

The
Seedbed
Daily Text

+
THE
ADVENT
MISSION

SERMON
SERIES
OUTLINE

Omar Rikabi serves as a United Methodist pastor in the Dallas area. He and his wife, Jennifer, have three daughters: Sadie, Norah, and Lilly. When not telling stories, Omar likes to watch movies, read books, and work in the kitchen cooking and grilling for family and friends.

The Seedbed Daily Text - The Advent Mission (Sermon Series Outline)

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SERMON SERIES OUTLINE & GUIDANCE

Advent and all it represents matters deeply. It matters to our faith because it is about what God has done, is doing, and is going to do. The Christian calendar is based on the life and ministry of Jesus; Advent is uniquely the one part of the story that we're still waiting on to happen, while also celebrating what Jesus has already done. Advent has the power to inform and shape who we are for the future more than any other season in the church.

Many folks tend to separate Advent and Christmas, with the first serving as the count-down to the second. We separate the two events—the two seasons—and then just sort of quit on the day after Christmas. But Robert Webber called seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany the “Cycle of Light.” They belong together in significant ways. It is through this cycle that *The Advent Mission* journeys (Robert Webber, *Ancient Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004], 34).

Advent can be a special time in a church community when many people return for the holidays. And although the season may be widely celebrated, it is less understood. This six-sermon series offers an opportunity for preaching to help persons and communities better understand and participate in God's rescue mission through Jesus Christ: the rescue mission we observe at Advent.

These are not full manuscripts, but outlines with points of proclamation. Think of them as mission objectives to help launch the trajectory of the message. You may have some spaces to fill, depending on the time allotment for sermons in your service. For those churches that light an Advent candle as part of worship, each sermon has a connection to that week's theme. Feel free to let the Holy Spirit guide you in making these your own sermons for your context.

SERMON 1

THE ADVENT MISSION

The First Sunday of Advent (Christ Our Hope)

TEXT

Hebrews 10:23–25 (NLT)

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

Illustrate: To help launch this series, start with one of these ideas to help your audience see where we're going:

- + What is a favorite memory you have of preparing and counting down until Christmas? Did you ever use one of those classic Advent calendars with twenty-four days of chocolate? Isn't it interesting that we call that countdown a "calendar," and isn't it fascinating that there are so many unique calendars today (like the cheese, wine, or LEGO Star Wars Advent calendars)?
- + Share a story or memory of your past experiences and ideas with Advent, and ask the question, "What are we really preparing for?"
- + Share what seasons orient your life and family. Hunting, school, sports, farming, etc.

We tend to think of Advent as the start of the countdown to Christmas morning, but really it's "Happy New Year!" Advent is the beginning of the Christian calendar, which is oriented to the life of Jesus Christ. The irony about the Christian calendar is that it begins at the end, but once you see how it all fits, it makes sense.

ADVENT: the return of Jesus to the world in final victory, because of . . .

CHRISTMAS: the birth of Jesus into the world, which leads to . . .

EPIPHANY: the manifestation of Jesus to the world, which leads to . . .

LENT: Jesus' journey to the cross for the world, which leads to . . .

EASTER: the resurrection of Jesus in the world, which leads to . . .

ASCENSION: the enthronement of Jesus over the world, which leads to . . .

PENTECOST: Jesus sending his Spirit into the world, which leads to . . .

KINGDOMTIDE: proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the world, which leads to . . .

ADVENT: the return of Jesus to the world in final victory.

So what is Advent and what is our mission? Let's look at the two words. Advent is "the arrival of a notable person or event." So, then, the season of Advent is about preparing for and celebrating the arrival of Jesus. But not just in the manger as a baby, but also his second arrival when he returns.

Mission is "a sending to go perform a specific duty." In the creation story, humanity was given a specific mission: to walk with God and tend to creation. But we know what happened: mission failure. Because of this, God had a new mission—a rescue mission—summed up in the mission statement of our faith, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16).

If Jesus' arrival in the manger is the first part of that mission, his arrival in the clouds when he returns is the last part. This is our hope, and we are invited to participate because we can hope from the future.

Today's scripture calls us to meet together and encourage each other because Jesus is coming back soon, and that is our hope as we live today and prepare for his return.

