

GOD WITH US

Week 1: Advent of Hope

Titus 2:11-14

OPEN

This is our first week of our series called “God with Us” based on Matthew 1:23 which says, “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “**God with us**”). The story of Christmas is really the story of God coming down in the person of Jesus to bring us back into relationship with the Father. Christmas reminds us that Immanuel, God with Us, gives us **hope, peace, joy and love**. Advent (meaning arrival) is a time of expectant waiting, preparation, with great anticipation, for the arrival of Jesus. We live between two advents. We look back at his birth which gives us hope for his return at the second coming. Advent invites us to slow down and experience Immanuel—“God with Us anew, who came to bring us hope, peace, joy, and love in the midst of the messiness and busyness of the our lives.

READ

- **Read Matthew 1:18-25.** Focus on Mary and what she had to wait for as the story unfolds.
 - When have you had to wait for someone else to hear from God or for God to change someone’s thoughts or opinions in order to move forward with your own life?
 - Is there something you are waiting for God to provide or release this Advent season?
- **Read Luke 2:25-32.** Focus on Simeon and his waiting for the “consolation of Israel.” **Read Isaiah 40:1-5** and reflect on how Simeon may have understood the consolation or comfort of Israel.
 - As Simeon prayed to the Lord for his people and nation, how can you pray to the Lord for your people and nation?

REFLECT

- **Read Titus 2:11-13.** A form of the word “appear” is found near the beginning and the end of Titus 2:11-13. In the first instance, the *grace* of God is the subject, and the second time it’s the *glory* of God.
 - Thinking of Jesus as the expression of God’s grace and the bearer of God’s glory, how are those two appearances similar and how are they different?
 - As followers of Jesus, how can we reflect his life as an expression of the grace and glory of God towards others? What would that look like in your life?
- In Hebrews 9:24-28 the word “appear” is found three times, all in relation to some work of Jesus (vv. 24, 26, and 28).
 - Which two of the three, parallel the two occurrences in Titus 2:11-13?
 - What does the other use of “appear” indicate that Jesus is doing between his ascension to heaven and second coming to earth (see Romans 8:34)?
 - How does this awareness impact my life right now?

APPLY/PRAY

- **Read Matthew 1:23.** In what ways do you need to experience Immanuel, God with us afresh today?
 - In what area of your life do you need to know the presence of God more deeply? Share that with each other and pray for that.
- What practical steps can you take to ensure that you have time for quiet remembrance and reflection to wait on the Lord between now and Christmas?
- As a church, we are in a season of waiting for a new lead pastor to be identified. Continue to pray for the Board of Elders, pastoral staff members, and other leaders for wisdom, unity, and grace, as we wait on the Lord for direction in the future.