

ADVENT 2026 · NOVEMBER 29 TO DECEMBER 25

LONG EXPECTED

Daily Readings for Advent

A companion to the sermon series

Are We Dreaming?

Anticipating Someone Real

GRACE CHURCH ARIZONA

for the table, the candle, and the five minutes you have

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use this book

There are twenty-seven readings here, one for each day from Sunday, November 29 through Christmas Day. Each one is short enough to read aloud around the dinner table, even with little ones who haven't quite settled in.

Every day has four parts: a passage to read from your Bible, a few paragraphs to read aloud, a question to put to the table (with one just for little ones), and one sentence of prayer. The whole thing takes about five minutes, simple enough to keep up all season.

The readings follow the same daily passages as Jon Moorhead's *Advent Candle Companion*. Families who want to go deeper can use both together. His adds candle-lighting readings, activities, and ideas for couples and small groups. Whenever a day connects to Sunday's sermon at Grace Church, a short sermon note says so.

Two simple suggestions. First, light a candle. It's an old practice for a reason: kids remember what they can see, and watching the room get a little brighter each week helps the season sink in.

Second, don't worry about getting the answers right. The goal is just to get your family talking. Having these conversations out loud is part of the experience.

This year, each of the four Advent words comes with a question mark: **Hope? Peace? Joy? Love?** By December, many of us feel a little worn out on these words. We still believe them, but we've stopped expecting them to make a difference. The question mark also asks something deeper: not just *Do you have hope?* but *Hope in what?* Let your discussion be honest about both.

Watch for the day the question mark disappears.

THE QUESTION UNDER IT ALL

One question, and one answer

Underneath all twenty-seven readings there is a single question, and it is the question Advent was made for:

Are we dreaming, or is this real?

That is what the people in these passages are asking. If we're honest, it's what many of us wonder too: whether any of this is real or whether we are keeping up a lovely habit for the children's sake.

You will hear the same answer every Sunday this month, in the same words. It is worth learning by heart, because it is short enough for a child to say, and true enough to build your life on:

He's not something we made up.
He's someone God gave us.

Nobody in this story thought of it first. Not Isaiah, not Mary, not the shepherds. It came from outside, the way light comes into a dark room. A room can't light itself.

LEARNING IT TOGETHER

Memory verse for the season: Luke 2:10-11
"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Song: "Joy" (Luke 2:8-14) by Seeds Kids Worship. Practice it at home with the hand motions video on our Advent page. Our Kids of Grace classes are learning the verse and this song to share on Christmas Eve.

Join us for a special Christmas Eve service in the courtyard.



WEEK ONE

HOPE

The Prophecy Candle. A long darkness, and a light promised before it's seen.

November 29 to December 5

THIS SUNDAY

Saviors Don't Save

Isaiah 9:1-7

A light promised

READ Isaiah 9:2–7 (and, if you can, 7:10–14)

LIGHT The first purple candle, for Hope.

Read the two passages together, because they are one story. In the first, a frightened king is offered any sign he wants from God, as deep as the grave or as high as heaven, and he says no. He had already decided to trust the army of Assyria instead. In the second, God gives the sign anyway: *to us a child is born, to us a son is given.*

Nobody asked for him. The one man who was offered him refused. He came anyway.

And notice that Isaiah writes in the past tense. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.* He's so sure of what God will do that he writes it like it's already happened. That is where Advent starts: in the dark, with a promise and no proof.

In C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Narnia is under a spell where it's always winter and never Christmas. Advent starts there, in the winter. It doesn't pretend the darkness is over. It simply promises that it won't last.

SERMON NOTE

This morning's sermon, *Saviors Don't Save*, told the story behind these verses. King Ahaz was afraid, so he hired a savior, and the savior didn't save. What we hire leaves a question mark. The Savior God gives leaves an exclamation point: *Hope!*

AT THE TABLE

When you are scared, what is the first thing you reach for? What is one thing you are waiting on God for this year?