FURTHER POINTS TO EXPLORE

- + Discuss what people tend to be anxious about in the future (peace, retirement, economy, exams, etc.). Discuss events people are excited about (weddings, birthdays, vacations, promotions, etc.).
- + Explore Bible stories where people needed hope: Adam and Eve after the fall; Abraham and Sarah with no children; Israel enslaved in Egypt; Israel in exile; Israel waiting for a Messiah; Israel struggling to keep their covenant with God, etc.

CHALLENGE / INVITATION

To look at this season in a new or different way than just holiday nostalgia and to prepare with hope for the second return of Jesus before we celebrate his first arrival. How can knowing the cycle of Christ's life in our calendar help reorient our lives toward Jesus?

OTHER SCRIPTURE

Romans 13:11–14

CORRESPONDING BOOK DAYS

Introduction and Day 1 (p. 3)

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SMALL
GROUP
DISCUSSION
GUIDE

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The Seedbed Daily Text - *The Advent Mission* (Small Group Discussion Guide)

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SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Seedbed Daily Text and the *The Advent Mission* is not just information but transformation that leads to action. We believe Scripture is worthy of our most focused and consistent attention. While Scripture always addresses us personally, it is not written to us individually. The content of Scripture cries out for a community to address, which is the goal of this small-group study. Included are short video segments for each week (5–10 minutes in length). There are Scripture passages that serve as a basis for the reading each week, along with further Bible references and questions to work through as a group. Finally, there are repeated procedures to follow up on in smaller groups, where appropriate.

Throughout the study you will come across references to discipleship bands. This is a practice of deep-dive discipleship that offers a model for meeting together, reading together, and praying together. If you would like to learn more about discipleship bands, visit discipleshipbands.com where you can also download a free app.

There are two challenges to an Advent Bible study. First, it has a specific start and stop date (this book study begins on December 1 and runs through January 6). Second, it is during the busiest holiday season of the year. Because of this, it may be challenging for a small group to meet according to a regular schedule. What follows is a suggested plan for deploying *The Advent Mission* as a resource for a Sunday school class, small group, class meeting, or discipleship band during this important season. Feel free to edit procedures and questions based on your context.

SESSION 1

REASONS FOR THE SEASONS

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

BAND TOGETHER

Gather your group and set apart your time together, maybe with the saying of the Lord's Prayer or the lighting of a candle. Give each person an opportunity to check in with what is happening in their life since you last met. Ask the question, How is it with your soul? Or, How is your life with God?

PRAY

Take a few moments to intentionally pray for each other. Also pray for your church, for your city, even for the events in the world you see on the news because Advent is about God's mission in the world. Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your hearts to see Jesus during your time together.

WATCH THE VIDEO

GROUP RESPONSE

READ HEBREWS 10:23-25

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What holiday or season of the year is your favorite or least favorite? Consider answers like: hunting, sports, family vacations, fiscal year, tax season, summer, back-to-school, etc. Which one weighs heaviest or impacts your family the most? How? Have you ever considered making the Christian calendar (or "church calendar," or "liturgical calendar") your primary measurement of time and space? How might this change your life rhythm?
- 2 The Bible itself doesn't explicitly mention nor prescribe the season of Advent, but several themes are present in Scripture that encourage us to observe the

season: a deep anticipation for God to redeem the entire world (Isaiah 7:14; 2:2–4); a longing for God’s justice (Amos 5:24); John the Baptist’s proclamation of the coming Messiah (Mark 1:1–7); the expected return of Jesus to consummate his kingdom (Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; James 5:7–8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28). Select some of these passages and discuss how they relate to Advent.

- 3 Revisit today’s Scripture reading from Hebrews 10:23–25. How might the season leading up to Christmas look different if everyone were to observe it in light of: “the day of his return is drawing near” (v. 25)?

BREAK INTO GROUPS OF TWO OR THREE

Feel free to continue the current conversation, or move into reflections from the week’s *The Advent Mission* readings with the following questions:

- 1 How did the Scripture and devotional readings this week inspire, challenge, or change your idea of Advent and Christmas?
- 2 What did you find encouraging, surprising, or affirming in the readings? What did you find difficult, corrective, or warning? What did you see or learn?
- 3 Where do you sense the Lord leading or calling you to participate in his mission? What would that look like?

Allow group conversation to proceed at will. Limit to one sharing item per turn, with multiple rounds of discussion.

GO

Close your time together by joining hands and each person praying a short prayer for the person on their right.

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THE
ADVENT
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YOUTH
TEACHING
PLANS

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The Seedbed Daily Text - The Advent Mission (Youth Teaching Plans)

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Students are called to be vibrant leaders in their communities today; they can be full recipients of the Holy Spirit and join the Advent Mission. It is my deep hope that this resource will serve you and your students in that direction.

