

# THE WONDER OF IT ALL



SERMON OUTLINES



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# WEEK ONE

## The Wonder in the Journey: Joseph's Story

### MAIN TEXT & SCRIPTURES THAT SPEAK TO HOPE

Main text: Matthew 1:18–25; see also Isaiah 9:2–6; Romans 15:13

### MAIN POINTS

- I. Journeys of hope and wonder often intensify the demands of discipleship.
  - Joseph trusted but likely faced scrutiny from his community.
  - Israel faced challenges and opportunities to trust God after Egypt (Exodus 14).
  - We must meet each new day with a renewed commitment to follow Jesus.
  
- II. Journeys of hope and wonder are both spiritual and physical.
  - Joseph had to ready his heart but also had to travel to Bethlehem.
  - Rahab demonstrated her convictions by helping the Israelite spies (James 2:25–26).
  - We should appreciate that faith expresses itself in physical, material ways.
  
- III. Journeys of hope and wonder are often protracted.
  - Joseph had to care for and lead his family to Egypt as they fled Herod.
  - The apostle Paul awaited trial in Rome for more than two years (Acts 28:30–31).
  - We must see our journeys through to the end, even as their conclusions elude us.

### QUOTES FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“Whereas Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth.”

—Pope John Paul II

“The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord.”

—Henry Nouwen

“The man who cannot wonder is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye.”

—Thomas Carlyle

## QUESTIONS ON HOPE & WONDER

- On this first Sunday of Advent, what are you hopeful for? Truly?
- In what ways is God's world or his story inspiring wonder in your life?
- How does Joseph's invitation to trust God inspire you?
- How can you be an over-flower of wonder and hope?

## PRAYER

Loving God, as we begin this Advent season, we are reminded of the beauty found within a life that is true to your calling. We place our hope in you, Lord. We ask that, on this day and each day to come, we would be found righteous and obedient to your calling, just as Joseph was. May this season remind us all of your faithfulness and renew our hope in your promises, even as we wonder at what will come next in our journey with you. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

# WEEK TWO

## The Wonder in Anticipation: Mary's Story

### MAIN TEXT & SCRIPTURES THAT SPEAK TO PEACE

Main text: Luke 1:26-38; see also Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 52:7; Luke 2:13-14; John 14:27

### MAIN POINTS

- I. God's Word sometimes first evokes perplexion and distress for us.
  - Mary was troubled in her heart and wondered how she could bear a child.
  - God's presence will burn away the chaff in our lives; he is a God of holy love.
  - We must be honest as we reconcile ourselves to the calling of God for our lives.
  
- II. God was committed to working a miracle in order to fulfill his redemptive purposes.
  - Mary believed God could do the impossible and surrendered to his promise.
  - God is a creating, sustaining, and redeeming Father who will see us through.
  - We must exercise holy imagination in order to believe the future God desires.
  
- III. God desires active waiting even as we trust him.
  - Mary's pregnancy lasted nine months, then she journeyed with Jesus a lifetime.
  - God journeys with his people from infancy to maturity; he is utterly faithful.
  - Waiting means doing the work and preparing for the future reality.

### QUOTES FOR SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

"God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

—C. S. Lewis

"It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

"First keep peace with yourself, then you can also bring peace to others."

—Thomas a Kempis

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

—Jesus (Matthew 5:9)

## QUESTIONS ON PEACE & WONDER

- On this second Sunday of Advent, where do you experience peace?
- In what area might God be calling you to activate holy imagination??
- How does Mary's faith inspire you to trust God differently, or more?
- How can you move from passive to active surrender?

## PRAYER

God of wonder, God of peace! As we enter into this, the second Sunday of Advent, we rejoice in the gift of your Son, who is our peace. Grant to us, we pray, the faithfulness to stand with Mary as she anticipated and wondered at what her Son would be like. May she who is the first disciple be for us a model of faith's response to your will in all things; may her "Let it be with me according to your word" be our constant prayer; may her "Do whatever he tells you" elicit from us a more perfect surrender of obedience to her Lord and ours. Amen. (Quoted in part from *A Common Prayer*, "Do Whatever He Tells You: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian Faith and Life: A Statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together.")

# WEEK THREE

## The Wonder of the Arrival: Shepherds

### MAIN TEXT & SCRIPTURES THAT SPEAK TO JOY

Main text: Luke 2:8–20; see also Isaiah 12:2–6; Luke 2:10–11 ; Philippians 4:4–5

### MAIN POINTS

- I. God's kingdom timing is perfect, even when it appears delayed or extraordinary to us.
  - The shepherds experienced the company of angels in their ordinary routine.
  - God's plan was revealed with awesome wonder to those of humble heart.
  - We live in the tension of the already-not-yet; between the glorious and the mundane.
  