LITTLE ONES

When you feel scared, who do you run to? Who did God send for us?

PRAY

Lord, it feels dark sometimes, and we know we can be honest with you about that. Come.

Darkness and light

READ Romans 8:24–25

> *Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?*

If you can see it, you are not hoping. You are just looking. So the fact that we can't yet see what we're waiting for is not evidence against it. It's just the view from where we're standing right now.

A few verses earlier, Paul says all of creation is groaning, like a woman in labor. So when the world feels broken, it's because it is. But the groans of labor mean something good is coming. The waiting is almost over.

So Paul's word for the waiting is *patience*. Patience is hope that stays put in the dark, because it trusts the One who promised the light.

Try this tonight: turn off the lights for one meal and eat by a single candle. Notice how much one small flame can do.

AT THE TABLE

What is something we can't see yet but are waiting for?

LITTLE ONES

What's something that's hard to wait for? Christmas counts!

PRAY

Father, teach us to wait with patience for what we cannot see yet.

The promise to Abraham

READ Genesis 12:1–3

In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Abram was old, he had no children, and God told him to leave everything he knew for a land he had never seen. Along with the command came a promise far too big for one family: through you, every family on earth will be blessed.

He went. Hope in the Bible usually starts this way. A promise first, then a road, and a long time between them. Abram died before he saw the land become his family's, or the blessing come true.

But the promise did not die with him. Matthew begins his account of Jesus by calling him the son of Abraham. The blessing for every family on earth was a person, and he was on his way the whole time.

AT THE TABLE

Tell about a promise someone kept to you. How did it feel to wait for it?

LITTLE ONES

God promised to bless every family on earth. What family could we pray for tonight?

PRAY

God of Abraham, you keep your promises, even the long ones. Help us trust you on the road.

The promise through David

READ 2 Samuel 7:12–16

Your throne shall be established forever.

King David wanted to build God a house. God answered by turning the offer around: I will build *you* a house. A son of yours will sit on your throne, and his kingdom will never end.

Then the kings came and went. Some were good and most were not. By Isaiah's day the throne belonged to Ahaz, the frightened king of Sunday's story, and it looked like God's promise had failed.

That's exactly when Isaiah announced the child who would reign on David's throne forever. God hadn't forgotten his promise. The right King was still coming.

SERMON NOTE

Sunday's text, Isaiah 9, rests on this promise. The hope Isaiah preached came from God keeping his word to David.

AT THE TABLE

Write down one promise of God you are holding onto, and put it where you'll see it this week.

LITTLE ONES

Other kings have come and gone, but Jesus is King forever. What makes Jesus a good king?

PRAY

Lord, your kingdom never ends. We praise you for being our King, this Christmas and always.

Hope in hard seasons

READ Lamentations 3:22–24

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations is a book of grief, written in the rubble of Jerusalem after it fell. Almost every line is a cry. And right in the middle of it, the poet says this: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

He did not say it because things had turned around. They hadn't. He said it because he looked past the rubble to the God who had not changed.

That's what hope looks like in a hard season. It's a choice to remember who God is, made fresh every morning, because his mercies are new every morning too.

Waiting well is hard work. If someone you know is waiting on something hard right now, send them a few words today. It may be the morning mercy they need.

AT THE TABLE

Who do we know who is in a hard season? What could we send them this week?

LITTLE ONES

God's love is brand new every morning. What would you like a fresh start on tomorrow?

PRAY

Faithful God, your mercies are new every morning. Hold close the ones who are waiting in hard seasons.

Hope produces action

READ Philippians 1:6

> *He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Paul wrote this from prison to a church that was far from finished. Still, he was confident, because his confidence was in God, not in them. The One who starts the work is the One who finishes it.

That kind of hope keeps us steady. Since God has promised to finish what he started, you can get up and do today's part without carrying the whole outcome on your back.

Our hope rests on what God has already begun, and he never leaves his work half done.

AT THE TABLE

What good work do you see God doing in our family right now?

