



HOW ARE YOU GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS?
WHY NOT JOIN AN ADULT SMALL GROUP
AND ENJOY READING EXPERIENCING CHRISTMAS
by Matt Rawle

How do you experience Advent? How do you experience Christmas? Do you have a count down with an Advent calendar? Do you have an Advent wreath at home that you and your family light each week?" Do you spend hours simply decorating, buying and wrapping gifts, planning for family get-togethers, making travel plans, or planning the menu for the huge Christmas dinner?

In his easy-to-read book, Rawle points out that this time of year seems different. We're at the end of a year and things just look, smell, and taste different during the Advent season. He invites us to encounter God in the sights, sounds, tastes, and feelings we associate with Christmas.

Experience the Four Sundays of Advent through our Sunday Sermon Study Series
December 1 - 22, 2024

See

Sight is the strongest sense we have, and we see signs of Christmas long before the actual date arrives. The Symbols of Christmas are powerful. We anticipate the gifts around the tree long before that tree becomes a cross symbolizing death to life. The wreath is a circle of peace, hope love, joy and it is timeless. We aren't just waiting, we're also inviting peace, hope, love, and joy into our lives. We anticipate a baby, but we expect to see salvation. What do you see as Jesus comes?

"This is a sign for you; you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

Hear

Faith comes by hearing and so Rawle explores the sense of hearing as we progress through Advent. Christmas music is everywhere, so you can't miss that! However, have you really thought about what the shepherds heard as they tended their flocks? The wind, the popping of the fire, the sheep, silence, and then, the angel appearing with the words, "Do not be afraid!" Angels were praising and speaking of the glory of God. Once the shepherds had seen Jesus, they returned glorifying and praising God. The next time Luke uses the same words is on Palm Sunday. It is impossible to have Christmas without music. What do you hear at this time of year? And after hearing, are you glorifying and praising God?

"Sing to the Lord a new song! Sing his praise from the ends of the earth!" Isaiah 42:10

Taste

Have you finished the meal planning for the Holiday? Have you thought about what happened when Jesus was born? Between angels, shepherds, livestock and everything else, Mary had a baby. She nursed Jesus and as she did so, creation was brought to its knees. Mary offered her body for Jesus's nourishment and 30 years later, Jesus offered His body for our nourishment. Communion! During communion we recognize that we are all hungry and need food to survive. There is no record of Jesus eating alone. Eating was a communal activity. Food and relationships were inseparable. During communion, Jesus offers Himself to us. How many times has Jesus invited you to dinner?

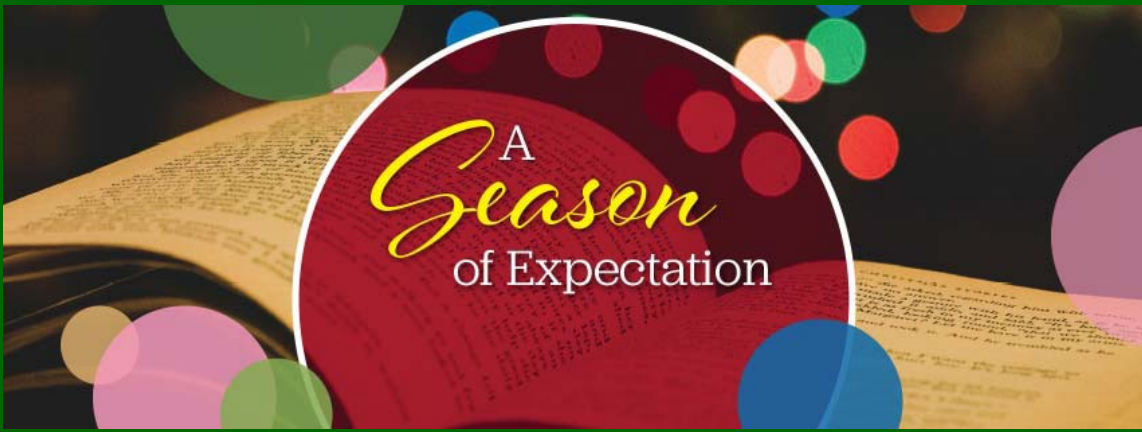
"Taste and see how good the Lord is! The one who takes refuge in Him is truly happy!" Psalm 34:8

