



# ADVENT WEEK 2 | PEACE

December 3, 2023

[Worship Music Playlist](#)

SONG 1 | This Wild Earth by Young Oceans

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 85:8-13

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly. Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. **Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.**

WELCOME | Announcements (Budget & Commitment Cards\_Ryan Kernes)

2024 BUDGET | \$245,000

**SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONS**

- Preparing for **Partnership**...and a Place
- Launching our **Pastoral Residency**...with Dylan & Alyson!
- Dental & Retirement **Benefits** to Christ City & VHOP staff

**CHRIST CITY CHURCH**

**WHAT WE NEED & WHEN**

- **PRAY**...For Our Faith Family & YOUR Part
- **CONSIDER**...What the Spirit Would Have You Give
- **COMMIT**...Turn in Your Commitment Card by **December 17<sup>th</sup>**

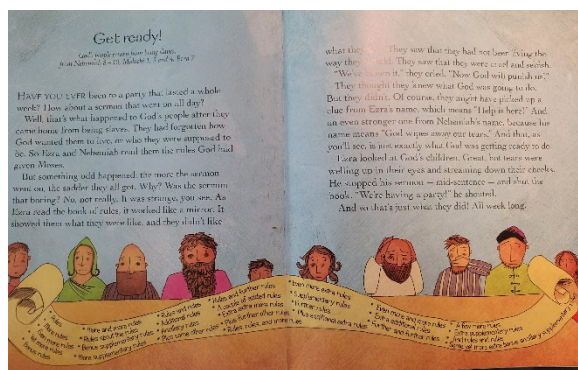
ADVENT STORY | “The First Christmas Tree” (see additional printout for slides)

**So, advent is a journey**, a day-by-day walk to Christmas morning, but it is not the destination that makes Advent so special; it’s the places we are taken along the way: the prophetic symbols and scriptures and apocalyptic (revelatory) signs and sounds that fill the airways, screens, yards, and homes. Each is meant to help us **pay attention to the visions of anticipation and arrival**, the

beginnings of the end, much like our story and its symbol do today. **[INVITE KIDS TO THE STAGE STEPS & READ]** – See Additional Sheet for Slides

It is peace, shalom, wholeness that comes when the steadfast love and faithfulness of God not only act on our behalf but dwell with us—when righteousness (restored relationship) and peace, kiss. It’s this longing for salvation through God’s action in relationship, through a person, a Messiah, that the forerunners of our faith anticipated with life-shaping angst.

## ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING | PEACE (Lily Pace)



God’s people, after they came home from being slaves (again!), had forgotten how God wanted them to live, or who they were supposed to be. So...

All day they listened to stories about the wonderful things God had done for his people. How he made the world. How he gave a special promise to Abraham. How he rescued them from slavery. How He spoke to Moses and showed them how to live. How he brought them to a special land. How he rescued them—no matter what, time after time, over and over again—because of his Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.

They remembered how God had always, all through the years, been loving his children—keeping his promise to Abraham, taking care of them, forgiving them. Even when they disobeyed. Even when they ran away from him. Even when they thought they didn’t need him.

Then God told his children something more...He said,

*‘I can’t stop loving you. You are my heart’s treasure.  
But I lost you.  
Now I am coming back for you.  
I am like the sun that gently shines on you, chasing away darkness and fear and death.  
You’ll be so happy—you’ll be like little calves running free in an open field.  
I am going to send my Messenger—The Promised One.  
The One you have been waiting for. The Rescuer.  
He is coming. So Get Ready!’*

It had taken centuries for God’s people to be ready, but now the time had almost come for the best part of God’s Plan. God himself was going to come. Not to punish his people – but to rescue them. God was getting ready to wipe away every tear from every eye.

**[Pause and pick up the lighter, then read...]**

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, amongst us and until all know what we know, **peace, goodwill among mankind.**”

**[Now light the second PURPLE candle]**

Hymn/Carol | O Come O Come Emmanuel by Traditional

## Dismiss Kids

### SCRIPTURE READING | Zechariah 9:9-13

“Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion! Raise the roof, Daughter Jerusalem! Your king is coming! A good king who makes all things right, a humble king riding a donkey, a mere colt of a donkey. I’ve had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim, no more war horses in Jerusalem, no more swords and spears, bows and arrows. He will offer **peace** to the nations, a **peaceful rule** worldwide, from the four winds to the seven seas. “And you, because of my blood covenant with you, I’ll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells. **Come home, hope-filled prisoners!** This very day I’m declaring a double bonus— everything you lost returned twice-over! Judah is now my weapon, the bow I’ll pull, setting Ephraim as an arrow to the string. I’ll wake up your sons, O Zion, to counter your sons, O Greece. From now on people are my swords.”

### SONG #3 | Baby Son by John Mark McMillan

### SERMONETTE |

Your king is coming! A *good* king who makes all things right, a *humble* king riding a donkey, a mere colt...I’ve had it with war—no more chariots...no more war horses...no more swords and spears, bows and arrows. He will offer **peace** to the nations, a **peaceful rule** worldwide...And you, because of my blood covenant with you, I’ll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells. **Come home, hope-filled prisoners!** This very day I’m declaring a double bonus— everything you lost returned twice-over!

(Zechariah 9:9-12)

“Zechariah’s name,” the name of the one who spoke of the apocalyptic picture that Kylie read for us moments ago, his name, “means ‘The LORD remembered.’ Although it seems so at times, God doesn’t forget us. He doesn’t lose interest in us. He remembers us. He cares about us. But he comes in his time, not ours[, as Lily’s recap of our faith’s heritage reminds us...] In preparation for God’s coming to his people...[a] people engaged in the difficult and seemingly endless work of [building a life good,] Zechariah encouraged them. He described the future [like all good prophets do], keeping the picture[, the vision] of God’s blessing vividly before them. Central to that [vision],” contends Eugene Peterson, “was a promised King. [‘A good king who makes all things right, a humble king [with] no swords or spears (weapons to secure and conquer, at least in the typical sense)...offering peace.’]”