LITTLE ONES

God is helping you grow, just like he helps a seed become a flower. What's something new you've learned to do this year?

PRAY

Thank you, Lord, for the good work you've started in each of us. Help us trust you to complete it.

Looking toward Sunday

READ Isaiah 9:2, 6 again

> *And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Read the names slowly. Each one tells us something about who Jesus is. And notice that the last one points to tomorrow: the second candle is for peace.

Imagine a child who has been invited to spend a week at the ocean, and who cannot understand the offer, and so goes on making mud pies in the backyard because he cannot imagine anything better than mud. That is the trouble with us. Our desires are not too strong. They are too weak. We are far too easily pleased.

Advent is a season to stop settling for mud pies. Before tomorrow's candle, ask honestly what you are hoping for this Christmas, and whether it is worthy of the God who is coming.

The image and the phrase far too easily pleased*are C. S. Lewis's, from his 1941 sermon* The Weight of Glory.

SERMON NOTE

Tomorrow's sermon, *Peace Promised Is Peace Secured*, asks a question many of us bring into December: *Peace sounds nice, but I'm not feeling it. Why should I believe it?*

AT THE TABLE

Which of these names means the most to you this week, and why?

LITTLE ONES

Which name for Jesus do you like best? Can you say all four?

PRAY

Father, our hopes are often too small. Please grow our hearts to want what you want.



WEEK TWO

PEACE

The Bethlehem Candle. Peace announced, and peace secured.

December 6 to December 12

THIS SUNDAY

Peace Promised Is Peace Secured

Isaiah 40:1-11

Peace on earth

READ Luke 2:8–14

> *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*

LIGHT The Hope candle, then the second purple candle, for Peace.

December can feel like the least peaceful month of the year: the shopping, the schedules, the long to-do lists. But the peace the angels announced doesn't depend on getting everything done. It comes *among those with whom he is pleased*. It starts with his favor, not our effort.

SERMON NOTE

This morning's sermon, *Peace Promised Is Peace Secured*, was from Isaiah 40: *Comfort, comfort my people*. Trying to earn peace on our own wears us out, and it withers like grass. But *the word of our God will stand forever*. That word came true in Jesus, so our peace is secure even when we don't feel it: *Peace!*

AT THE TABLE

Where do you need peace this year?

LITTLE ONES

The angels sang about peace. Can you show us your most peaceful face?

PRAY

Lord, speak your comfort over us, and teach us to rest in you.

Peace with God

READ Romans 5:1

> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We usually think of peace as a calm feeling inside. But Paul starts with something deeper: a relationship with God that's been made right. *Justified* means declared right with God, through what Jesus did, not anything we earned.

And notice that Paul doesn't say we're working toward peace with God. He says we already *have* it. Calm feelings come and go, but peace with God stays, because it rests on Christ, not on how today went.

SERMON NOTE

This is what Sunday meant by peace that is *secured*. You can have it even on days you don't feel it.

AT THE TABLE

Where do you still try to earn God's love instead of receiving it?

LITTLE ONES

How does it feel to be friends again after you say sorry? Jesus made us friends with God.

PRAY

Thank you, Jesus, that we have peace with God because of you.

The prophecy of Bethlehem

READ Micah 5:2–5

And he shall be their peace.

Bethlehem was a small town, *too little to be among the clans of Judah*. Nobody would have picked it. God picked it, and promised that from there would come a ruler *whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days*.

Seven hundred years later, a census sent a carpenter and his pregnant young wife from Nazareth to that exact town.

Look at what Micah says this ruler will be. He won't just bring peace. *He shall be their peace*. Peace is not a condition you reach. It is a person you receive.

If some part of your life feels too little to matter, remember Bethlehem. God likes to start big things in small places.

AT THE TABLE

Find Bethlehem on a map. Why do you think God chose a small town?

LITTLE ONES

God picked a tiny town for Jesus. Do you ever feel too little to matter? God loves using little ones.

