



Church-Wide Advent Study, 2020

The Best Gifts

In this Advent study, each Sunday will have a word at the center of the study. We will explore each word within the Gospel lesson that Sunday. Advent is a time of anticipation, waiting, and hope. Each word will enrich our understanding of Advent and provide each of us with a deeper understanding of God.

The title of the study is *The Best Gifts*. I hope that every person will find that God gives us the best gifts. In the Advent season, we wait for the best gift of all, Jesus Christ. Each week we will discover a different gift from God. Let us now unwrap the best gifts God has for us.

First Sunday in Advent | Nov. 29, 2020

Mark 13:24-37: AWAKE

Focus Verse: (13:37) And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

Theme: Jesus calls for the disciples to keep watch for the coming of God.

Introduction

Advent season calls for Christians to wait on the Lord, but we are not waiting idly. Jesus says, “Keep Awake.” When I was a child, the longest night was Christmas Eve. My brother and I could not sleep. We ready for Christmas day to arrive. As an adult, other things keep me awake at night, like worry and anxiety. On this first Sunday of Advent, Jesus calls for us to stay awake and keep our mind on God. By doing so, you will begin to awaken to God’s mercy, love, and grace. The best gift of this first Sunday in Advent is Christ waking you to God’s purpose for your life. Keep Awake!

Study Questions

What keeps you up at night?

Do these words from Jesus in Mark give you hope?

How can you keep awake as a Christian? (i.e., prayer, etc.)

Going Deeper

Read: *Ephesians 5:14; Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:6*

Notice how Paul uses the words awake or alerts throughout his writings.

Questions

How does Paul’s word relate to the words of Jesus in Mark 13?

What language does Paul use to describe keeping awake in his writings? (i.e., running a race, etc.)

Second Sunday in Advent | Dec. 6, 2020

Mark 1:1-8: MESSAGE

Focus verse: (Mark 1:4) John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins

Theme: John paves the way for Jesus with a message of repentance and forgiveness.

Introduction

As Christmas approaches, we hear a lot of different messages. Commercials advertise the latest and greatest gifts to buy this season. I am sure you have seen the commercial where the husband buys two new cars for Christmas. The wife decides on the truck, and the husband is stuck with the SUV. The wife cries out, "I love it." What kind of mixed messages are you receiving this season?

Mark makes the message really clear for us in chapter 1. John the Baptist comes from the wilderness, preaching a message of repentance and forgiveness. He calls for all the people to prepare for the coming of Christ. People from all over to hear the message and turn back to God. The message is still the same for us. We are to use the Advent season to turn to God and ask God to forgive us.

Study Questions

Can you name some other messages you hear in this season?

What does the word repentance mean?

How hard is it to really forgive someone?

Going Deeper

Read: Mark 1:9-15

What is the message of Jesus?

What is the good news, Jesus proclaims?

Third Sunday in Advent | Dec. 13, 2020

John 1:6-8, 19-28: LIGHT

Focus verses: (*John 1:7-8*) He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

Theme: John the Baptist has come to testify to the light and bring those to the light of God with the coming of Jesus.

Introduction

Again, we encounter John the Baptist. This time we hear the Gospel of John's account of the man from the wilderness. The Gospel lesson opens with John the Baptist, bringing light into the world. John doesn't claim to be the Messiah. Jesus will bring the true light of God into the world. In this Advent, the light is breaking into the darkness of the world. God is preparing the way for Jesus.

I often wonder about our testimony during Advent. We are called to bring the light of Jesus into a dark world. Certainly, this Advent seems very dark, with a pandemic raging across the land. Yet, how can we still bring the light of Christ to people during this time? I know this is a difficult time for many people. Now is the time to cling to the light of God!

Study Questions

What does the light of God mean to you?

Where do you find the light of Christ during this season?

How can you help spread the light?

Going Deeper

Read: *John 3:19-2; John 8:12; John 12:35-36*

John uses the terms light and darkness throughout his Gospel.

What is essential about the light?

What role does darkness play in the Gospel of John?

Fourth Sunday in Advent | Dec. 20, 2020

Luke 1:26-38: IMPOSSIBLE

Focus verses: (Luke 1:37) For nothing will be impossible with God

Theme: The birth of Jesus is foretold in this passage from Luke. The impossible becomes possible with God.

Introduction

Luke gives the account of an angel coming to Mary and telling her she will give birth to the Son of God. For Mary having a child seems impossible, but the angel tells her something even more impossible. Mary is going to have the Son of God. Impossible! Well, we know the rest of the story. Mary does have the Son of God, Jesus. God does the impossible.

God is still the same today. God does the impossible. I know this season of life is not what anyone planned. Yet, God is still at work doing the impossible. God doesn't stop moving and being even when chaos is happening. During this Advent season, God will continue to do the impossible. For nothing will be impossible with God.

Study Questions

How does Mary react to the angel?

What does it mean, "For nothing will be impossible with God?"

Only in Luke do you hear this story of Mary. What do you think Luke wants us to know this story?

Going Deeper

Read: Luke Chapter 1

What do Elizabeth and Mary have in common? What differences are in their birth stories?

In Luke 1, you will find two songs. Why are these songs important?

Compare and contrast the two songs. Notice the language used in both songs.