Centuries later, Matthew [tells a story that sounded a lot like Zechariah’s]



King's branch

[And so] identified [the long-awaited King] as Jesus of Nazareth. [While the arrival was something worth celebrating with hosanna shouts and palm parades,] it's how that King came that made him distinctive.

What was distinctive about him was his character [the nature of his arrival that carried through into the disposition of his life lived], not [merely] his conquest. He was [as Zechariah portrayed] a *good* King who used his might [not merely to end evil, but to mend what was broken, both physically and relationally within us and between us.] He was...a *humble* King who came not [into newborn form within a queen's palace, but into a commoner's cramped space, borrowed at that! Nor into the culmination of his life's work did he arrive] on a majestic chariot but on a mere colt [once again borrowed! Dependent, as it were, like us, on the Father's grace through others.]

In a world bustling with commerce [not unlike the particular season we find ourselves] and bristling with conflict [again, not unlike the particular season we find ourselves], God entered," contends Pastor Peterson, "unpretentiously, meek and lowly [in birth, in life, in conquering all that ends life good], bringing justice not with a powerful fist but with a peaceful hand. [A] hand [that 'because of his blood covenant'] would be extended to all...first and foremost to those who found themselves in one form of prison or another.

[', I'll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells. **Come home, hope-filled prisoners!** Zechariah exclaims!]

The world is used to battles fought with chariots and war horses, swords and spears, bows and arrows[, and any other form of weapon, physical, psychological, economical, our imagination can muster.] Into [this] world came an unlikely King, [long-awaited, but unlikely. Born of a virgin and laid where animals ate. Growing in wisdom and stature and favor with God and his neighbors as he learned to work the wood and build a life like everyone else. Stepping out in faith and the Spirit into three years of wondering with prophetic purpose, until one day, riding on a donkey to the cheers of those who had been waiting, and to his end.]

Perhaps because our minds have a hard time envisioning conquering (even essential enemies like death and sin) without enacting some measure of violence or force, apocalyptic vision, The Revelation, depicts the one worthy to begin the end, which is a new beginning this way,

Weep no more; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered...And between the throne...and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...and the elders fell down before the Lamb...And they sang a new song, saying...' Worthy are you...for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom of priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth...' (Revelation 5:5-10)

Without weapons or war rhetoric [came the expected but unlikely King. The Lion of Judah who is the Lamb slain.]. [Arriving] not in retribution [for rebellions past and rejection present, nor ridicule, and remembering not] but in restoration. [Arriving] to the prisoners, bringing hope [as was revealed last week!] to their hopeless cells. [Arriving] to release them. To return them home. And, to restore everything they lost [“twice-over!” as Zechariah envisioned it.]”<sup>1</sup>

This very day I’m declaring a double bonus— everything you lost returned twice-over! (Zechariah 9:12)

“The Kingdom,” contends Malcolm Guite, in its arrival and our experience (entering) of it, “offers us a double reversal, a double renewal.”<sup>2</sup> For at the “core of Christ’s mission,” the long-awaited Rescuer, the unlikely, the good and humble King’s conquering, “is redemption: not the ending [of time and life] but rather the mending all that is bent and fractured in our fall.”<sup>3</sup> Twice-over, double renewal means we are not only freed, restored to a right relationship with God, one another, and self; but made whole, able to live in and with peace, to be a kingdom of priests as the Revelation reveals, and so to be our truest selves, as Jesus said, “peacemakers...heirs of God.” (Matthew 5: 9)

‘Come home, hope-filled prisoners!’ Shouts the prophet in his apocalyptic picture, come home to the people you are freed to be...makers of peace for hope has arrived, and peace is with us...**the ending that is a mending is underway.**

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you...I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 14:27, 16:33)

## REFLECTION

To whomever and whatever is in the hopeless cell, the unlikely King (the Lion who is a Lamb) speaks Peace— release and restoration, not into what was, but something different, deeper, doubled! Freedom of purpose as priests over our daily stewarding (rule). So, **What part of your life is Jesus speaking ‘Peace;’ this season?** Are you imprisoned by addiction or doubt? Disappointment or anger? Unforgiveness or bitterness? Envy or jealousy, lust or greed? And, **For what peacemaking is Jesus freeing you?**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Eugene Peterson, “Contemplative Readings,” *The Message Study Bible*, 1466.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Guite, *Lifting The Veil: imagination in the kingdom of God*, 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

## COLLECT & COMMUNION

In the vision of Zechariah,

“because of my blood covenant with you...everything you lost returned twice-over! Judah is now my weapon, the bow I’ll pull, setting Ephraim as an arrow to the string. I’ll wake up your sons, O Zion, to counter your sons, O Greece. From now on people are my swords.” (Zechariah 9:11-13)

And in the vision of Jesus,

‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ And when Jesus had said this, he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ (John 20:21-22)

### COLLECT | *First Sunday of Advent*

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Through the body, blood, and life everlasting of Jesus, amen.**

## SONG #4 | Lo He Come with Clouds Descending by Traditional

### SCRIPTURE READING | Revelation 21:3-6

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

## SONG #5 | Heaven All Around by Young Oceans

## SONG # 6 | Behold Him by Mission House, Citizens

### BENEDICTION | 1 Peter 3:8-11

Summing up: Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless—that’s your job, to bless. You’ll be a blessing and also get a blessing. Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, Here’s what you do: Say nothing evil or hurtful; Snub evil and cultivate good; **run after peace for all you’re worth.**