PRAY

Prince of Peace, be our peace in the small places of our lives.

Peace with others

READ Romans 12:18

> *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

December brings people together around tables, and not every table is easy. Paul is honest about that. *If possible*, he says. *So far as it depends on you.* Some peace is not in your hands.

But some of it is. You can make the call, say the kind thing, drop the old argument, let someone else have the last word.

Remember Monday's reading: peace with God comes first. People who have peace with God can afford to make peace with others. You don't need to win the argument when you have already been declared right where it counts.

AT THE TABLE

What is one way each of us can live peaceably at home this week?

LITTLE ONES

Is there someone you need to say sorry to, or forgive? Let's do it tonight.

PRAY

Lord, make us peacemakers, starting at this table.

Peace over anxiety

READ Philippians 4:6–7

> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

That sounds like being told not to have a headache. But look at what Paul actually tells us to do: pray, ask, and give thanks. Then peace comes, like a guard standing watch over your heart. It's something God gives, not something we have to work up.

Anxiety almost always lives in the future. It is about a conversation that has not happened, a bill not yet due, a diagnosis not yet given. God gives grace for today, not for tomorrow's worries in advance. Like manna, it comes one day at a time, and it does not keep overnight.

So the practice is small and daily: hand God tomorrow, and receive today.

The observation about anxiety and the present moment is C. S. Lewis's, from The Screwtape Letters, *Letter 15.*

AT THE TABLE

What is one worry you could give to God in prayer right now instead of carrying it?

LITTLE ONES

Pretend to hold a worry in your hands. Now open them up and let God have it. How does that feel?

PRAY

Father, we give you our tomorrows. Thank you for the grace you give us today.

Peace as a gift

READ John 14:27

> *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.*

Jesus said this at supper on the night before he died. Nothing around him was peaceful. He gave his peace anyway.

The world's peace depends on everything lining up: the schedule holds, the people behave, the news is good. Jesus gives his peace before anything gets better. That's why he could tell his friends, *"Let not your hearts be troubled,"* right before they watched everything fall apart.

One thing that drowns out peace is noise. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis imagines the enemy's plan is to fill every moment with sound, so we never have a quiet minute to think. Now look at your December. Most of us fill it up without meaning to. But Jesus offers something better. Try sitting in ten minutes of quiet tonight.

AT THE TABLE

What helps you feel close to Jesus when things get busy?

LITTLE ONES

Let's be very quiet for one whole minute. What did you hear?

PRAY

Jesus, we receive your peace. Help us to be still and know you're near.

Looking toward Sunday

READ Luke 2:14 again

> *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*

Look back over the week: peace with God, peace in Bethlehem's promise, peace with others, peace over anxiety, peace as a gift. It all traces back to one announcement in the sky.

C. S. Lewis gave some good advice about prayer: come to God with what's really in you, not what you think should be there. Bring your real mood, your real frustration, your real tiredness. God isn't fooled by a cleaned-up version of us, and he can only comfort the real one.

And notice what the angel said first, before the song: *good news of great joy*. Tomorrow we light the Joy candle.

SERMON NOTE

Tomorrow's sermon, *Lifeless Myths Bring No Joy*, asks the skeptic's question about Christmas: *How can I receive a myth?*

AT THE TABLE

Which day this week helped you most, and why?

LITTLE ONES

You can tell God how you really feel, even when you're grumpy. How do you feel tonight?

PRAY

Father, here's what's really in our hearts tonight. We bring it all to you, and we ask for your peace.



WEEK THREE

JOY

The Shepherd's Candle. Good news of great joy.

December 13 to December 19

THIS SUNDAY

Lifeless Myths Bring No Joy

John 1:1-18

Good news of great joy

READ Luke 2:8–20

> *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

LIGHT The Hope and Peace candles, then the rose candle, for Joy.

The angel has to start with *"Fear not!"* because the shepherds are terrified, and they're right to be. God's glory is frightening. But listen to what the angel actually says. It's news!

