

ADVENT: WAITING WITH HOPE AND EXPECTATION

First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2009

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

The LORD Our Salvation

Today, the first Sunday of Advent, marks a wonderfully exciting time in the church year. The change of season proclaims - Jesus Christ is coming! We sing "O come, O come, Emmanuel" as we await Christ Jesus' arrival. In announcing his advent, all the readings echo the word COMING:

- The LORD said: I made a wonderful promise to Israel and Judah, and the days are COMING when I will keep it. (Jeremiah 33:14, *CEV*)
- When our Lord COMES with all of his people, I pray he will make your hearts pure and innocent in the sight of God the Father. (1 Thessalonians 3:13, *CEV*)
- Then the Son of Man will be seen, COMING in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:27, *CEV*)

The message of Advent is God's reassurance to us of his faithfulness to his promises. The promise is that Jesus Christ will be present among us and the Holy Spirit will guide and counsel us. Advent also is a summons to watch and pray. Watch for signs of the kingdom of God, for signs of love and forgiveness, for signs of hope and joy, for peace. Be alert for opportunities to reach out to others. Pray for the coming of the kingdom and the fulfillment of God's will. We are called to grow in holiness as we prepare for the coming of the Lord.

God will overcome and change the world by pouring out, in self sacrifice and love, his unrestricted force and flood of divine life. This life can be brought into being by making real in human affairs the depth of divine life and love; by showing 'glory' – the intensity and radiance of unqualified joy, eternal self-giving. Only in the heart of the ordinary vulnerability of human life can this be shown in such a way, so that we are saved from the terrible temptation of confusing it with earthly power and success. This is an assurance from the LORD, as recorded by Jeremiah, that God truly is the LORD, our salvation.

Today, we begin the new church cycle; we start over again, and we have the opportunity to review and recommit ourselves to the disciplines of faith. We will again receive the invitation and call, "Come, for all things are ready!" Let us respond with faith, in preparation of Jesus' coming! Amen!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Tenny Thomas, a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City and who serves as a consultant for the American Bible Society in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Uzbekistan –

With prayers for the completion of the Old Testament translation and the publication of some books of the New Testament into Uzbek, for the translation of the Old Testament into Karakalpak, and that the government will permit the importing and distribution of Scriptures in Central Asia's Turkic languages; **Tajikistan** – With thanks to God for the completion of the New Testament into Shughni and for the distribution of the four Gospels in modern Tajik, and with prayers for the production of a Bible Atlas in Tajik and Shughni, for the Braille project, and for the recording of the Tajik New Testament; **Kazakhstan** – With prayers for God's guidance for Bible work in prisons, orphanages, children's summer camps, and among people searching for meaning, and with prayers for plans for a diglot Scripture Portion in Kazakh-Russian, that the new legislation in the country will not prevent the distribution of the Bible, and with prayers for political and economic stability in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Activity Corner: "Waiting for Jesus with a Heart Filled with HOPE"

Supplies needed: Bible; Bible Concordance; small notebook or writing paper; pen/pencil.

The theme for the first week of Advent is HOPE. Look up the word HOPE in a Bible Concordance and then look up several Bible passages that contain the word. What is the hope that is expressed in each passage? Consider keeping an Advent Journal to record your thoughts and reflections. At the end of the week, prepare a prayer that incorporates your thoughts. Share your prayer with members of your household during a time of family devotion.

Throughout the Advent season, gather with members of your household and reflect daily on Christ's Advent – his coming on Christmas as a baby in Bethlehem, his coming to you each day through the Holy Scriptures and prayer, and his promise to come again at the close of the age. The Bible readings for Advent remind us to remain alert and faithful as we prepare for and await our Lord's coming. If you are using an Advent Wreath, light the first candle prior to the Scripture reading for the day.

Sunday	Isaiah 40:1-11
Monday	Isaiah 61:1-11
Tuesday	Jeremiah 31:1-14
Wednesday	Romans 5:1-11
Thursday	Romans 15:7-13
Friday	1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:11
Saturday	2 Peter 3:1-18

Conclude each day's reading with prayer and singing the first verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" or one of your favorite Advent carols.