



“CONSCIOUS AND INTENTIONAL MINISTRY: DOING WHO I AM”

Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

THE PASTOR’S PEN

December 19, 2021

ADAPTED FROM WHAT IS ADVENT? by Justin Holcomb

For many Christians unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there may be some confusion surrounding the meaning of the Advent season. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think that it serves as an anticipation of Christ’s birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there’s more to Advent. The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *Parousia* (the second coming of Christ).

Advent Today

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. Advent 2018 begins on Sunday, December 2 and ends on Monday, December 24.

Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these “last days”, as God’s people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s kingdom when he returns for his people. In this light, the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” perfectly represents the church’s cry during the Advent season:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

While Israel would have sung the song in expectation of Christ’s first coming, the church now sings the song in commemoration of that first coming and in expectation of the second coming in the future.

Advent Liturgy and Practice

To balance the two elements of remembrance and anticipation, the first two Sundays in Advent look forward to Christ’s second coming, and the last two Sundays look backward to remember Christ’s first coming.

While it is difficult to keep in mind in the midst of holiday celebrations, shopping, lights and decorations, and joyful carols, Advent is intended to be a season of fasting, much like Lent, and there are a variety of ways that this time of mourning works itself out in the season. Reflection on the violence and evil in the world cause us to cry out to God to make things right—to put death’s dark shadows to flight. Our exile in the present makes us look forward to our future Exodus. And our own sinfulness and need for grace lead us to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew his work in conforming us into the image of Christ.

PILGRIM REST OASIS

We envision the Pilgrim Rest Oasis as a needed resource to revitalize our community through family engagement and holistic community service. The Pilgrim Rest Oasis will function for the good of the community to promote neighborhood vitality.

The Pilgrim Rest Oasis is established upon three foundations:

1. Education Center – An elementary school with a comprehensive educational program built upon academic rigor, cultural understanding and character development, and to facilitate and expand our Summer Learning Camp.
2. Community Center – A center to support and invigorate the capacity of residents to thrive in recreation, athletics, performing arts, technology, along with other areas of their lives.
3. Community Venue – A venue to support and encourage the creative and innovative work of our neighbors while gathering to discuss and debate. GED/HSED and continuing education classes for adults, intergenerational gatherings, and more.

Through the Pilgrim Rest Oasis, we will create an environment for refreshment, renewal, restoration, refuge and recreation (re-creation). Our vision is to create the place and space for a **Pilgrim** to find **Rest**.

The momentum of our journey presses us to continue looking forward, knowing that this is our time, our opportunity, our expression of faith for this season through the Pilgrim Rest Oasis.



WORK FOR THE WEEK

DECEMBER MEMORY VERSE

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

DECEMBER MEDITATION QUOTE

“Our world is not divided by race, color, gender, or religion. Our world is divided into wise people and fools. And fools divide themselves by race, color, gender, or religion.”

Nelson Mandela