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EMBRACE | EMBODY | EXTEND



**ADVENT**  
HOUSTON

**Second Sunday Of Lent**

FEBRUARY • 25 • 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.

## LENT

“Unfortunately some Christians live as though the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ never happened. Our lives become absorbed in the day-to-day experiences of life. We focus on name-brand clothing, the color of our houses, the size of our bank account, the year and make of our automobile, the prestige in which others hold us, and the symbols of our own power. We too easily forget our Maker and Redeemer, replacing God with things and ambition. Lent is the season that does something about this situation. It calls us back to God, back to basics, back to the spiritual realities of life. It calls on us to put to death the sin and the indifference we have in our hearts toward God and our fellow persons. And it beckons us to enter once again into the joy of the LORD – the joy of a new life born out of a death to the old life.”

Lent is a forty-day period in the church calendar that dates back to the 4th century. It was originally a time of preparation and spiritual discipline for all who were being baptized at Easter—the normal time of baptism for all new Christians and their families. As early as the 1st century, we see Christians using a time of preparation for their baptism, and with time, this preparation grew to forty days in association with Jesus’ forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness.

Lent is a time that beckons us to remember our own baptismal vows. Martin Luther encouraged his congregation during Lent to “live into [their] baptism.” And so, we too should live into our dying with Christ and rising with Christ. We too are called to live into that pattern of repentance and faith. We are invited to turn away from all distractions and sins and turn toward God.

This lenten practice can take many forms. We can choose to fast from food, reminding ourselves that Christ is our daily bread. As theologians Louis Weil and Charles Price remind us, “The psychosomatic unity of human beings makes it inevitable that a physical glut will cloud mind and spirit.” Alternately, we can fast from some of the distracting behaviors that we have slipped into, like scrolling on our phones at bedtime. Or, we can pursue new habits that help us to pattern our lives on the life of Jesus; we may commit to praying every day or to calling a friend to check on them every day.

During this lenten season, make time to consider the condition of your heart and to enter into a season of living out your baptism in repentance and faith.

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## REFLECTIONS

Here, in this crucified Messiah, we see the love that moves the sun and the stars. To be “with Jesus” means we are not “lost in the cosmos,” but rather we can confidently live in the recognition, with faith, that God is not other than the one found in Jesus of Nazareth. How could we ever think we need to know more than this thief? Like the thief we can live with the hope and confidence that the only remembering that matters is to be remembered by Jesus.

— **Stanley Hauerwas**

The hands that Adam stretched out toward the tree of knowledge, breaking the commandment, were unworthy of stretching out toward the tree of life to receive the gifts of the God that they had despised. Our Lord took these hands and attached them to the cross, so that they might kill their killer and arrive at his marvelous life.

— **Ephrem the Syrian**

One alone was saved upon the Cross that none might despair; and only one, that none might presume.

— **Anonymous, in reference to the criminals on the cross with Christ.**

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

Psalm 107:19-22

**Leader:** Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

**People:** **He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.**

**Leader:** Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!

**People:** **And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!**

## \*SONG

## Oh You Bring

Words and music by Matt Crocker

© 2008 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

### Verse 1

Oh You bring hope to the hopeless  
And light to those in the darkness  
And death to life now I'm alive  
Oh You give peace to the restless  
And joy to homes that are broken  
I see You now, in You I'm found

### Chorus 1

And You opened the door for me  
And You laid down Your life to set me free  
All that I am will serve You Lord

### Verse 2

Oh You fill those who are empty  
And rescue those in the valley  
And through it all You calm my soul  
Oh You find me in my weakness  
And heal the wounds of my heartache  
I worship You in Spirit and truth

## **Chorus 2**

And You opened the door for me  
And You laid down Your life to set me free  
All that I am will serve You Lord  
And You opened my eyes to see  
All the wonder and awe of Christ in me  
Jesus You're everything I need

## **Bridge**

All honor  
All glory  
All praise to You  
*Repeat*  
*Chorus 2*

## **PRAYER OF ADORATION**

### **SCRIPTURE READING**

**Ephesians 2:1-9**

[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—[3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (ESV)

**Leader:** The Word of the LORD

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

## STORIES OF MISSION & MERCY

### \*SONG

### O Sacred Head Now Wounded

Words by Bernard of Clairvaux, translated by James W. Alexander and music by Johann Walther

© Words and Music: Public Domain

O sacred Head now wounded  
With grief and shame weighed down  
Now scornfully surrounded  
With thorns Thine only crown  
How pale Thou art with anguish  
With sore abuse and scorn  
How does that visage languish  
Which once was bright as morn

What Thou my Lord has suffered  
Was all for sinners' gain  
Mine, mine was the transgression  
But Thine the deadly pain  
Lo here I fall my Savior  
'Tis I deserve Thy place  
Look on me with Thy favor  
Assist me with Thy grace

What language shall I borrow  
To thank Thee dearest Friend  
For this Thy dying sorrow  
Thy pity without end  
O make me Thine forever  
And should I fainting be  
Lord let me never never  
Outlive my love to Thee

## \*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Derived from the Christian Enterprise of Zambia 1995

**ALL:**           **The Father, perfect in holiness, power, wisdom, love, grace, and sovereignty, acts in creation and redemption—caring for creation and recreating the universe.**