I would like to give an outline of how this guide may best be used and specific instructions for each element. First, don't neglect to pray for your students to receive from Scripture and the Spirit. Second, give yourself the gift of preparation. This guide should help cut down on your prep time, but it does not eliminate it. Preach your sermon by giving an hour to it ahead of time. Craft questions that will awaken your student's curiosity. Change the activities. Tweak the worship response in consideration of your student's needs, maturity, and culture. Third, don't miss the mission. This is less about students learning and more about students living.

SCRIPTURE: The Scripture reading for the week is the main focal point. The notes, discussion questions, and activity and worship response find their beginning and culmination in the Word of God. You are encouraged to read this aloud in whatever environment you are using this guide. Even better, invite and prepare a student to read it aloud. (Side note: This is not a, "Who wants to read?" moment to the whole group of students. This is a, "I see the Holy Spirit inviting you into mission, would you read this so all of us can receive it?" to one specific student in advance kind of moment.) All passages used in this guide are in English Standard Version. You may choose different versions based on your group, but keep in mind that the notes are written based on the ESV.

NOTES: The notes are designed for you or your adult leaders to use in any ministry setting, from Sunday school to week night teaching to small groups and bands. They seek to drive home a single point and set up the students for discussion. You will need to supplement your own stories, recalibrate to suit your student culture, and adjust to fit the ministry setting. For example, in a Sunday school setting, teachers may want to teach in an iterative fashion (introductory five minutes from the notes, seven minutes of discussion, then teach the central five minutes of notes with seven minutes of discussion. Repeat until complete). While in a small-group setting, you may want to share the notes ahead of time with your students and then dive deep into discussion and response when gathered together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: These are designed to help the students rephrase the main idea of the week, reflect on how they receive the main idea, and then challenge them to take a next step with this idea. Please spend as much time preparing for the discussion as you do any teaching. And add your own questions!

FURTHER POINTS TO EXPLORE: This section can help you round out, theologically and biblically, some of the teaching in your lesson, especially if you have more time. You may consider teaching through these points and asking questions of the large group, or using them as launch pads for small-group discussions.

ACTIVITY: Whether or not you can use these is determined by your ministry setting, i. e., physical space. There are many game books and resources out there (see Seedbed's resources for this). These activities are linked, at least in some small way, with the scripture. However, they may not be designed for your ministry setting or group size. Please take a moment and make sure it will work for your group before trying to use it.

WORSHIP RESPONSE: The application of these will also be affected by your setting, but they are quite adaptable. The goal of the worship response is for students to put movement to the meaning of Scripture and teaching. Use the worship response provided after the teaching. In some cases, you may do it before or after discussion questions. Feel free to adapt by using these responses as a launching point for your own ideas.

WEEK 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR, OR PASS THE BLACK-EYED PEAS

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 10:23–25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

NOTES

Advent seems like the overhyped, under-delivering few weeks before the main event: Christmas! It's like, does Santa even need Advent? Advent is the time of year when we hear the same songs and same sermons, see the same ugly sweaters and ragtag ornaments. The best part of Advent may be that there are usually a few good new movies to see, we can prepare for college and professional football playoffs, and literally ask for anything we want.

At least, this is the recent history of Advent, how we have seen Advent lived out the last twelve to eighteen years of our lives. The recent history of Advent misses the revolution in revelation. You and I, we will not. Revolutions start in small ways, not big actions. They start inside individuals, not in front of crowds. How do we join this revolution, the Advent Mission? We restart.

Advent is the new year, the restart of our annual journey through the story of God's mission. A recap may be helpful:

ADVENT: the return of Jesus to the world in final victory, because of . . .

CHRISTMAS: the birth of Jesus into the world, which leads to . . .

EPIPHANY: the manifestation of Jesus to the world, which leads to . . .

LENT: Jesus' journey to the cross for the world, which leads to . . .

EASTER: the resurrection of Jesus in the world, which leads to . . .

ASCENSION: the enthronement of Jesus over the world, which leads to . . .

PENTECOST: Jesus sending his Spirit into the world, which leads to . . .

KINGDOMTIDE: proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the world, which leads to . . .

ADVENT: the return of Jesus to the world in final victory.

We join the revolution of God's ongoing revelation by stepping into a New Year.

