



“Glory to God in the highest...”

The season of Advent begins on the Sunday closest to the commemoration of St. Andrew (November 30) in the church year. The four Sundays of Advent are not the season of Christmas itself. The season of Christmas, in the church year, begins December 25 and lasts for twelve days. Advent means “coming” speaking about the promised Messiah “coming” to earth to dwell in human flesh (**St. John 1:14**). Advent also teaches about the Savior’s second coming along with a celebration of His first coming to earth to die on the cross. Traditionally, Advent is a time of repentance and preparation, but also involves joy in the knowledge of God’s promise of a Savior kept in the person of Christ and that He will come again to take believers with Him to life everlasting. The beginning of the church year starts with Advent. The first half of the church year from Advent through Pentecost is called the “festival half” of the church year and teaches about the “life of Christ”, that is, what He came to earth to accomplish by His death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sin. The Second half of the church year is the “non-festival half” which teaches the “life of the church” which is to proclaim the Gospel to the world. We just finished the second half of the church year and now begin a new church year with Advent.

While Advent is a time of repentance and of preparation for the Lord’s second coming for the first two Sundays of Advent, we are also joyful in the knowledge that our salvation has been accomplished in Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem who sheds His blood on the cross and then rises in triumphant victory over sin, death and the devil. The work of salvation accomplished by Christ on His cross is the event foretold in the first promise of the Savior in **Genesis 3:15** ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*** Living on this side of the cross as we do, we know the outcome and anticipate the Christmas celebration with great joy. Therefore, we give thanks and praise God for His blessings each Sunday, even during the penitential season of Advent because we are saved by God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

As we celebrate God’s gifts to us through the season of Advent and Christmas, we learn that like Lent, Advent is a season of penitence. We ask God for His continual grace and mercy in Christ that we would be ready for the Lord’s second coming with a good conscience. In faithful adoration with a repentant heart we are ready to see our redemption drawing near (**St. Luke 21:28**). We also ask God’s grace and forgiveness that prepares our repentant heart for the Lord’s Supper, His means of grace to us that gives us what Christ has earned on the cross, forgiveness, life and salvation. During Advent, we look forward with great joy to see the Babe of Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger with angel choirs above singing praise for His promise of a Savior, first made in **Genesis 3:15**, then delivered in the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Advent is truly a marvelous time of year which prepares us for Christ’s second coming while celebrating God’s promises kept in His first coming.

The first promise of the Gospel, that is, the first promise of a Savior in **Genesis 3:15** is fulfilled in **St. Luke 2:11** ***“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*** Advent/Christmas show us the promise of God made and then kept in Christ Jesus.

Our culture today begins celebrating, or perhaps selling, Christmas around Reformation (Halloween) and ends the Christmas season all too quickly on December 25. But Christmas has just begun for the Christian Church. The great joy of the promise of a Savior delivered in Bethlehem is too much good news to end after just one day. Therefore, the church celebrates Christmas for 12 days giving thanks to God for His compassion that gives us Christ the Savior. I pray you all enjoy a most blessed Advent/Christmas season as we gather to hear God’s Word and sing His praises during this beautiful time in the church year.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” St. Luke 2:14. (NKJV)

Please consider attending Bible class during December as we look at the Gospel of St. Luke telling of The Birth of Christ.

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt