What a year it has been!” And he asked us to “prayerfully take time to consider how you might help us to meet” the goal of becoming a self-sustaining church group.

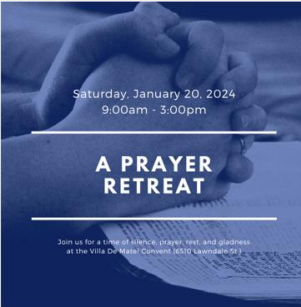


PRAYER RETREAT

Saturday, Jan. 20th at the Villa De Matel Convent

When was the last time you spend a few hours in quiet prayer? Come and join your Advent family in experiencing a time of prayer at a local haven within our city. The event is free.

Register at AdventPres.org/Events.



ALL ABOUT ADVENT Membership Class



ALL ABOUT ADVENT – MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Sunday, February 25th at 5:30 P.M.

Interested in learning more about Advent Houston? Attend the Membership Class on February 25. Register at AdventPres.org/

FINANCIAL UPDATE – Calendar Year to Date

Internal Income	\$147,508
External Income	\$81,875
Planned Internal Income	\$250,000

(Calendar Year to Date = January 1 to December 12, 2023)

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 to opt out of the media release.

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ADVENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOUSTON

2617 BISSONNET ST. SUITE 200, #208
HOUSTON, TX 77005



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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