Growing up, New Year's meant three things: January 1, resolutions, and black-eyed peas. So how is the revolution, how is the Advent Mission our new year's?

First, it isn't January. We are joining the movement of God in time over the way our calendar time moves us. We recognize that we are preparing for the future return of Jesus while remembering his victorious arrival as the word made flesh (John 1:14). Our great hope is in the return, the second coming of Jesus to fully restore the kingdom. We live into this hope today, this week. Take a small step into the Advent Mission by celebrating a new year of hope.

Second, we are not in need of another set of resolutions, forced expectations, or more self-imposed homework. We are in desperate need of confessing our faith with tenacity (holding fast), provoking love (stir up one another to love and good works), and meeting as fellow revolutionaries to encouraging one another (not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another). Revolt against resolutions and this new year, this Advent, hold fast to Jesus and those who are following him closely.

Third, create a New Year's tradition. In my family, it wasn't a New Year's until we had eaten black-eyed peas. Most years it was with greens, corn bread, and ham. Some years, they were eaten out of can. It didn't matter though, black-eyed peas meant a new year, a restart. Maybe we revolt against the standard fare of Christmas cookies, and serve black-eyed peas for dinner the night you decide to join the Advent Mission.

The Advent Mission is about Jesus' arrival so that you and I can walk with God and the life of hope we have in his return. The revolution begins in us and is made real by the small shifts in our lives that lead to significant changes. Start a new year today. Hold fast to Jesus and those who follow him closely. Celebrate and mark joining the Advent Mission with a new tradition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- + What might be your perfect New Year's meal?
- + Read the scripture again. What stands out as important to living into a new year?
- + What might need to shift in your calendar, attitude, or relationships so that you could be part of the revolution, part of the Advent Mission?
- + What is the Advent Mission? Do you want to be part of it?
- + What action can you take to hold fast to Jesus?

FURTHER POINTS TO EXPLORE

- + Discuss what people tend to be anxious about for the future (peace, retirement, economy, exams, etc.). Discuss events people are excited about (weddings, birthdays, vacations, promotions, etc.)
- + Explore Bible stories where people needed hope: Adam and Eve after the fall; Abraham and Sarah with no children; Israel enslaved in Egypt; Israel in exile; Israel waiting for a Messiah; Israel struggling to keep their covenant with God, etc. Discuss how the Advent Mission can realign us to God's future full of hope.

ACTIVITY

Throw a New Year's party. Order goofy hats, New Year's plates, and décor. Serve black-eyed peas and only eat with large cooking utensils (spatulas, straws, ladles, and any other awkward item from the church kitchen.) Skip the resolutions. Sing the New Year's song ("Auld Lang Syne"). This is best done before the teaching, or if in a small group, as part of the teaching.

WORSHIP RESPONSE

Google "Hold Fast" images and select three to five different ones to print on enough cards for your students ahead of time. Set them out on your stage, near a prayer station, or somewhere the students need to take a few steps to reach. Scatter sharpies among the images. After the teaching (or after discussion questions) invite your students to take a card and write on the back how they will hold fast to Jesus this Advent. Then, invite them to write, "Yes, I join the Advent Mission" on the front. Have them take it home and put it on their mirror, their door, etc.

The
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+
THE
ADVENT
MISSION

CHILDREN'S
TEACHING
PLANS

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The Seedbed Daily Text - *The Advent Mission* (Children's Teaching Plans)

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INTRODUCTION

During the six combined weeks of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany we will be focusing on what it means to be on mission for Christ while we wait for his return. We will celebrate the advent of Jesus' first coming while waiting with anticipation for his second coming. This children's study is a companion curriculum to *The Advent Mission* by Omar Rikabi. This curriculum dives into some pieces of Advent, Christmas, New Years, and the days following, but this is not your typical Christmas study. Our hope is for children to come into a new understanding of what it means to have the mind of Christ, to live by the Spirit, and seek to follow after God all of their days. Children will be sent on an Advent Mission that does not end when Christmas arrives. Our lives should look more and more like Christ's while we live in the advent of the return of Christ each day. Join us in taking this Advent Mission from these six weeks to the rest of the year.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Each week you will read Scripture together followed by a retelling of the story and characters. There will be discussion questions to help facilitate this, along with an activity or object lesson. These lessons are intended to be interactive more than passive; however, please feel free to add to or subtract from the lessons to fit your ministry setting. These lessons are designed to be done in 45–60 minutes and can be modified for children ages K-5. This is best in a small-group setting, but the Invitation into the Story and Tell the Story portions could be done in a larger group first then broken down into smaller groups for the response time. The lessons are designed for you to make them your own. Lesson prep should not exceed twenty minutes, though it is encouraged to spend some extra time in prayer for those who are in your class. Our prayer is that you, too, will become more alert to the ways Jesus is calling you into his mission as you wait with anticipation for Christ to come. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!