That's what makes Christianity different. It doesn't start with advice about how to live. It starts with a report: something really happened, at a real time, in a real town, to real people you could have asked about it.

The shepherds didn't stay in the field. They said, *"Let us go over to Bethlehem,"* and they went. Then they went home *glorifying and praising God*. Real joy runs toward Jesus, and then it spills over.

SERMON NOTE

This morning's sermon, *Lifeless Myths Bring No Joy*, was from John 1: *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. You can't receive a myth. You receive a person, by trusting who he is: *Joy!*

AT THE TABLE

Name something that has genuinely brought you joy this year.

LITTLE ONES

The shepherds ran to see Jesus and then told everybody. Who could you tell about Jesus this week?

PRAY

Lord, help us rejoice in this good news, so that it spills over into everything we do.

Joy as strength

READ Nehemiah 8:10

> *Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

The people had come home from exile. When they heard God's law read aloud, they wept, because they saw how far they had fallen. But Nehemiah told them to dry their tears and throw a feast, and to share with anyone who had nothing ready.

That's a different kind of strength. The Bible's joy runs deeper than a good mood. It can hold up even at a funeral. It's like the heavy weight low in a ship that keeps it steady in a storm. C. S. Lewis called joy "the serious business of heaven." It isn't decoration. It's the real thing.

AT THE TABLE

Who do we know who's celebrating something right now? How could we share in their joy?

LITTLE ONES

What treat could we share with someone who needs a little joy?

PRAY

Lord, your joy is our strength. Fill us with it this week.

Joy in God's presence

READ Psalm 16:11

> *In your presence there is fullness of joy.*

We often use *joy* to mean cheerfulness, but that doesn't help much if you're having a hard December. Cheerfulness is a mood, and moods can't be made on schedule.

David finds joy somewhere else: in God's presence. Joy doesn't come from fixing your December. It comes from being with God in the middle of it.

Try spending five quiet minutes with him today. No requests or lists, just time together.

AT THE TABLE

What does it feel like to be with someone you love without needing to say anything?

LITTLE ONES

What's your favorite thing to do with Mom or Dad, even without talking? God loves being with you too.

PRAY

Lord, show us the path of life, and let us find our joy with you.

Joy made full

READ John 15:11

> *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Jesus said this the night before he died. He wanted his disciples to have his joy, all the way full.

Think about what we do with things we love: we tell friends about the restaurant, make everyone listen to the song, drag people to see the view. C. S. Lewis noticed that praise is how enjoyment reaches its full size. The delight isn't finished until we say it out loud.

So when God asks for our praise, he's inviting our joy in him to become full.

AT THE TABLE

What's something good God has done that we haven't thanked him for out loud yet? Let's say it now.

LITTLE ONES

When we love something, we tell people! What good thing has God done that we can thank him for out loud?

PRAY

Jesus, thank you for sharing your joy with us. Please fill our hearts with it until it overflows in praise.

Joy in hardship

READ James 1:2–3

> *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.*

James knows trials are hard. Still, he tells us to *count* them as joy, because of what they produce: *the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

That kind of joy can live in a hard place. If this is a hard Christmas in your house, you still belong in this story. You don't have to feel festive. You can simply trust that God is building something good, even here.

AT THE TABLE

Name a hard thing you're facing. What might God be building in you through it?

LITTLE ONES

What's something hard for you right now? Is God still with us when things are hard?

PRAY

Lord, we aren't always cheerful. Thank you that we can still be glad in you.

Joy in anticipation

READ John 3:29–30

> *Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John the Baptist had crowds. Then Jesus came, and the crowds started leaving John for him. His followers were worried. John wasn't.

He compared himself to the best man at a wedding. The best man is happy just to hear the groom's voice and know the big day has come. John's joy was complete because someone else had arrived.

That's Advent joy: finding our gladness in Jesus' coming, more than in our own plans working out.

SERMON NOTE

This past Sunday's text introduced the same John: he *came as a witness, to bear witness about the light.* His whole joy was pointing away from himself.

