

Advent Theme Study

Hope | Peace | Joy | Love

Sundays at 11:15 a.m.

11/30, 12/7, 12/14, 12/21

Immanuel Lutheran Church

830 S. Ave. W.



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What is the Season of Advent?

Advent means “coming” or “arrival”. The Advent season is a four-week period in the Christian calendar that prepares people for Jesus Christ’s birth at Christmas, while also pointing ahead to his promised return. Each Sunday of the season traditionally spotlights a key theme—like hope, peace, joy, or love—to invite reflection, prayer, and expectant celebration. Advent practices share a heightened anticipation for God’s arrival. More than a countdown to Christmas, Advent embraces the way of Jesus and encourages hopeful waiting, courageous peace-making, resilient joy, and self-giving love in our still-suffering world.

What is an Advent Wreath?

We light candles at church and at home to show that Jesus, the Light of the World, is coming. The four candles mark our four weeks of waiting and each may symbolize Advent themes such as hope, peace, joy, and love. The evergreens remind us of the eternal life Christ brings, and the circle reminds us that God’s love and mercy never end. Some Advent Wreaths include a fifth white candle called the Christ candle to light on Christmas Eve and throughout the twelve days of Christmas.

How to Use this Advent Theme Study

Select one day or several days to focus on the theme for the week. You may use one candle or four candles and a wreath or not. Pray the litany below, read the introduction, one or more the theme scriptures, and then reflect on what you like or questions you have about the reading. Close with the theme’s refrain or a prayer.

Litany

Into our darkness, our doubt and despair
Come, Lord Jesus, and be our light.
Into our sorrow, our sickness and grief,
Come, Lord Jesus, and be our comfort and joy.
Into our fears, our failures, our sin,
Come, Lord Jesus, forgive and renew.
Into our poverty of generosity and compassion,
Come, Lord Jesus, and change our hearts.
Into each place of conflict, division and war,
Come, Lord Jesus, and be our peace.
Into our wounded world, the earth, sea and sky,
Come, Lord Jesus, and give hope and healing.

This study is written and adapted from www.bibleproject.com by Pastor Molly Sasser-Goehner



ADVENT ONE: HOPE

Hope may feel wishful, like crossing our fingers while each day seems to bring more troubling news than the previous one. Advent invites us to imagine a different kind of hope, rooted in God's promise to restore every part of creation. It does not minimize pain or difficulty, nor does it assume things will get better soon. Instead, it faces the darkness with courage and chooses to trust that God's promises will come to pass, guaranteed by God's long-proven, faithful character.

As we hope and wait, we lean forward, anticipating the day when Jesus will return to make all things new. Such hope empowers us to persevere, to act justly, and to serve others as a sign of the restoration that will arrive through Jesus. In this daily hope, we discover that Christ is always coming to us, entering a troubled world, a ruined relationship, a broken body, a wounded heart.

Facing Darkness With Firm Hope: Isaiah 8:5–17

In the face of violent threats and fear that God has turned away from God's people, Isaiah chooses to wait for God with hope.