LESSON STRUCTURE

- 1 PREPARE:** This section is for the teacher or leader. Please spend time reading over the scripture for the lesson in addition to reading the summary, which will give some background information surrounding the scripture or theme. It will also include some personal encouragement and a list of supplies needed for the lesson.
- 2 INVITATION INTO THE STORY (10–15 minutes):** This may include asking “wonder questions” or having some interactive play that draws children into the text. These questions vary in levels from concrete to abstract thinking.
- 3 TELL THE STORY (5 minutes):** This will be the reading of the text for the day. You can read the story from an age-appropriate Bible or have children read it out loud together.
- 4 RESPOND TO THE STORY (20–30 minutes):** Adult leaders will act as tour guides with leading questions as the children engage the story. You can select which discussion questions are most appropriate for your age level. You do not have to use them all.

Children will engage the story through different activities that help create more concrete illustrations of the lesson.

- 5 ADDITIONAL TIME** (optional): These are additional activities if you have extra time or want to use these instead of one of the others listed in the lesson.
- 6 PRAYER** (5 minutes): It is important for children to have prayer modeled for them. You can choose to take prayer requests in addition to reading the prayer printed in the lesson.

WEEK 1

THE ADVENT MISSION

The First Sunday of Advent (Christ Our Hope)

PREPARE

Read Romans 13:11–14.

Kids grow eagerly excited at Christmastime. Who doesn't look forward to new toys, flashing lights, and festive family gatherings? But why is Christmas so important, and what do we celebrate at Advent? This lesson focuses on the hope and waiting of the first Christmas and how it relates to hopeful anticipation of Christ's second coming, as well. The day of Jesus' return is unknown to us. We have, as a human race, experienced his first coming and celebrate it with fondness every year. The idea that Advent serves two purposes has generally been lost on us. Advent is about waiting. While the waiting is over for Christ to come the first time, the waiting is not over for the promise that he will return. Therefore, we are to be on guard. To wake up! Jesus' return may be in direct correspondence to our willingness to be on mission for him in the in-between time. During this Advent/Christmas season, let us reset ourselves. Let us prepare for his arrival. Let us adore him. Let us find our hope in him. Let us be sent on his behalf.

Supplies:

- + Age-appropriate Bibles
- + White board or big sheets of paper
- + Twenty-four blue or purple strips of construction paper (for Advent Chain)
- + Crayons or markers
- + Permanent marker
- + Blank Advent calendar (optional)
- + Ten balloons or Nerf balls (optional)
- + Blank printout of the solar system (optional, available at seedbed.com/solarsystem)

INVITATION INTO THE STORY

Say: Welcome! I am excited you have joined me today because we are in for some exciting surprises for the next couple of weeks.

Ask:

- Do you like surprises?
- Do you like having to wait for a surprise?
- When have you had to wait for something (good or bad)?

Say: Waiting can be hard. (Share an example of your own of having to wait for something.) We are going to play a little game that makes us have to wait and also be surprised.

ACTIVITY

Select one or more activities to do.

OPTION ONE: Play “Red Light, Green Light.” You can tape a line or put an object (like a manger or picture of Jesus) as a goal on one end of the room. Have children line up on the other end of the room. In order to not have anyone get hurt, make them walk, not run, when they hear the word “green light.” When they hear “red light,” they have to stop. When they hear “green light,” they may move forward. Do this until everyone has reached the goal (this game is not about who gets there first).

OPTION TWO: Play “Duck, Duck, Goose,” but instead say “Wait, Wait, Go.” If the size of your group allows for it, try to make sure everyone has a chance to be told to “go.” You can even have two people walking around the outside saying “wait, wait, go” at the same time.

OPTION THREE: Have all children stand in a large circle, while you stand in the center of the circle. When you are ready, throw the ball up in the air and call the name of a child. That child will have to run out to try and catch the ball before it hits the ground. If the child doesn’t catch the ball, then the rest of the class will begin to run. Once the child gets the ball, he will yell “Freeze!” and try to tag another child with the ball. The child that is tagged moves into the center of the circle. The game continues with either the original child throwing the ball up into the air or the person who was tagged. The game is over once all childrens’ names have called. (This game will help illustrate Jesus’ ascension and waiting for him to come back.)

