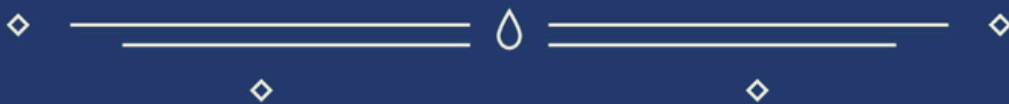


# Advent with CrossPointe



# ADVENT

WATCHING & WAITING



## Week One: Comfort & Strength in Waiting

### **Read: Isaiah 40:1-31**

*Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. - Isaiah 40:30-31*

### **Advent Wreath Candle**

**PEACE:** *God's promised one would bring peace.*

### **Overview**

Advent is a season of waiting. In the book of Isaiah, God's people were in exile in Babylon for their rebellion against him. In Isaiah 40 God promises to rescue and deliver those who would turn back to Him (40:9-11). This promise of rescue is meant to comfort God's people (40:1). Isaiah also gives them encouragement on how to wait until He comes and fulfills his promises (40:30-31). In a world that says it's all on us, Isaiah reminds us that true strength and hope come from trusting in God.

*Ray Ortland on waiting and God's strength: Isaiah's point in verse 30 is blunt. Human strength at its best, in its prime, will inevitably fail. We're no match for the demands of life. But we're not doomed to our own potential. There is a power beyond ourselves, and we can experience it.*

*In verse 31, Isaiah is not merely saying, "God enables those who draw strength from his promise." He is saying, "God enables those who draw strength from his promise to do the impossible." The weak soar like eagles and run without tiring and walk without quitting. Their confidence in God will not let them lie down and give up. It's not a matter of willpower but of expectancy. The key is the word "wait." What does it mean? To wait for the Lord means to live in confident, eager suspense. It means to live with the tension of promises revealed but not yet fulfilled.*

*This waiting is not killing time. It isn't sitting around, drumming your fingers. It is waiting on tip-toe, waiting with eager longing. It is forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, and pressing on toward the goal (Philippians 3:13, 14). It isn't erratic bursts of hyperactivity within a general pattern of boredom. It is steady, rugged progress, sustained by the conviction that the display of God's glory in Christ is yours.*

*Waiting is an important part of our faith. Waiting is what faith does before God's answer shows up. God gives us great and precious promises, and then he calls us to wait. And Isaiah's point is that such bright expectancy is the psychological leverage God uses to empower us. The "how" question is answered in this word "wait." Are you willing to wait? Are you willing to let God set the pace? Or are you such a controller you can't live on God's terms? Does your heart prize him as worth the wait? If so, your heart will be endlessly renewed until that great day. If not, you're on your own.*



**For Reflection / Discussion:**

Think about a time you had to wait for something you really wanted - what was beneficial about waiting? Challenging?

Where/for what do you feel God is asking you to wait in this season?

What does it look like practically for God to comfort & strengthen you in the waiting?

**Hymn to Sing:** Comfort, Comfort all My People (See Advent Playlist)

Comfort, comfort now my people  
Tell of his peace with no end  
Comfort, comfort those in darkness  
Tell them that God's pardon waits for them

The Glory of the Lord now on earth is shed  
In deserts far and near he will raise what's dead  
His peace has now been spoken  
His word is never broken  
The Kingdom of God is now here

Straight shall, straight shall be what's crooked  
Making all the rougher places plain  
Let your, let your hearts be humble  
Befitting our god's glory and his reign

Let the valleys rise to meet him  
The hills all will bow down in praise  
The Glory of the Lord now on earth is shed  
In deserts far and near he will raise what's dead  
His peace has been spoken  
His word is never broken  
The Kingdom of God is now here  
Comfort, comfort now my people

**Activity:** Plant a seed & wait & watch it grow over the Christmas season.

**Waiting Verse** (meditate on or memorize throughout the week)

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:5-7*



## Week Two: Waiting With Faith

### **Read: Luke 1:26-38, 2:16-21**

*For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. - Luke 1:37-38*

### **Advent Wreath Candle**

**JOY:** *Mary had joy in the unknown .. she "treasured" these things in her heart*

### **Overview**

In our instant gratification age of same-day delivery and instant messages, we rarely have to wait; when we do, anxiety or restless frustration can kick in. These are trivial matters. What about when sickness strikes, and we're hoping for healing, or we lose a job and wait for a new one? Do we trust that God is faithful? Can we find joy in the waiting? Mary did. We can learn so much from her. Amid shock and uncertainty, we see a peasant girl, only 13 to 15 years old, demonstrate unwavering faith and an abiding joy in accepting the unexpected calling on her life.