Hoping for Redemption: Psalm 130

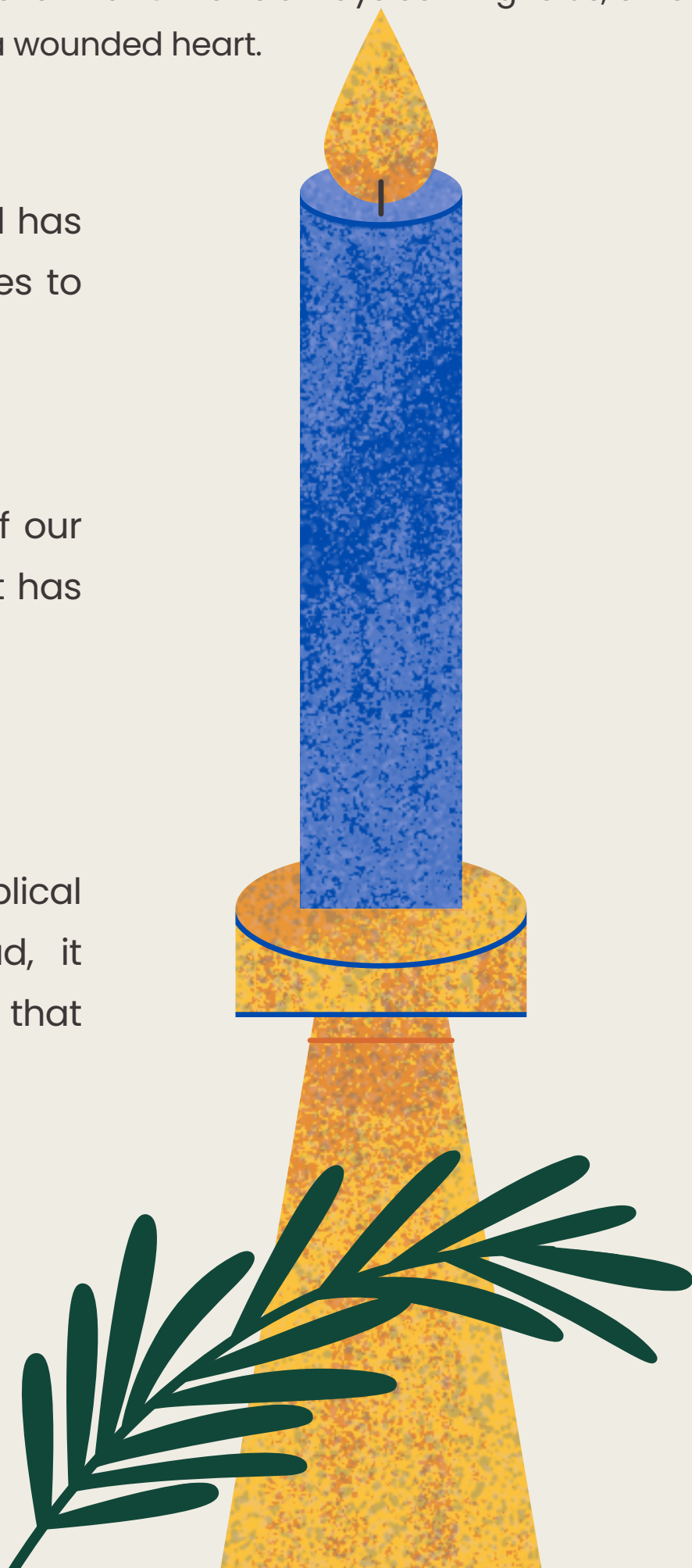
God shows loyal love. So even in the depth of our suffering, we can hope in God to redeem what has been harmed.

Holding Fast to Living Hope When Suffering

1 Peter 1:3–9, Romans 8:18–25

Suffering can make our hope feel fragile, but biblical hope doesn't wither under pressure. Instead, it becomes more firmly grounded in the promise that God is making all things new.

Christ is our Hope. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.



ADVENT TWO: PEACE

We often hear that peace comes through strength like through a powerful, unchallenged military. Taking the opposite approach, some try to “keep the peace” by avoiding conflict and ignoring problems, hoping they’ll solve themselves. Like Israel’s false prophets, both provide superficial harmony, saying, “Peace, peace!” But, in reality, nobody is truly at peace.

The kind of peace envisioned during Advent comes not through military victory or avoidance of reality, but through the way of Jesus. He brings true peace by honestly addressing and working to heal the deeper sources of division, such as fear and pride, that compel us to violence. Jesus reconciles all things to himself, offering healing and restoration through love and forgiveness.

As Jesus continues his work of bringing real, lasting peace throughout the Earth, we can participate in that work by living as peacemakers. We join with Jesus by embracing his non-violent way of forgiveness, caring for our neighbors, and extending generous love toward all people. Christ is our peace. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The Prince of Peace Who Ends Violence:

Isaiah 9:1-7

When the threat of war terrifies King Ahaz, he allies with Assyria and its legendary warriors to bring “peace” through violent strength. But God promises that a new king will arrive to bring peace by ending all violence forever.

