

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Advent, from the Latin word *adventus* meaning arrival, is the 4-week period prior to Christmas. It is a time to ponder the great sacrifice that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, made by coming to earth as an infant. He lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death, and rose from the dead for us. He saved us from our sins and eternal damnation because of His great love, and adopts each person individually into his family through baptism and faith in Him.

First Advent Candle

As we light the first Advent Candle, we recall the **hope** we have in Christ.

God told Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 22:18), because he trusted and put his hope in God (Genesis 15:6). The Old Testament spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a Saviour would be born, the One True King in the line of King David. This prophecy had its fulfilment in Bethlehem. We celebrate this coming of Jesus every year at Christmas, but we also trust God's promise to send Jesus again, only this time it will be to *judge the living and the dead*. This Second Coming of Christ is a source of hope and joy for us. Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

ALL: God of Abraham and Sarah and all the Patriarchs of old, You are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate His birth, to make our hearts ready and to place our hope in You. Help us today and every day to worship You, to hear Your Word, and to do Your will by sharing Your hope with others. We ask it in the name of the One who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Second Candle - The Candle of Peace

We now light the Second Candle of Advent, the candle of **peace**.

We remember the prophets who spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a Saviour would be born, a King in the line of King David. The prophet Isaiah called Christ "the Prince of Peace," (Is. 9:6).

When Jesus came, He taught people the importance of being peace-makers. He said that those who make peace shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9). When Christ comes to us He brings us peace, a peace that is everlasting. We light the candle of peace to remind us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that only through Him true peace is found. Peace is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the peace we find in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

ALL: Lord Jesus, Light of the World, the prophets said You would bring peace and save Your people from trouble. Give peace in our hearts at Christmastide. We ask that, as we wait for

You to come again, You would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship You, to hear Your Word, and to do Your will by sharing Your peace with each other. We ask it in the name of the One who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Third Candle - The Candle of Love

We light the Third Candle of Advent, the candle of **love**.

In their old age, God gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert, denying his own comforts and prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that God would show His love by delivering His people from sin's captivity through His Son. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to repent and find God's forgiveness. Love is like a candle shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the love we have in Christ.

Let us pray:

ALL: Lord God, Your witness John the Baptist grew up strong in spirit and prepared people for the coming of the Lord. Prepare a royal highway in our hearts, that we may receive You in steadfast humility and joy. Help us to have such great love for You that we would be witnesses to Him and spread the good news of Your love. As Christmas draws closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome Him. Amen.

Fourth Candle - The Candle of Joy

We light the Fourth Candle of Advent, the candle of **joy**.

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special Child would be born to her, she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour," (Luke 1:46-47). Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to His mother, so His presence in the world gave joy to those who had none before. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in Him. From hope, peace, and love grows joy. We light the candle of joy to remind us that when Jesus is born in us we have everlasting joy.

Joy is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

ALL: Thank you God for the joy You give us. We ask that as we wait for Christ to come again, that You would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship You, to hear Your Word, and to do Your will by sharing Your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the One who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.