



ADVENT

— Hope. Love. Joy. Peace. —

Key points

Think back through the message.
What stuck out?

THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY

Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

ISAIAH 11

- Enemies becoming companions
- Children are safe from harm
- Wise national leadership
- A world without war
- Isaiah's Advent is the universal vision of hope for the world
- True disciples do not need a "Departure Lounge", because the "Jesus Plane" - when it comes - will always find them working in the harvest field

ROMANS 15

Hope is realized through an awareness of God's story connecting to our story, emphasised by 2 things:

1. Pleasing others instead of ourselves
2. Praising God in unity and harmony

- Hope is communal
- All are invited and included
- The Church is called to "abound in hope"

MATTHEW 3

The Kingdom of God requires a change of heart, a contrite spirit, and a new set of values

- John's "repentance" is not "hellfire and brimstone"

"We have become so accustomed to the idea of divine love and of God's coming at Christmas that we no longer feel the shiver of fear that God's coming should arouse in us. We are indifferent to the message, taking only the pleasant and agreeable out of it and forgetting the serious aspect, that the God of the world draws near to the people of our little earth and lays claim to us. The coming of God is truly not only glad tidings, but first of all frightening news for everyone who has a conscience."

"The Coming of Jesus in our Midst", by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas*, December 21

The angels proclaimed "Peace on Earth" when the Baby Jesus was born. Today we wonder as we listen to the evening news, is peace possible? We all need two kinds of peace in our lives. We need inner peace, but we also need peace with others. God addresses both. He tells us what to do to find that peace.

INNER PEACE

Inner peace begins with a relationship with God, and it continues as we focus on His strength and allow Him to fill us. We can exchange our weakness for His strength in any area of life. God's Word says, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is focused on You because He trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

Personalise that verse with your own name in it: "God will keep me in perfect peace as my mind focuses on Him and trusts Him." Inner peace hinges on your trust in God.

If inner peace is eluding you these days, and anxiety is spilling over in your life, choose to trust God. You can decide to put your hand in His and draw from His patience and wisdom as you take each step. He will guide you through the maze of life if you ask Him. Choosing to trust God with those blind corners in your life will take you down the road to inner peace. Choosing not to trust Him will take you down the road to stress and worry. Inner peace is there for the choosing.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Peace with others begins as we understand that God has called us to be peacemakers in our world. Is there somewhere in your own world where you can be a peacemaker this Christmas? Is there an invitation that needs to be extended to smooth over a fractured family relationship? Is there an apology to be made or a silence to be broken that has stood as a barrier for too long? Don't miss the blessing God promises in your life as you respond to His call to be a peacemaker in your own circle.

We can help bring peace to our world one heart at a time.
Do you dread family gathers in the holiday season?

PRAYER

To make the most of this advent week, I would challenge you to pray the prayer of Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy... Divine Master; Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. In Jesus name, Amen.