How Jesus’ Death and Resurrection Bring Peace

Colossians 1:13-23

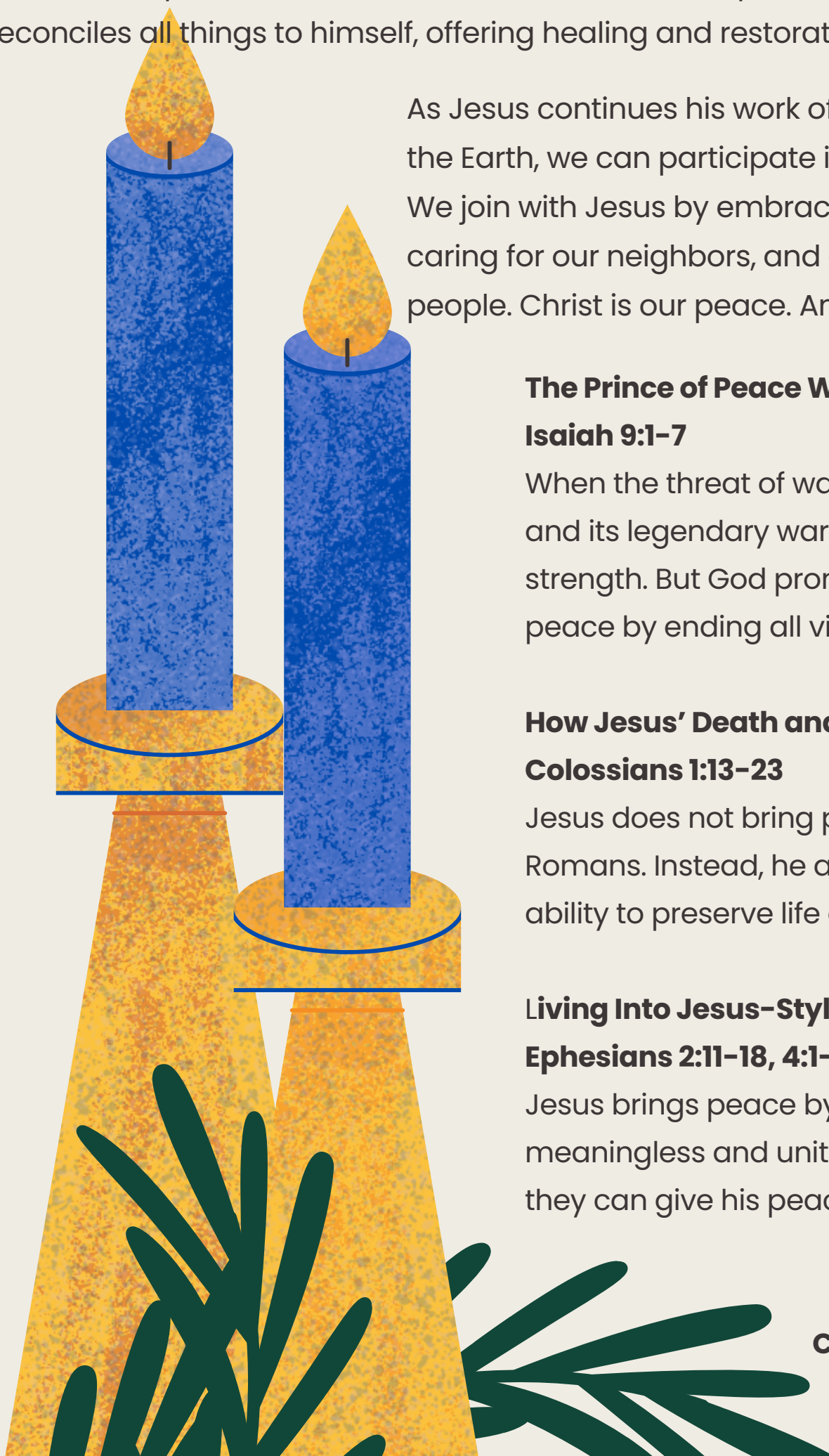
Jesus does not bring peace by leading an army to overthrow the Romans. Instead, he allows his enemies to kill him, trusting God’s ability to preserve life even through death

Living Into Jesus-Style Peace

Ephesians 2:11-18, 4:1-6

Jesus brings peace by making divisions between people meaningless and uniting all of his followers into one body, so they can give his peace to others.

