

The First Week of Advent – The Prophets’ Candle

As you light the first candle explain, “The first candle we light is the prophet’s candle and it reminds us that the coming of Jesus was foretold hundreds of years before His birth.”

Consider: In many places in the Old Testament we read about a promised Savior, a promised King, or of God’s promise to send an Anointed leader to conquer sin. For hundreds of years His people looked forward to the day when this deliverer would come. For Adam and Eve, he was the conqueror who would crush Satan’s head. For Abraham, he was the descendant that would bless every nation. For King David, he was the descendant who would establish His throne for eternity. For Ezekiel, he was the True Shepherd that would care for His people. And for Isaiah, he was the virgin born child that would be Emmanuel “God with us.” Through all of these promises foretold, we get a picture that God had a plan to reconcile us to Him even though we had sinned and gone astray. One specific prophecy often read at Christmas time comes from Micah 5:2 and told the people where to expect the Christ to be born:

Read the Bible: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old from ancient days. (Micah 5:2 ESV)*

Because of this, when the wise men came, the learned men knew where to tell them to look for the one who would be born King of the Jews.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” (Matthew 2:1-6 ESV)

Remember: History is God’s story. He has purposes and plans that He has set forth to accomplish in His time and according to His will. Just as He promised to send a Savior and fulfilled His promise according to His time, He also has plans and purposes He is

accomplishing in our time. Sometimes we may feel like life rolls on with little meaning in the day to day details, but the birth of Jesus reminds us that there is more to the story. God is not distant and unconcerned. He is present and active showing people that through Jesus they can have hope of life with Him. Take some time to reflect this week on how God may be at work in your life drawing near to you in the midst of the circumstances of your life.

Pray: God, we recognize that life belongs to you. When life does not make sense to us, help us remember that you are a God that is purposeful and keeps His promises. Help us to remember that you have promised to give Salvation to all those who hope in Christ and lead us to have grateful hearts that recognize you have provided for our greatest need. In Jesus name, Amen.

Experience the Joy: Each week you can take the opportunity to make your Christmas meaningful by doing something practical to share and experience the joy of Christmas. During this week, the project is called Not Forgotten

The holiday season can be one of the most difficult times of year for those who have recently lost loved ones. While everyone else is hurrying along through their holiday schedule they are often stung with grief to experience the holidays with the hole that has been left by their family member or friend.

During this week plan an act of kindness for them. Send them a card. Pay them a visit. Call them and pray for them. Invite them out for dinner. No matter what you do let them know that their loved one and their sorrow are Not Forgotten during your season of celebration. As you do God may just use you to remind them that He is always present and active, caring for their needs and giving them hope.

Daily Reading: Use the daily readings each week to guide you through scriptures related to Advent and the weekly theme.

Week 1 (Monday-Friday)

Monday - Isaiah 9:1-7

Tuesday - Isaiah 11:1-5

Wednesday - Isaiah 12:1-6

Thursday - Jeremiah 33:14-26

Friday - 1 Peter 1:3-12