

2023 Advent Series
Introduction: "In The Beginning"
John 1:1-18

In the Beginning:

- 1. Was the Word** (See also 1 Jhn 1:1-4) *Before time and creation existed, the Word was. The picture here is of the Word's existence prior to the beginning.* **1-5**
- a. And the Word was with God. (e.g., Jhn 8:58; 17:5)
 - b. And the Word was God - Or - And God was the Word (emphasis, mine).
 - c. He was with God in the beginning. (He is separate from, but equal to and One with God). e.g., Jhn 17:5, 24; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet 1:20
 - d. He (the Word) is the One through whom all things were created. Nothing was made without Him ("And not even one thing was made w/o Him"). Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3
 - e. He is light and life - the One who enlightens humanity. Jhn 8:12; 9:5; 11:25; 12:46; 14:6
 - f. The darkness cannot comprehend/overcome Him. See Mat 16:18; 1 Cor 2:14-16

2. His way was prepared **6-13**

- a. John came from God (Lke 1:1-24/Isa 40:1-11; Mal 3:1-5; 4:5-6
 - He was the Elijah who was to come. Mat 11:7-14/17:10-12
 - He bore witness to the Light/Word. e.g., Jhn 1:29-34
- b. He came to His own ... and was rejected. Isa 53:3
- c. But to all who receive Him, He gave the right to become children of God. This is not a human birth but a work of the Spirit. See Jhn 3:5-8; Tit 3:3-5

3. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us **14-18**

- a. "Emmanuel"- He lived among us as one of us. Fully God and fully man in one person. See also Isa 9:1-7.
- b. The only "born one" "from the Father." See also Jhn 6:46
- c. The only Revealer of God to humanity. Jhn 5:16-23; 6:46; 14:6-7, 9-11; Col 1:15-17; 1 Tim 6:13-16; Heb 1:1-3.
- d. The law came *through* Moses (It came from God), grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You can't by-pass Him. He is the way, truth, life and only way to the Father.
Salvation is found in no one else (Jhn 14:6; Act 4:12)
Do you know Him?

2023 Advent Series
“The Prediction”
Gen 49:8-12

1. The ruler’s staff will not depart from Judah until He to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be His. In this messianic prophesy there are some things to note:

- a. Judah will be the royal tribe (See Zec 10:4) and will continue as such until one comes who will rule by right and who will govern the nations.
- b. See also Ezk 21:27 - The house of David will not regain the throne until it comes to the One to whom such rule belongs and who will judge. Note that in Jer 22:28-30 the royal line of the deported king Jehoiachin is cursed to never regain the throne. Compare the genealogies in Matt 1 and Lke 3 - They are different. In Matthew the line of descent isn through Solomon down through Jehoiachin. That cannot be the Messianic line. But the genealogy given in Lke 3 is from David through his son Nathan, not through Solomon. That line was / is destined to rule.

So we know that One from Judah will rule the nations and be descended from David.

2. A child will come, be born who will rule eternally on David’s throne. Isa 9:1-7

- a. Although through judgment God had humbled Galilee, He will bless / honor it in the future.
 - Galilee of the Gentiles.
 - Along the Jordan, by the way of the sea. (Sound familiar?)
- b. The people there would see a great light.
- c. Oppression shall cease and they shall rejoice in freedom.
- d. War shall cease (See Isa 2:1-5, Psm 110, Mic 4:1-5)
- e. Why? Because:
 - To us a child is born.
 - To us a son is given.
 - He will rule.
 - He will be called:
 - * Wonderful / extraordinary.
 - * Counselor.
 - * Mighty God.
 - * Prince of Peace.
 - His rule and peace will be eternal.
 - He will rule on David’s throne with justice (Jhn 5:19-22).
 - God will do this!

Yet in His incarnation, the people looked for a different kind of savior.

Jhn 7:25-53

3. The One to come would be in Bethlehem. (Mic 5:1-4)

- a. Despite the defeat and captivity of Judah’s rulers, a ruler was coming.
- b. From Bethlehem of Judah (a small, relatively unimportant town) would come for the Lord a ruler who is eternal (“from days of eternity”).
- c. Israel will be abandoned until she who is labor bears a Son and He sets things right.

4. He wouldn’t be what they were expecting (Isa 53)

- a. An unlooked-for and (to their minds), unlikely Messiah. A “root out of dry ground.”
- b. A most ordinary man (unremarkable appearance).
- c. The “Lamb of God” who bore our sins and purchased our peace with God. (Rom 3:21-26)

God's predictions cannot be separated from His promises.

From the beginning (E.g., Gen 3:15) He has had a plan (Rev 13:8)

God progressively revealed more of His plan over time and humanity had a lot of details by the time of our Savior's birth.

- He would crush Satan's head (Heb 2:14-18, 1 Jhn 3:8)
- He would come from the tribe of Judah.
- He would be a descendant of David.
- He would be both human and divine.
- He will rule eternally.
- He would be born in Bethlehem.
- He would bear our sins/guilt.
- He would come as an ordinary man.

And this is only the "tip of the iceberg." There is so much more.

Think of God's promises. Can you list some?