When the Angel Gabriel first appears to Mary, he greets her as "O favored one" and tells her the Lord is with her. The Greek word for favor is *charis*, and it translates to grace. God has chosen to bestow grace on Mary- and through her- to us. Mary's initial emotional response is one of feeling troubled, but she doesn't cower in fear. Instead, she is curious and tries to discern what sort of greeting this might be. Mary likely recalled Old Testament stories or truths, drawing strength from scripture. Mary goes from thinking to speaking, asking the angel a critical question, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel tells her that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, the power of the Most High will overshadow her, and the child will be called holy- The Son of God. He adds that her once barren, elderly cousin Elizabeth has also conceived- for nothing is impossible with God. Mary responds in faith, giving herself the title of servant, accepting her role in God's grand story, "Let it be to me according to your word."

After Mary's encounter, her response is one of joy. Mary went with haste to visit Elizabeth, and together, they celebrated the favor and grace of God in their lives. We see this theme of joy continue. After the shepherds visited Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, sharing what the angels had told them, Mary's response was one of quiet praise. She treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. The Greek word *treasured* means "Kept safe." The heart represents the deepest place in us. Treasure points to value and security in the present and future. Mary was reflecting on the past and considering the value of these experiences and interactions. She is not easily distressed or shaken.

A biblical portrait of Mary unveils a faith-filled, virtuous woman filled with biblical understanding and thoughtful, personal awareness who sacrificed greatly for the mission and ministry of her son, our savior, JESUS. We, too, can experience faith and joy as we celebrate the birth of King Jesus, the answer to every longing heart.



**For Reflection / Discussion:**

In what area of your life do you need to believe that God can do the impossible?

How do you think the news of Elizabeth's pregnancy impacted Mary's response to her own news?

How have you experienced security in Christ? What moments can you think back on and treasure?

**Hymn to Sing:** Hark the Herald Angels Sing (See Advent Playlist)

Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled

Joyful all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With angelic host proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King

Christ by highest Heaven adored  
Christ, the everlasting Lord  
Late in time behold He'll come  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King

Hail the Heaven born Prince of Peace  
Hail the Son of Righteousness  
Light and life to all He brings  
Risen with healing in His wings

Mild He lays His glory by  
Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King



**Activity:** Make a treasure chest to fill with Advent encouragements from God to treasure and store up in your hearts. Decorate a box and put a slit in the top. Take a piece of paper and cut it into small deposit slips. Leave those slips beside the chest with a pen or marker. Invite family and/or friends to write moments where God answered prayers or they experienced His kindness or grace through others. This can be done throughout the remainder of Advent. Unpack your treasure chest of grace-filled moments on Christmas day and read them and celebrate together.

**Waiting Verse** (meditate on or memorize throughout the week)

*"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."*

-Hebrews 11:1



## Week Three: Waiting in Community – God’s Mercy to Elizabeth

### **Read: Luke 1:39-56**

*“Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion” – Luke 1:24*

### **Advent Wreath Candle**

**LOVE:** *We need a community of love in the midst of waiting.*

### **Overview**

After a lifetime of longing and hoping and waiting and praying for a baby, Elizabeth, Luke tells us, is “well along in years”. That’s a gentle way of saying she’s way too old to have a baby. As a devout Hebrew, Elizabeth’s standing in her community depended on her ability to bear children. And in her community’s eyes—she’d failed long ago.

But now that Elizabeth’s dream is coming to life—literally inside of her—does she invite her extended family or gossipy neighbors over to dine on fattened calf and stare at her rounded midsection? No. She withdraws—for. five. months.

Luke hints at the reason Elizabeth withdrew from her community, “‘The Lord has done this for me,’ she said. ‘In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people,’” (Luke 1:26). Elizabeth doesn’t consider herself disgraced with God—it is her people who misjudged her.

Perhaps you understand what it feels like to be misjudged or to be an outsider to your people? Like Elizabeth, you’re not alone.

Despite her community’s lack of empathy, Elizabeth had God’s favor. And after 152 days of seclusion—God gave Elizabeth a gift—another pregnant woman.

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent an Angel” (Luke 1:26) to Mary and she went to be with Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, “her baby leapt in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit,” (Luke 1:41). These, two first-time moms share in the wonder of an elbow raking across a tummy, laugh together at frequent bathroom trips, share in savory food cravings, and worshiped and marveled at the One who brought their story to fruition, “why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43).

Through the companionship of a friend, Elizabeth became an insider.