AT THE TABLE

What would it look like for Jesus to increase in our house this week?

LITTLE ONES

John said Jesus is more important than he is. How can we make Jesus the most important part of Christmas?

PRAY

Jesus, may you increase in our home. Please make our joy complete in you.

Looking toward Sunday

READ Luke 2:10 again

> *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

Every culture that ever told stories told this kind of story: the god who comes down, the winter that ends, the one who dies and comes back. For centuries, skeptics have pointed this out as if it settled the matter: *Your religion is just another one of those.*

C. S. Lewis had a surprising answer: yes, and then it happened. The story people kept telling turned up with a date attached, under a named Roman governor, in a town you can still visit. The dream came true.

So if the story feels familiar, there's nothing to explain away. It's what you would expect if people everywhere had been dreaming about something real all along.

SERMON NOTE

Tomorrow's sermon, *Love Works*, asks whether Christian love is just guilt and rule-keeping. Tomorrow we light the Love candle.

AT THE TABLE

What's a favorite story of yours that reminds you of Jesus?

LITTLE ONES

Do you have a favorite pretend story? The story of Jesus isn't pretend. It really happened!

PRAY

Lord, the thing we kept dreaming about is true. Please help us believe it.



WEEK FOUR

LOVE

The Angel's Candle. Love that came first, and love that lasts.

December 20 to December 24

THIS SUNDAY

Love Works

Titus 2:11-15

Love sent, not earned

READ 1 John 4:7–10

> *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

LIGHT The Hope, Peace and Joy candles, then the last purple candle, for Love.

Most of the love we know at Christmas comes with a list attached: gifts to buy, cards to send, and a quiet worry that we haven't done enough. It's easy to think God's love works the same way. Do enough, and he'll love you.

John turns that around. Love didn't start with us. God sent his Son before anyone had loved him back. *Propitiation* is a big word for a sacrifice that takes away God's anger at sin and makes peace. Jesus came because God already loved us.

C. S. Lewis compared us to a greenhouse roof. It shines because the sun is already shining on it. In the same way, God's love comes first, and his love is what makes us good.

SERMON NOTE

This morning's sermon, *Love Works*, was from Titus 2: Christ *gave himself for us* to make a people eager to put his love into action. Love measured by what he gave: *Love!*

AT THE TABLE

What's something you've been given that you didn't earn?

LITTLE ONES

Did anyone have to earn a hug today?

PRAY

Father, thank you for loving us first. Let your love shine on us and through us.

The cost of yes

READ Luke 1:26–38

> *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*

Mary was young and engaged, and an angel told her she would have a baby. She asked an honest question: *How will this be?* The angel's answer ended with this: *nothing will be impossible with God.*

Then she said yes. It cost her. People would talk. Joseph might leave. Her whole life would be rearranged around a promise.

Her yes came from trust in a word that had come to her first. God's love spoke, and she answered.

SERMON NOTE

Sunday's sermon talked about grace *training us*. Grace changes us, and it teaches us to say yes.

AT THE TABLE

Has someone in our family said a hard "yes" to God? What did it cost?

LITTLE ONES

Mary said yes to God even when it was hard. What's something hard to say yes to?

PRAY

Lord, we are your servants. Let it be to us according to your word.

Love that stays

READ Matthew 1:18–24

They shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).

Joseph had every reason to walk away. The young woman he was promised to was pregnant, and the baby wasn't his. Even before the angel came, he had decided to protect her from shame. After the angel came, he did even more: *he took his wife*, and he gave the child the name the angel said.

A lot of love fades. It's strong in December and gone by February. Joseph's love lasted because it leaned on something bigger than his feelings: God's word to him, and God's promise in the child. *Immanuel, God with us.*

Love that lasts leans on a God who stays.

AT THE TABLE

Who has stayed with you through something hard? How could you thank them this week?

LITTLE ONES

Joseph stayed and took care of Mary and Jesus. Who takes care of you? Let's thank God for them.