Touch

A touch communicates, whether it is a hug, a slap on the back for encouragement, or a slap across the face! Touch also protects - think learning not to touch a hot stove. We can't live without touch. Simon holds Jesus as a baby and confirms that Jesus is the salvation for all of us. According to Luke, the only other time that Jesus is embraced is when Joseph of Arimathea takes Jesus down from the cross. Jesus was both divine and human, so He knew joy and pain, and the healing of a mother's embrace. Jesus also used the power of touch for healing and there's even the account of the woman touching the hem of His garment and is healed! Touch matters! How we touch others, either physically or by our words and actions matter. Jesus was fully embraced at his infancy and at His death. Luke suggests that to fully embrace Christ, we need to learn and take hold of the entire story of Jesus.

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God saying: "Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation. You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and a glory for your people Israel.." Luke 2:28-32

Rawle points out that we started with sight. Sight is hope and allows distance because we can see Christmas coming. We need to be closer in order to hear. The candle of peace must be close as we seek recognition and forgiveness. By the third week, we have to be at the same table in order to share the same dish (meal—communion). We need to eat, and so we are at arm's length! And, at last, Advent ends with the touch of Joy. God is with us! We will know what it means to be held, to be cared for, and we also will know pain and sorrow. Have no fear! Don't worry! Rejoice, because joy is the touch of the divine, and one day heaven and earth will be one!



Adult Small Groups Participating in the Sunday Sermon Study Series EXPERIENCING CHRISTMAS by Matt Rawle



AGAPE - A mixed group meeting on Sunday from 9:30-10:30 in Room 302-303 or via Zoom.
Contact: Pat Thornton, Kurt Streicherm Pam Thornton or Phil Paulson

GOOD NEIGHBORS - A group meeting on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 in the Chapel at the Vistas (2500 Grant St., Bettendorf).
Contact: Roberta Gimmy

LADIES ARM GROUP - A group of ladies that meet every other Thursday from 7:00-9:00 PM via ZOOM.
Contact: Sharon Phillips

THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY - A mixed group that meets on Thursday Evenings from 7:00-8:30 PM via ZOOM.
Contact: Chris and Vern Harvey

WINGS (WEDNESDAY INSPIRATIONAL NIGHT (OF) GROUP STUDY)

A group that meets on Wednesdays from 6:15-7:30 PM at the church in rooms 302-303 or via ZOOM.
Contact: Jean Black or Heather Dennis

Other Adult Study Groups Meeting Include:

ASBURY MEN'S GROUP - A group of men that meets at 7:45 AM on the second and fourth Saturday mornings in Room 302-303 or via ZOOM. They offer a study, watch and discuss a video, have one-on-one prayer partners, fun, fellowship, and varied service projects.
Contact: Cliff Pim or Phil Paulson

EXPLORATIONS - A mixed class meetings on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:25 AM in Room 202. They are studying: *SEARCHING FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS* by Jean-Pierre Isbouts. Isbouts is a historian, biblical scholar and National Geographic author who offers historical details that help one understand the motive behind the message of Jesus.
Contact: Realf Ottesen, Gary Hendershot or Vickie Streicher

Fellowship and Connection Groups

HANNAH CIRCLE - A socially oriented group of ladies that meets at different locations on the second Tuesday of each month either for a brunch or lunch.
Contact: Donna Stradt

LIFT (LADIES IN FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER)

See their Facebook page for the latest information regarding activities, studies, and/or service projects.
Contact: Jenny Bloomquist, Julia Hensch, Marian Edmund-Paulson or Stephanie Pim

RACHEL CIRCLE - A group of ladies that meets on the second Tuesday of the month at church. They not only support and encourage one another, have a speaker each month, but also include a service project which helps support an organization within our community.
Contact: Pam Duehr or Katie Nelson

