

## My Continuing Thoughts for Sunday, Through Christmas

### The Advent of Our Lord

**advent** (not capitalized): a coming into being or use; i.e. (the advent of spring)

**Advent** (capitalized): the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas and observed by some Christians as a season of prayer and fasting

The prophet Isaiah very aptly described this Advent at [Isaiah 11:1-2](#)

*"Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.  
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him  
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a spirit of council and strength,  
a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."*

For many years before becoming a member of my WELS Lutheran family, a church of believers in the larger family of God, brothers and sisters to our Savior, Jesus Christ, I often wondered just what this grouping of candles meant that always seemed to appear just before Christmas. Let me share with you over the next four weeks what I have learned as we, together, light these candles one by one.

First, let me give a little understanding and description of this candle arrangement for those of you, who like me, were unfamiliar with this Christian tradition. The arrangement, generally in the circular form, representing a wreath is sometimes adorned in similar fashion as, or included in the actual composition of, a wreath. The Advent wreath consists of five candles; one white, one pink and three purple or blue. One candle is lit each of the four weeks preceding Christmas signifying specific aspects of this time of preparation of the coming of our Lord, culminating with the white candle being lit on Christmas Day.

Most people, probably you also, have developed over the years many traditions and practices regarding this most joyous time of the year. There is the practice of gift giving; Christmas caroling; decorating of trees, houses and even landscapes; festive holiday meals and the gathering of families, some members seldom seen except at Christmas time. In addition to these many traditions practiced by most of us, Christians have annually celebrated the Advent of our lord, recognizing and waiting in anticipation of that day we all celebrate as the birthday of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**ADVENT 1:** 30 November 2014

The lighting of the first candle (purple or blue) THE PROPHECY CANDLE or CANDLE OF HOPE. Hope for what?

We need to return to the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, to see the first prophesy of a Savior. Adam and Eve had sinned against God and had received the condemnation of death as a result and in fulfillment of His warning. However, at this time God also promised that He would send a Savior, one who would be born of her seed, born of a woman and would remove that curse from all mankind. [Genesis 3:14-15](#). Thus, the PROPHECY CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF HOPE. It is only through this Savior that we can find hope for anything other than the death we deserve. We can find references to the fulfillment of this prophesy in [Galatians 4:4](#), [Hebrews 2:14](#) and again in [1 John 3:8](#)

**ADVENT 2:** 7 December 2014

The lighting of the second candle (purple or blue) THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION. Preparation for the coming of the Messiah, HOW?

*Preparation:* basically meaning: to get ready

God's ever faithful promise of a Savior to be born in Bethlehem is in the process of being remembered. Help us to prepare for that coming of our Lord. Again, we need to go back to Scripture to understand this process of preparation. Isaiah first spoke of this time of the coming or advent of the Messiah when he spoke of the one crying out to make way in the wilderness for the Lord. ([Isaiah 40:3](#)) Luke reaffirmed this prophesy very clearly that the promised Lord was coming. ([Luke 3:4-6](#)) This is that time of the year when we too prepare the way and get ready to worship our new born King.

### **ADVENT 3:** 14 December 2014

The lighting of the third candle (Pink) THE SHEPHERD CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF JOY. The shepherds heard the message of joy from the heavenly host.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: "There is no peace on earth; I said: because hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will toward men." This is a sad commentary in light of the message the angels delivered to the shepherds two thousand years ago. This was on that very night that we are looking forward to in a few short weeks. I would prefer to look back to that message and realize it was sent by God and means a lot more than Mr. Longfellow's statement.

Read what Luke wrote regarding the birth of Christ from the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah long before, in Isaiah, chapters 9 and 14 where he speaks of *Immanuel* and Micah, chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough—because there was no room for them at the lodging place.*

<sup>8</sup> *In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

<sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people:*

<sup>11</sup> *Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.*

<sup>12</sup> *This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough."*

<sup>13</sup> *Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:*

<sup>14</sup> *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors! **Luke 2:7-14 (HCSB)***

This is the peace that our *Prince of Peace* gives to us through His sacrifice and that He creates with love in the hearts of those who love and trust Him.

### **ADVENT 4:** 21 December 2014

The lighting of the fourth candle (Purple) the ANGEL CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF LOVE

The Angels told the shepherds about the coming of the Savior that winter night just as John told us in his gospel, in that well known verse about the Savior; "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*" (John 3:16-17) Is it any wonder that the shepherds were excited to go and see this Savior the angels had told them about? They had been waiting for centuries for the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior from their sins.

We have now gone through the four weeks leading up to the highlight of the season. As we approach Christmas we are reminded of the four candles of Advent; Hope, Preparation, Joy and Love.

We have and share all these feelings in anticipation of the Savior who came once as a baby, born of a woman to redeem us from our sins. We are also in anticipation of this same Savior coming again in the end time to gather all believers to Him and take us home to be with Him for eternity.

This brings us to the fifth candle, (white)--THE CHRIST CANDLE

This candle reminds us that Christ is the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; His birth was to culminate in His sinless life and death; His death was to give us life, a new birth as redeemed, justified and sanctified children of God. As John said, ! "*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*" (John 1:29) John goes on to tell us what must happen for us to gain that promised life in the Kingdom of Heaven. "*Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.' In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'*" (John 3:1-8)

During these weeks of Advent I have given explanation to the many names and titles given to our Lord; some of which are in our opening text and document: *branch; root; Lord; Jesus; Christ; Savior.*

**Branch/ root/ vine:**

As our text says a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse and a *branch* shall bear fruit. Paradoxically Jesus is also the *root*. He is the *vine* on which we depend for life and nourishment. ([Isaiah 11:1](#), [Jeremiah 23:5](#), [Zechariah 3:8](#), [6:12](#), [John 15:1](#))

**Lord:**

Jesus is *Lord* over all. He has the title by right as the Son of God and Creator of the universe. ([1 Timothy 6:15](#), [Revelation 19:16](#))

**Jesus/ Christ/ Messiah:**

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Yeshua* which means "Yahweh (Jehovah) is salvation." *Christ* meaning *Jesus or Messiah* was believed in Judaism to be a king who would be sent by God to save the Jews. *Messiah* is the Hebrew word translated into Greek as *Christ*; both names meaning "*Anointed One*" or *Savior*. He came to deliver us from death, the one who seeks and saves the lost. (Matthew 1:21, [Daniel 9:25](#), [John 1:41](#), [John 4:25](#))

**King**

Christ is King over all kings and rulers. In His kingdom all will be in subjection to Him and owe Him our complete allegiance. (1 Timothy 6:15), ([Revelation 17:14](#)) In scripture He was also referred to as King of the

Jews (Matthew 2:2),([Matthew 21:5](#)), King of Israel (John 1:49), and as *Prince* in [Daniel 9:25](#) and Prince of Peace in [Isaiah 9:6](#).

**Prince/ Prince of Peace:**

Christ became our peace when He ended the conflict between God and man and died on the cross. He is also our personal and internal peace through the love He has placed in our hearts. ([Ephesians 2:14](#)),

**Emmanuel/ Immanuel**

Meaning, *God with us*. Jesus was born on earth, a real human. He entered time and space to become fully human so we have the opportunity to be with God forever. (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)

My fondest prayer is that many of my readers may join us in our celebration of the coming of our Savior as a babe. For those who cannot join us, please find a church teaching these truths or go to your home church and experience the Hope, Preparation, Joy and Love given to us by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A Most Blessed Christmas To You All