- II. God's kingdom activity is perfect, despite it often confounding us.
  - The shepherds received the announcement of Jesus with joy and left their duties.
  - God has sown the seed of his kingdom and salvation in the Holy Incarnation.
  - We must leave everything to pursue the presence of God-with-us.
  
- III. God kingdom is for all people, and brings them together for worship.
  - The shepherds went out celebrate and spread the news about the Son of God.
  - Jesus's arrival unites his people into one body, no matter rank or background.
  - We bear the good news of the child—God with us—with our lives and our lips.

### QUOTES FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.”

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

“Joy is not the absence of suffering. It is the presence of God.”

—Robert Schuller

“Aren't you glad it's not Christmas yet? Advent wills to rob Christmas of all its anxiety and replace it with pure joy.”

—J. D. Walt

“God gives God. That is the gift God always ultimately gives. Because nothing is greater and we have no greater need, God gives God. God gives God, and we only need to slow long enough to unwrap the greatest Gift with our time: time in His Word, time in His presence, time at His feet.”

—Ann Voskamp

## QUESTIONS ON JOY & WONDER

- On this third Sunday of Advent, where are you looking for joy?
- In what area of your life is God asking you to reimagine the timing?
- How does the joy of the shepherds inspire you to go forward in faith?
- How can you bear witness to God’s arrival in your own neighborhood?

## PRAYER

God of wonder, God of joy! As we enter into this, the third Sunday of Advent, we rejoice in the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask of you and declare over our world—no more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground—for he, our king Jesus, comes to make his blessings known to all. Fill our hearts, Lord, with the joy that comes from knowing him, and may our very lives reflect his love and light unto all we encounter today. Amen. (Quoted in part from “Joy to the World” by *Isaac Watts*.)



# WEEK FOUR

## The Wonder of the Revelation: The Magi

### MAIN TEXT & SCRIPTURES THAT SPEAK TO LOVE

Main text: Matthew 2:1–12; Zephaniah 3:17; John 3:16–17; John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:16–20

### MAIN POINTS

- I. God reveals his purposes over time and in ways that often defy our expectations.
  - The Magi were likely pagan astrologers who learned the messianic expectation.
  - God reveals his timeless, unchanging character—of love—through time.
  - We should honor and build on the prevenient grace sown in the lives of all people.
  
- II. God’s revelation of love is what grounds our response to him.
  - The Magi offered a litany of love to Jesus: gifts, time, words, proximity, and service.
  - God draws us near by always taking the first step toward us.
  - We discover our true identity when we draw near to God in acts of worship.
  
- III. God invites us to see our longings, desires, ambitions—fulfilled in him.
  - The Magi went back another way for they recognized darkness but cherished light.
  - God gives us enough light to grow our appetite for more of him and his purposes.
  - We respond to his revelation by exchanging our emptiness for the fulness of Jesus.

### QUOTES FOR FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“At this Christmas when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God’s own love and concern.”

—Mother Teresa

“When one has once fully entered the realm of love, the world—no matter how imperfect— becomes rich and beautiful, it consists solely of opportunities for love.”

—Søren Kierkegaard

“During Advent, we occupy our greatest longings.”

—Ruth Haley Barton

“Look up, you whose gaze is fixed on this earth, who are spellbound by the little events and changes on the face of the earth. Look up to these words, you who have turned away from heaven disappointed. Look up, you whose eyes are heavy with tears and who are heavy and who are crying over the fact that the earth has gracelessly torn us away. Look up, you who, burdened with guilt, cannot lift your eyes. Look up, your redemption is drawing near. something different from what you see daily will happen. Just be aware, be watchful, wait just another short moment. Wait and something quite new will break over you: God will come.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## QUESTIONS ON LOVE & WONDER

- On this fourth Sunday of Advent, where does love find you today?
- What do the Scriptures say to you personally, today, regarding love?
- What does love mean to you, and how do you know?
- Read aloud 1 Corinthians 13 but replace the word *love* with your first name.

## PRAYER

Gracious God, as we enter the fourth Sunday of Advent, we are reminded of the childlike wonder that love brings into our lives. As children embrace love with open hearts and unbridled joy, may we too approach your love with childlike faith and trust. Fill us with the good news found in your love for us all and lead us to share it generously with all we encounter. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen.