

Worship/Discipleship Observation 3

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The Advent season marks the beginning of the Christmas celebration. The candle lit during the time symbolizes for each Sunday of the advent until the Christmas arrives. I had the opportunity to attend one of the Advent Sunday services. The time of the advent this year was the Sunday between 27th November – 3rd December. This is the brief outline of the advent liturgy which I had attended last Sunday

First Sunday in Advent

Advent Candle Lighting

During, the first Sunday of Advent, we light the first candle on our Advent wreath: the candle of Hope.

History

Twenty-five centuries ago, in a time not much different than our own, when the Israelites had little hope for the future of their country or their people, the Jewish prophets called to God to come to the people and make things right. They told the people—and us—that a messiah would come as a new hope in the midst of suffering. Their prayers were answered with the birth of Jesus, also called Emmanuel, a Hebrew word which means “God is with us. Today begins our Advent journey of waiting for the birth of the one who is called the Light of the World and the Hope of the Nations. As we light the candle of Hope we give thanks for the prophets of today who dare to speak words of hope for liberation, who say “No” to the evil in the world, and who call us to overcome our comfortable fears so we may let go of faulty ways of thinking and doing, and explore new realms of unimagined visions of how things could be.

Second Sunday in Advent

Advent Candle Lighting

We began Advent last Sunday by lighting the first candle, the candle of Hope. We light it again today to remind us that Christ is coming to fulfill God's promises. The second candle is the candle of Peace. The prophet Isaiah said, "Comfort, comfort my people" to a nation anxious about invasion and exile, as he foretold the coming of the Prince of Peace. Our world is still filled with violence and abuse, where families are torn apart by war and children are used as soldiers. Isaiah's words continue to speak to us that Jesus will bring us to an everlasting peace.

History

Mary and Joseph found no room in the inn to give birth to Jesus, but we can heed John the Baptist's command to make room in our hearts. Wherever there is war or mistrust between peoples, families, or our own hearts, God is present and leading us to imagine new ways of living in peace. Christ is our only hope, and our peace is found through him. The second candle is lit to remind us of Jesus' life-giving peace to all who trust in him. We light it in honor of those who live the Gospel truth that war does not make one great: the peace workers who risk much so that others may live free of fear.

Third Sunday in Advent

Advent Candle Lighting

As the candles of Hope and Peace have lit, and relight them now to remind us that our hope is in Christ and that he will come again to bring peace to the world. During the third week in our Advent journey, and as we light the third candle, the candle of Joy.

History

In ancient times, the prophet Isaiah said, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.” Many suffer from despair, anxiety, or holiday blues. Others experience only the dark side of human nature. Christ’s light has power to overcome all dark places in our society and our souls. The Psalmist tells us to “make a joyful noise to the LORD, for the Lord is God who made us and whose we are, whose steadfast loves endures forever and faithfulness to all generations.

Now we light the third candle, the candle of Joy, as we remember the angel’s words to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people.” We light it so that all who reap blue harvests from seeds of sadness may know the joy of Jesus Christ. We light it in honor of those who show us the joy of following Christ.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Advent Candle Lighting

On our journey to Christmas we have lit the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy on our Advent Wreath. We relight them now to remind us of the hope that Christ will come again, bringing everlasting peace and joy. During, the fourth Sunday of Advent as we light the last candle, the candle of Love. To a world of empires and despots, war and greed, grief and apathy, we proclaim that love is strong enough to overcome all evil and that compassion is more powerful than fear.

History

The angel Gabriel reassured Mary that “nothing will be impossible with God.” The power of love is the power to overcome what we think is impossible. Love tells us God doesn’t want our excuses for why we dare not try, but our faithfulness to do.

As we light the candle of Love, we remember that God so loves this world that he sent his only son, Jesus, to save us. We do so in honor of those who have shown us how to love even when doing so is not convenient or sensible. We remember those who show us that compassion— unconditional love— is central to a Christian’s life.

Bibliography

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