What does not mean to you that He is absolutely trustworthy? (Heb 10:23)

And how does/should this affect your life? (E.g., Heb 10:19-39, 13:4-6)

Finally, never forget *whose* timeline we live by. (Hab 2:3, Lke 18:7, 2 Pet 3:9)

2023 Advent Series
“The People”
Luke 1:1-80

What sort of people does God use? Are there any markers that might indicate a potential for spiritual greatness and productivity? In our text today we will examine three very different and ordinary people. And we will look at others in scripture through whom God blessed, challenged and changed the world.

1. Zechariah and Elizabeth

- a. Life had not gone as they had hoped:
 - They were both descendants of Aaron.
 - They were both righteous in God’s sight (Whose opinion alone matters).
 - They were “well advanced in age and childless.” Which would be considered a sign of disfavor.

- b. God sent them a messenger and a message:
 - Gabriel got around. He is previously seen in the book of Daniel (Chpts 8-9).
 - His message was amazing: His prayers had been heard. He and Elizabeth would have a son.
 - * And that son would be a huge blessing.
 - * And that son would play a key role in fulfilling God’s purpose in salvation.
 - He couldn’t see past his situation and doubted God’s message and messenger. And God gently chastened him. God seems to specialize in driving us to the point to where we can’t achieve His plan for us on our own. He forces us to depend on Him. When that happens, hang on! Things may not go how we envisioned them but it will be good. In bible history there are several examples of God using divine means to overrule nature by bringing about miraculous births. It is like saying, “Watch closely - something significant is about to happen.” Think Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Sampson’s mom.

- c. We do not know much about John’s growing up but we are told that “the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.” Lke 1:80. And when it was time, the word of God came to him (Lke 3:1-6, Jer 1:9-19).

- d. Think of the ministry of parenting! Never say, I’m just a dad, a mom. The ministry of parenting has great potential to change this world.

2. Mary

- a. A young girl (Somewhere between 13 and 18, per “Ancient Israelites: Society & Lifestyle,” <myjewishlearning.com>)
- b. A willing servant of God. Mary had found favor with God. And us? See 1 Jhn 3:1-3.
- c. Just an ordinary girl who trusted an infinitely good and powerful God.

3. Jeremiah (see Jer 1:4-8)

- a. God’s appointed prophet to the nations.
- b. He felt unqualified due to his youth and perhaps, for being untrained as a speaker (See 2 Cor 11:6)
- c. A young man who dared to obey God and stand on His word.

Think of who God uses!

Tradesmen	Priests	Dad/husband	Children	Soldiers	The rich
Shepherds	Farmers	Grandfathers.	Failures	Princes	Slaves
Teenagers	Laborers	Scholars	The Timid	Widows	Kings
Soldiers	Wives/mothers	Old folks	The fearful	The poor	Scribes

***The ordinary
1 Cor 1:26-2:5***

Why do we tend to excuse ourselves by thinking that only the humanly powerful, brave or privileged get things done?

Bloom where He has planted you and expect Him to work. 1 Cor 12:7

Offer yourselves and know that it matters. Rom 12:1

And above all, seek Him.

Remember, God does not use "perfect" people. He uses those He is perfecting.

Moses felt that he was not eloquent. And he had a past.

Rahab had been a sex worker.

Gideon was fearful

Ruth was a foreigner.

Peter denied Him.

Paul had been a persecutor.

Manasseh had been an apostate and a violent man.

What makes the difference? God.

2023 Advent Series
“The Presence”

Luke 2:1-21/Rom 8:1-4
Theme Verse: Rom 8:3-4

In this message we will look at two things: God’s identification with humanity in our lostness and need. He came for all, not merely the outwardly righteous. Secondly, to those who received Him, He conferred a ministry. We are saved to serve.

1. God sent His Son in our likeness. Rom 8:1-4

- a. He came as a man under the curse - he could hunger, bleed, suffer and die. Just like us (Heb 4:14-16).
 - Our great High Priest
 - Able to sympathize with our weaknesses.
 - Understands temptation (Lewis quote)
 - Without sin (A spotless, perfect sacrifice and representative for humanity before the Father. See Rom 5:12-21.
- b. He came as one of us (Heb 2:10-17)
 - Christ tasted death for everyone.
 - He was made perfect through what He suffered (He completed redemption - Jhn 19:30. The ministry of redemption was carried out and God’s justice satisfied - Rom 3:21-26
 - He came in our likeness to be a sin offering (Heb 2:11-13)

He came on our behalf

2. He came to ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. Luke 2:1-21

- a. A young couple in a bind.
 - A cloud on their reputation.
 - Poor, expecting and about to deliver.
 - Far from home and needing a place to shelter. What a quintessentially human predicament! No room (either guest room or inn),
- b. Ordinary working people doing their job. Not the high priest, not the king, not the comfortable and wealthy. Ordinary people living their lives.
- c. A backwater town - maybe 2 or 3 thousand people, or likely, just a few hundred.
- d. God sent the glory of heaven to the most ordinary of people.
 - An angelic messenger came in the glory of God with a message.
 - He brought momentous news.
 - He told them how to find the child.
 - The message was driven home by a great company of the heavenly host.

He came for us all

3. They were sent out to declare the arrival

- a. They went out looking.
- b. They found and worshipped the Lord incarnate.
- c. They spread the word.
- d. They returned (To their sheep!), worshipping God. 1 Cor 7:17-24

Christ in us, will minister to others where He has placed us.

“No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness — they have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means — the only complete realist.”

— C.S. Lewis