PRAY

God with us, thank you for staying. Help us to stay too.

Love defined

READ 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

> *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Read the passage once and put your own name where it says *love*. It doesn't take long to stop fitting. Patient? Not irritable? Endures all things?

Now read it again and put *Jesus* in that place. Every line fits.

Sunday's sermon named a charge we hear all the time: *love is just another thing to do that doesn't last.* Our love often doesn't last. His always does. At the end of *The Last Battle*, C. S. Lewis says the children's whole lives had been only the cover and the title page. The real story was just beginning.

AT THE TABLE

Which phrase from the passage is hardest for you? How could we practice it at home tomorrow?

LITTLE ONES

Let's read the love verse again and say "Jesus" every time it says "love." Does it fit?

PRAY

Jesus, your love never ends. Please teach us to love like you.

Love so great

READ John 3:16, then Luke 2:1–7

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son.

Everything in Luke's account is small. A census, a crowded town, a young couple with nowhere to go, and a manger because there was nowhere else to lay the baby. If you had been in Bethlehem that night, you would have slept through it.

C. S. Lewis wrote a poem about that night, picturing history turning like a tide. Until then, everything had been running one way, away from God. That night the water stopped, hung still, and began to come back in.

John says why. *God so loved the world, that he gave.* Love is measured by what it gives, and God gave his Son.

Tonight you'll probably light a candle in a dark room. That's the whole story in one small moment. The light simply arrives, and the dark has to make room.

SERMON NOTE

Tonight's Christmas Eve service asks *Who Is Actually in Charge?* Caesar issued the decree, but God was the one moving a family to Bethlehem.

AT THE TABLE

In a sentence or two, why did God send Jesus?

LITTLE ONES

What's the best present you've ever been given? What was God's best present to us?

PRAY

Father, you loved the world so much that you gave your Son. Thank you.



CHRISTMAS

IMMANUEL

The Christ Candle. No question mark.

December 25

The Light has come

READ John 1:1–5, 14

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

LIGHT All four candles, then the white Christ candle in the center.

Four weeks ago we started in the dark, with a promise and no proof. Today there is proof, and it weighs about seven pounds. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*

C. S. Lewis pictured Jesus as a diver who goes down through warm green water into the cold and dark, all the way to the mud at the bottom. He grabs what he came for, then comes back up, lungs bursting, into the light. Today is the surfacing. And the one in his arms is us.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, someone says the great Lion isn't safe, but he is good. What arrived at Bethlehem isn't tame. It is good, and it is here, and it has your name on it.

For four weeks, the words at the top of these pages have had question marks behind them. Today there isn't one. *God with us*, no question.

So say it one more time. Let one person ask the question, and all of you answer together. Then go and open the presents:

Are we dreaming, or is this real?

It's real! He's not something we made up. He's someone God gave us.

AT THE TABLE

Go around the table: finish the sentence *God is with us, which means...*

LITTLE ONES

Jesus is here! Give everyone at the table a hug and say, "God is with us!"

PRAY

Immanuel, thank you for being here with us. Merry Christmas. We love you.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The Scripture references are to the ESV. Read the passages from your own Bible; this book gives the reference and the shortest possible anchor so that the reading happens in the text and not in the commentary. The daily passages follow Jon Moorhead's *Advent Candle Companion* (Rooted Word Ministries).

Several images in these readings are C. S. Lewis's, and are credited in the line beneath the reading that uses them. They are paraphrased rather than quoted, both to keep the readings short and to respect his publishers' copyright. If a reading sends you to the original (*Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Weight of Glory*, *Letters to Malcolm*, *Reflections on the Psalms*, or the Narnia books), that is the best possible outcome.

EVERYTHING FOR ADVENT IN ONE PLACE

gracechurchaz.org/advent

Weekly themes, sermons, the kids' song, and Christmas Eve details.

Prepared for the households of Grace Church Arizona, Advent 2026.

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