Christ is our Peace. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.



ADVENT THREE: JOY

All around us are signs of joy—children, lights, music, food and gathering together. Yet, these signs of the season may hide the sorrows of the world. We often think about joy as an experience of happiness based on things going our way. But when joy depends on circumstances, it fades fast when the good times end.

Advent joy is not about general happiness stemming from good times. Rather, Advent joy is a deep sense of safety and freedom we feel because of God’s loving character, which remains constant through all circumstances, and because God can be trusted to ultimately bless and heal creation as God promised. Like the joy a friend’s presence brings on good days and bad, we experience joy as God walks with us through the ups and downs of life’s positive and painful circumstances.

The season of Advent invites us to experience joy not because everything is perfect, but because God is with us. God’s joy is already breaking into the world. The angels proclaimed that the Christ child’s birth was good news of great joy for everyone. We wait for the joy of Jesus to make our sorrows cease. Christ is our joy. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Joy in God’s Exodus Deliverance

Psalms 105:43; Isaiah 51:1–11

Throughout the Bible, people often celebrate with great joy when God rescues them from injustice.

Joy in Jesus’ Kingdom

Luke 2:8–14; John 15:9–17

Jesus invites us to live in a new kind of Kingdom, where true joy is found not in taking and having but in giving and blessing. This Kingdom is rooted in generous, selfless service toward others.

Joy in the Midst of Sorrow

Matthew 5:11–12; 2 Corinthians 6:1–10

Joy and sorrow are different human experiences, often seen as inherently opposed. But people choosing to live like Jesus often experience joy in the midst of sorrow.

Christ is our Joy. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.



ADVENT FOUR: LOVE

Love is often seen as a force beyond our control, something people fall in or out of. Or it may seem like something satisfying that we can achieve, driving us to chase affection through relationships or status. “Love is all you need,” they say, because it’s the path to self-fulfillment.

But something is missing from that picture of love. The Bible invites us to see a kind of love that’s neither accidental, nor driven by desire for self-fulfillment. Instead, it involves a steady commitment to care for the well-being of others—never self-seeking, always self-giving—even when it costs us.

Jesus shows this kind of love when he gives his life for friends and enemies alike. Dying on a cross, with his killers still laughing at him, Jesus cares for their well-being as he prays for their forgiveness. Living with this kind of love does not mean ignoring our own needs or devaluing ourselves. After all, Jesus says to “love your neighbor as yourself.” But it means choosing to see all people as living miracles of God, each made in God’s image and deeply loved.

The Advent season leads us to reflect on the future God is bringing, where every interaction will be shaped and compelled by love. Even more, it invites us to live into that coming world right now by loving others the way Jesus does. As we give of ourselves to care for both friends and enemies, we demonstrate the love that Jesus shows to all people. In Jesus, love has come and never will leave us. Christ is our love. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

All the Laws Lead to Love

Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18;

Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:27–36

When asked to name God’s most important commandment, Jesus offers a summary of all God’s commands: love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Bright Reflections of Divine Love Everywhere

1 John 4:7–21

We love because God first loved us. And as God pours out his love on us, it flows through us and to our communities.

What True Love Looks Like

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Paul reminds the Corinthians that spiritual gifts are meaningless without self-giving love, which endures forever.

Christ is our Love. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.



Merry Christmas

The white candle is the “Christ candle.” Its flame symbolizes God’s light entering our dark world through the birth of Jesus and through his resurrection from the grave.

Witness, the Light of Creation

John 1:1–9

Jesus is the light of God from the beginning of creation. John testifies to Jesus, the Light of the World.

God is Light

1 John 1:5–9

In God there is no darkness. We let Christ’s love shine upon the truth of our sin and receive the light of Christ’s forgiveness and grace.

Jesus, Light of the World

John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.*”

Christ is our Light. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