- Ask:**
- What was it like to have to wait when we played this game?
 - Did you have to listen more carefully to know when it was your turn?
 - How would you know it was your turn if you were not paying attention?

Say: Sometimes waiting means listening very carefully. Waiting does not mean we aren’t doing anything. It means we are on alert. We are keeping watch. It also can mean we are hoping for something to happen.

Say: Today is the first week of Advent.

Ask: Do you know what Advent is?

Say: It is the start of the season where we wait for Jesus. It is the beginning of a new year for Christ’s followers—that’s you and me! Advent actually means “to wait.” During the season of Advent, it means that we are waiting for Jesus. In the Old Testament, God’s people waited for their Messiah, who was Jesus, for hundreds of years! They were in the season of Advent a long time!

Ask: Does anyone know when Jesus finally arrived?

Say: That's right, it was at Christmas. That is when Jesus came for the first time. And you know what? God surprised his people! They didn't know when he was going to arrive just like we don't know when he is going to come back. That is another reason why we are in a season of Advent. Our Christian calendar has a season of four weeks where we focus on waiting for Jesus. But, really, we are just like the people in the Old Testament. We are in Advent all year long! Advent is every day because we are waiting for Jesus to return.

Ask:

- What are some things you like to do while you wait?
- What do you think we, as Christians, should be doing while we wait for Jesus to come again? (Write down answers.)

Say: The Bible has something to say about what we should be doing. Let's hear what the writer of Hebrews says to us.

TELL THE STORY

Read Hebrews 10:23–25. Invite older children to turn to the passage to read together or have older children take turns reading portions out loud.

RESPOND TO THE STORY

Ask: What did you hear in those verses about what we should do while we wait? (Allow children to look closer and answer. Write answers on a board or piece of sheet paper.)

Say: We are to hold on to hope. That is the theme of this first week of Advent: Hope.

Ask: Can you give me an example of hoping for something? (Or share an example of your own.)

Say: Hope means waiting for a good outcome, or something we have wished for or prayed for. Our Scripture passage tells us that we can hope because we believe God will keep his promise.

Ask: Do you think waiting for Jesus to return should give us hope? Why or why not?

Say: Our Bible verses today also tell us we should help encourage each other to love one another and do good works.

Ask: How can we show love to one another? (Write answers on the board or sheet of paper. Steer them toward examples of showing kindness, compassion, justice, and mercy.)

Say: We show love by doing good works. We also are invited to keep meeting together.

Ask: What are some of the ways that we can meet together? (Write answers on the board or sheet of paper. Suggestions: attend worship, Sunday school, Bible study, prayer groups.)

Say: During this Advent season, we are going to be going on a mission: an Advent Mission. Today is our launch day to accomplish our mission. Our mission is to do all the things we just discussed. You came up with some great ideas! Now, let's put them into practice! That's what a mission is. It means being sent to accomplish a goal. Our goal is to actively wait on Jesus to return. And while we wait, we are going to be loving to others and do good works for Christ.

ACTIVITY

You will need slips of blue or purple (the liturgical colors for Advent) to create an Advent Calendar Chain. You will need glue sticks or a stapler and markers or crayons.

OPTION ONE: Create an Advent Calendar Chain with slips of paper where the children can write their ideas (along with any new ones) for their Advent Mission. Invite them to review the things you've already discussed to get them started. Write one tangible thing they can do per day/per slip of paper. If you run out of ideas, add Scripture verses that remind us to hope, wait for the Lord, or actively show love.

OPTION TWO: For younger children, have them draw pictures of things they can do for others while they wait for Jesus, or have ideas pre-written on slips of paper for them.

OPTION THREE: Create an Advent Calendar. Print off a blank calendar so children can write or draw pictures of the ways they can live out their Advent Mission leading up to Christmas. Feel free to continue the calendar beyond Christmas to Epiphany.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY / ADDITIONAL TIME

Ask: Do you know when we celebrate the new year?

Say: Remember that we said that Advent is the new year of the Christian calendar? Let's hear what John 1:1-5 says and see if it helps us understand why Advent is the beginning.

Read John 1:1-5.

