

2020

Advent Devotional

Week 2



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Love

Week 2 - December 6, 2020

“Cry Out!”

Celebrating with Children

Prayer and Candle Lighting

Dear God, we gather this day because we need to know you are near. At times when things seem sad or bad or confusing, we can forget that you love us. We begin in the darkness, hoping for the light of Jesus to fill our world. As we light this candle - (pause while the first purple/blue candle is lit) we are given hope that God is coming to us. God's light, Jesus Christ, will bring us hope. As we worship today give us renewed hope, that we might know you are near, and you will come to us and make things better. Amen.

Read the scripture

Psalm 85:8 - "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people,"

Activity

Fill a shallow dish with water. Let it sit until the water's surface is perfectly still. Poke the surface of the water and watch the ripples spread out over the entire surface. Just like the light from our candle reached the far corners of the room last week, the ripples from that poke reached the edges of the dish very quickly! Count the seconds. How long does it take for the surface to become peaceful and flat again? When things get rough, it can take a while for them to smooth out again. When you are feeling like things in life are rough and out of control, taking three long deep breaths can help you return to feeling a little more still and at peace. Try three deep breaths together now.

Sing

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”
https://youtu.be/CDRg_mW1EsA

Closing Prayer

O God, thank you for your love for us. Help us to love one another like you love us. Amen.

Bring the family together and offer a simple prayer. You may read the one here or offer your own. Feel free to do each section in any order.

Story Time:

Our story today is by Rev. David Petty. Click [HERE \(https://youtu.be/342tgddGNqo\)](https://youtu.be/342tgddGNqo) or read the following:

Waves can be fun, exciting, scary, and peaceful all at the same time. Growing up by the beach, I used to love to push my toes into the sand, walk to the edge of the water and feel the cool ocean breeze at my face. As I got older and worked up more courage, I would walk further into the ocean, eventually with a board under my arm, ready to ride the giants known as waves. Riding waves on a surfboard takes lots of patience, determination, and hard work.

The first dozen times I tried to paddle my board into a wave I crashed, tumbled, and spun in circles. Time after time I tried to stand up but the motion is kind of like standing on one foot on a skateboard while standing on a trampoline. Even with excellent balance, it's still extremely difficult.

Finally one day, I stood up, felt the energy of the wave pick me up and I rode the wave for what felt like forever (I think it was only 5 seconds, but it felt like much longer).

When the energy of your own efforts get picked up by the energy of the wave beneath you, it feels like you are connected to the ocean and you'll never let go.

Even after I got better at surfing, I would still fall. I would still crash. I would still tumble in the whitewash of the wave, turning and turning like a shirt in a washing machine. The more effort you put into a wave, trying to fight your way back to the surface, the more exhausted you get and the less time you can hold your breath under water.

The best thing to do in that situation, when things feel like they are out of control, twisting and turning and tossing about, is to relax. Allow the wave to pass over you and know that in time you will rise to the surface and get out of the spin-cycle.

As we approach this week in Advent, there is a lot going on in the world. This may seem new with a year of COVID, Elections, and more, but it was the same in the days of the prophets and the psalmist. They cried out from the turmoil of their time and they knew God's everlasting love would rise to meet them. This year, we can relax amid the spin cycle and know that God's love will meet us where we are as well.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever been to the beach and seen the waves lapping up on shore?
- Have you ever been in over-your-head in waves, leaves, snow, or in life?
- What does it feel like when things are out of your control?
- How can we trust in God's love when it seems so difficult?
- How does God's love for us help us love one another?

Week 2 - December 6, 2020

“Cry Out!”

Love

Celebrating alone, with youth and/or adults

Set aside time alone, or together, online, or on a phone call, and offer a simple prayer. You may read the one here, or offer your own. Feel free to do each section in any order.

Prayer and Candle Lighting:

When we feel afraid, scared, or uncertain, remind us of your promise. Send us up to the mountain. Make our voice bold so we can proclaim your promise this season - You are coming. Your love is coming. Your son is coming. Your love will tend to us like a shepherd to the sheep and you will carry us close to your heart. As we light the first candle, we remember how God brought us out of darkness. The hope of this light is that God is coming in Jesus Christ. (Pause while the first purple/blue candle is lit.) As we light the second candle, we remember God's love - that Christ would come to be with us because God first loved us. As we light this candle of Love, may the light that shines God's love upon us allow us to shine the light of love to one another. (Pause while the second purple/blue candle is lit.) Amen.

Read the scripture: Mark 1:3b “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...”