**The Lord Jesus, came as God in the flesh by a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed miracles by divine power, and died as an atoning sacrifice for sins. The Lord Jesus resurrected bodily, upon his ascension was crowned as king, and now exercises His kingly rule over creation as mediator between God and human beings.**

**The Holy Spirit, by his sovereign work regenerates the repentant, indwells believers, and progressively works a holy life in them. All who believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation share a spiritual unity and belong to the universal church, the body of Christ of which He is the head.**

## CONFESSION OF SIN

Adapted from Rev. Giorgio Hiatt

**Leader:**       For the corrosive belief that you are not good and don't have our best interests at heart:

**People:**       **Heavenly Father, forgive me.**

**Leader:**       For refusing to honor the work of Christ, and trying to earn your favor:

**People:**       **Heavenly Father, forgive me.**

**Leader:**       For feeding and guarding my sinful desires, when you command me to crucify them:

**People:**       **Heavenly Father, forgive me.**

**Leader:**       For believing the lie that the world, and not you, holds the promise of life:

**People:**       **Heavenly Father, forgive me.**

Leader: For all our offenses and all our wanderings:

People: **Heavenly Father, forgive us.**

## \*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Ephesians 2:3-4 (ESV)

Leader: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

## \*KYRIE ELEISON

“Lord Have Mercy”

Words: Ancient Text, Music: Phil Madeira



LEADER: Lord Je-sus Christ, son of God, have mer-cy on me, a sin-ner.



ALL: Lord Je-sus Christ, son of God, have mer-cy on me, a sin-ner.



LEADER: Ky-ri-e e - le-i-son. Lord Je-sus Christ, have mer-cy on me, a sin-ner.



ALL: Have mer-cy on me, a sin-ner. Have mer-cy on me, a sin-ner.

### 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

Adapted from Church of England

**Leader:** O God, the Father of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For your church, that though there is discord and disunity there may grow a rich union in Christ, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who make laws, interpret them and execute them, that our common life may be ordered in justice and mercy, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those in the darkness and agony of isolation, that they may find support and encouragement, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who, weighed down with hardship, failure, or sorrow, feel that God is far from them, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who are tempted to give up the way of the cross, Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

*Congregants may pray for concerns from our congregation, city, and world. After each petition, the following is recited:*

**Leader:** Lord, in your mercy.

**People:** **Hear our prayer.**

**SERMON READING**

**Luke 23:39-43**

[39] One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" [40] But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? [41] And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." [42] And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43] And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (ESV)

Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

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

## SERMON

Rev. Taylor Leachman

The Seven Last Words of Jesus - "Today You Will Be With Me In Paradise"



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:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** And also with you.

**Leader:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** We lift them to the Lord.

**Leader:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People:** It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

**Leader:** And now we give you thanks because each year you give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed. By Your Spirit we grow in loving reverence for you and of willing service to our neighbor.

As we recall the saving acts that give new life in Christ, you bring the image of your Son to perfection within our hearts.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, forever praising you and singing:

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: Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

By your Spirit, unite us with Christ and with your church in all the world.

All glory and honor are yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;

**People: Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;

**People: Have mercy on us.**

Leader: Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;

**People: Grant us your peace.**

Leader: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

**People: Therefore let us keep the feast.**

## 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.

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## COMMUNION SONG

## All Who Are Thirsty

Words and music by Brenton Brown and Glenn Roberts

© 1998 Vineyard Songs

### Verse

All who are thirsty, all who are weak  
Come to the fountain  
Dip your heart in the stream of life  
Let the pain and the sorrow be washed away  
In the waves of His mercy  
As deep cries out to deep, we sing

### Chorus

Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come

*Verse*

### Interlude

As deep cries out to deep  
As deep cries out to deep  
As deep cries out to deep we sing

*Chorus*

## \*SONG

## His Love Can Never Fail

Words by E.S. Hall and music by Christopher Miner

© 2004 Christopher Miner Music

### Verse 1

I do not ask to see the way  
My feet will have to tread;  
But only that my soul may feed  
Upon the living Bread.  
'Tis better far that I should walk  
By faith close to His side;  
I may not know the way I go,  
But oh, I know my Guide.

**Refrain**

His love can never fail, His love can never fail,  
My soul is satisfied to know His love can never fail.  
My soul is satisfied to know His love can never fail.

**Verse 2**

And if my feet would go astray,  
They cannot, for I know  
That Jesus guides my falt'ring steps,  
As joyfully I go.  
And tho' I may not see His face,  
My faith is strong and clear,  
That in each hour of sore distress  
My Savior will be near.

*Refrain*

**Verse 3**

I will not fear, tho' darkness come  
Abroad o'er all the land,  
If I may only feel the touch  
Of His own loving hand.  
And tho' I tremble when I think  
How weak I am, and frail,  
My soul is satisfied to know  
His love can never fail.

*Refrain*

**\*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



## **ALL ABOUT ADVENT – MEMBERSHIP CLASS**

*This Afternoon at 3:30 P.M. at the Leachman's*

Whether you're interested in becoming a member of Advent or just learning more about who we are, you are invited to come and see. Childcare provided.

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  
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