Say: Another name for Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is a part of God. Therefore, Jesus (the Word) was present when God created the world. That's pretty amazing that Jesus, God's only Son, was present and participated in creation. Jesus is also the one that God sent to come be with us and redeem us from our sin. And Jesus will be the one who will come back again to fully restore the world. Therefore, everything begins and ends with Jesus. That's why our Christian calendar begins with waiting for Jesus—not

just the first time as a baby, but also the second time when he comes to bring final victory.

- Ask:** Do you all know what our solar system is? (Show a picture of the sun and the planets.)
- Say:** Well, since we are launching our Advent Mission today, I thought we would make a different kind of solar system to help us understand the seasons of the church. The planets in our solar system orbit around the sun, don't they? (Explain that to younger children and ask the names of the planets or questions about gravity for the older ones.)
- Say:** Just like the planets circle around the sun, our Christian calendar, beginning with Advent, orbits around the life of Christ. Jesus is the reason for all the seasons.

ACTIVITY

Create a Christian Year Solar System: You will need balloons, or soft Nerf balls on which you can write in permanent marker. If you don't have these, just print out a blank example of the solar system where you can write on it and allow the children to color it in if you have time (see seedbed.com/solarsystem). Christ should be the sun. The planets will be the seasons of the Liturgical calendar. Advent has two planets because we wait for Jesus in two ways during that season. You can have the children orbit by carrying the seasons around Jesus (the sun) or tape them onto a surface (if you are using balloons).

MERCURY: Advent—waiting for Jesus, the Messiah, to come rescue the world (first coming)

VENUS: Christmas—the birth of Jesus into the world

EARTH: Epiphany—the realization of Jesus as Messiah and King in the world

MARS: Lent—Jesus' journey to the cross for the world

JUPITER: Easter—the resurrection of Jesus in the world

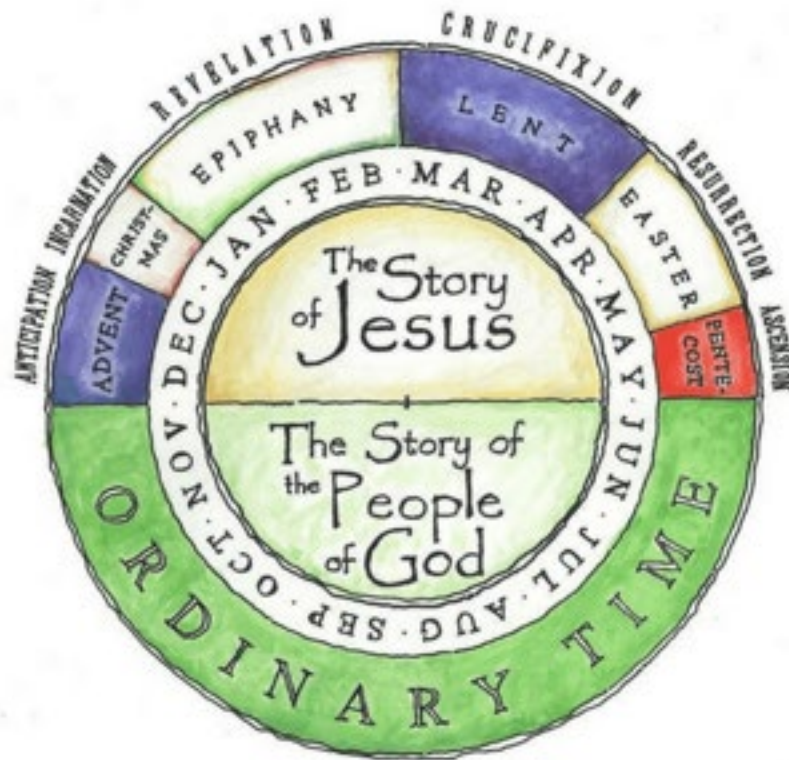
SATURN: Ascension—Jesus taking his throne over all the world

URANUS: Pentecost—Jesus sending the Holy Spirit into the world to be with us until he returns

NEPTUNE: Kingdomtide (Ordinary Time)—proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the world

(PLUTO): Advent—waiting for the return of Jesus to the world in final victory (second coming)

The Christian Year



Source: resources.wesleyan.org

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we wait to celebrate our Savior's birth and Jesus' second coming, help us to stay alert to our mission. Help us to show others love by doing good works and continuing to meet together until you return. Thank you for this season of Advent and for the hope we have in Jesus. Amen.