Perhaps during this time God helped Elizabeth to forgive her community. Luke is quiet on this point. But he does tell us that Elizabeth’s community has a change of heart with her baby’s birth, “Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy,” (Luke 1:58). And they were, “filled with awe,” (Luke 1:65). God showed generous mercy to Elizabeth and her community was blessed to have her be part of them.



**For Reflection / Discussion:**

Take a few minutes to consider: who do I accept and who do I judge? Do I know someone who is an outsider? Do I know someone who needs a friend?

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, forgive me when I am quick to judge, and where I've drawn a line between people who are different than me. Please help our church community to welcome everyone regardless of differences.

**Hymn to Sing:** Oh Holy Night (See Advent Playlist)

O holy night the stars are brightly shining  
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining  
Till He appeared  
And the soul felt its worth

The thrill of hope the weary world rejoices  
And yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees  
Oh hear the angel voices  
O night divine O night when Christ was born  
O night divine O night O night divine

Truly He taught us to love one another  
His law is love and His gospel is peace  
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother  
And in His name  
All oppression shall cease

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we  
Let all within us praise His holy name

Christ is the Lord  
Oh praise His name forever  
His power and glory  
Evermore evermore proclaim  
His power and glory  
Evermore evermore proclaim

Fall on your knees  
Oh hear the angel voices  
O night  
O night when Christ was born  
O night divine O night O night divine



**Activity:** Who are the “outsiders” at your school, at work, in your family, or community? Ask God for his creative help to find ways to encourage them, serve them, and love them well.

**Waiting Verse** (meditate on or memorize throughout the week)

*“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” -Romans 12:9-10*



## Week Four: Waiting with Hope

### **Read: Luke 1:39-56**

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him....” - Luke 2:25*

### **Advent Wreath Candle**

**HOPE:** *We can be hopeful people while we wait on God..*

### **Overview**

There is much to learn from the account of Simeon in terms of watching for and waiting on God. Often we want God to work on our time and in our way. One commentary framed it this way:

We create expectations of what God should do in our lives and how God should move, and when they don't come to pass, we wonder if God keeps his promises. But we must have a biblical understanding of what God has promised, along with faith in his sovereignty and wisdom.

In the account of Simeon, we learn what it looks like to KNOW God's promises and patiently wait for God to fulfill them. It is helpful to note that before God fulfilled his promise to Simeon, *he hadn't*. Verse 25 says that Simeon had been "waiting for the consolation of Israel." It had been 400 years since God's people had even heard anything about the coming of the Messiah. It had been hundreds of years since Isaiah's prophecy of one who would bring "comfort, comfort (consolation) to my people" (Isaiah 40:1). It had been a lifetime - year after year after year - for Simeon to finally see God fulfill his promise that he would see the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior.

Writer Jeanne Whitlock reminds us that Simeon helps us be "honest in our longing." He longed to see God's promise fulfilled, but much of his life it wasn't. We have areas of our life where we are longing for things to be made right - relationships we desire to be reconciled, diseases that we pray would be healed, needs we have that are unmet, and changes we wish to see that aren't happening. Before we get to the fulfilled promise, we can sit with Simeon in a lifetime of longing: God makes space for us to tell him how we really feel: mad, sad, frustrated, tired, confused, disappointed .. God invites us to bring him our heart's holes. He is intimately acquainted with our sorrow. He is the most comfortable of friends to sit beside as we rage or weep. When we are honest about our dearest desires, submitting them to God rather than denying them or trying to fulfill them ourselves, we practice Simeon's faithful Advent watch (Whitlock).

But we must view our longings through the lens of God's faithfulness to fulfill his promises. Simeon was not alone: the Holy Spirit was upon him (v/25). Simeon was in tune with God's promises to him (v/27). Simeon was keenly aware of God's promises being fulfilled right before his eyes (v/30). In the midst of our longing, we need tender hearts, ears to hear, and eyes to see God's salvation through Jesus.



**For Reflection / Discussion:**

Where are you currently experiencing “unfulfilled desires” or “unresolved sorrows”?

In what ways do you tend to either deny your unfulfilled desires or seek to fulfill them yourself or with things other than Christ?

How can God’s Spirit & promises allow you to have hope in a season (or life) of waiting? What are practical steps you can take to have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to experience Christ?

**Hymn to Sing:** Come Thou Long Expected Jesus (See Advent Playlist)

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

**Activity:** Get markers or colored pencils and draw a picture of your year. Draw both unfulfilled longings (disappointments, frustrations, sadness) and fulfilled longings (answered prayers, unexpected joys, gifts of grace). Talk to God and a trusted friend about your drawing.

**Waiting Verse** (meditate on or memorize throughout the week)

*Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. – Matthew 13:14-16*