Expanded Scripture: [Mark 1:1-8](#)

Sing: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

[Link: https://youtu.be/CDRg_mW1EsA](https://youtu.be/CDRg_mW1EsA)

Story Time:

This story is by Rev. Dave Petty. Select someone to read the story or you can watch him read this story here: <https://youtu.be/6DwKsLoHeus>

As a young man with three older sisters, I often found it difficult to choose my own path. I never knew if I was doing something because my parents wanted me to do it, because God wanted me to do it, or because *I wanted to do it. With so many well-worn paths before me, it was easy not to get lost, but it was difficult to make my own way.*

There is an old story of a Rabbi who tried to find his way:

The story has been told that late one afternoon, as the sun was beginning to set in the west, Rabbi Akiva was walking along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee on his way home to Capernaum. Rabbi Akiva was doing what most God-fearing, God-honoring Jews would be doing with their spare time, *he was meditating and reciting the Hebrew Scriptures. We are told he was meditating upon the portion of Scripture where the Lord says through the prophet, Isaiah,*

“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!”

“You are my servant.

*You have been chosen to know me, believe in me,
and understand that I alone am God.*

There is no other God—

there never has been, and there never will be.

I, yes I, am the Lord,

and there is no other Savior.”

Isaiah 43:10-11

Rabbi Akiva was so focused upon the text that he didn't realize that instead of taking a left turn toward the city gates of Capernaum, he had taken a right turn and as the sun sank behind the mountains, he found that the path he had followed had taken him to the large gate of a Roman fortress. As Rabbi Akiva stood in front of the gate realizing what had happened, he heard a loud voice coming down from above the gate. It was the voice of a Roman Century Guard standing on the top of the wall. The guard had shouted down to this stranger:

“WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?”

Rabbi Akiva was startled and could only respond to these frightening words with, “WHAT?”

Again the guard called out,

“WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?”

Rabbi Akiva had a few moments to gather his thoughts and he shouted back up into the dark at the Roman Guard:

“HOW MUCH DO YOU GET PAID TO ASK ME THESE QUESTIONS?”

The guard was now confused as to why this stranger would ask such a question in response, so after a few moments of silence he said, “TWO DRACHMA PER WEEK!” (Now a drachma was worth about a day's wage.)

Then Rabbi Akiva, with intense conviction shouted back to this Roman Century:

“I'LL PAY YOU DOUBLE IF YOU STAND OUTSIDE OF MY HOUSE AND ASK ME THOSE TWO QUESTIONS EVERY MORNING!”

These are the foundational questions we ask ourselves. The answers to these questions define where we are going. Although we may *want to find our own way, we will find that walking in the way of Christ is an easy burden to bear and a straight path to walk. Just as John prepared the way in the wilderness for the one who would come after him, Jesus prepares our way to walk in the way of Love so that all of God's people may come to know the love of God.*

Discussion Questions:

Can you remember a time when you felt someone really loved you? How did that make you feel?

Who is someone who is difficult for you to love? Why?

Do you think you are difficult to love? Why?

Sometimes we make it harder for others to love us, almost like we want them to have to make a big effort to convince us. What things are you doing that might make it more difficult to connect with God?

Closing Prayer

O God, thank you for giving us your love each day. Helps us remember that we are *your* children even when we lose our way in daily life with things that seem important. Help us to look for the light you shine for us in all times and remind us to love others (even if they are difficult to love) like you love all of us. We are grateful for your unending love. Amen.



Additional options

You might want to keep a simple journal during this Advent season. Below are some suggested prompts that coincide with this week's theme and stories. Read ahead a day or two as some days require a bit of homework.

Week 2 Journal Questions:

- Day 1: Can you remember a time when you felt someone really loved you? How did that make you feel? How does it feel to know that God loves you more than that?
- Day 2: Try throughout the day to remind yourself that you are loved. What did it feel like when you remembered and when you forgot?
- Day 3: Think about someone in your life who needs to know they are loved? How do you affirm them and tell them you love them today?
- Day 4: Thinking back to yesterday, how successful were you in affirming someone in love? How did that feel? Who else might you share that love with today?
- Day 5: Sometimes we make it harder for others to love us, almost like we want them to have to make a big effort to convince us. Are you making it easier or harder for God to love you?
- Day 6: Do you think that love is an emotion or a rational decision? What if it is both? How does that affect how you love others?
- Day 7: Reflect over your writings this week. What did you learn that surprised you? What did you relearn that you had forgotten? What is the most important thing to remember as we move toward Christmas?

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, o come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.