



The Gifts of Advent

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One of my favorite seasons of the year is Advent, which often falls on the first Sunday after Thanksgiving and lasts about 25 days. A reason for my excitement is the annual spiritual reminder that something highly valued is on its way, arriving on Christmas Day.

Hence, I, along with other humans worldwide, Christian and non-Christian, go forth into the weeks ahead in anticipation of a miraculous gift that has entered the world.

A typical Advent wreath is assembled with five candles, three purple, one pink, and one white, encircling it. Each Sunday, a candle is lit to signify a theme to focus on during the week.

Last week, the season's theme began with hope, and a purple Prophecy Candle was lit. This week, a purple Bethlehem Candle is lit to represent peace. In the following weeks, a pink Shepherd's Candle and a purple Angel's Candle bring joy, then love, respectively.

Finally, Christmas Day ushers in the gift of Christ's light as we celebrate his birth and anticipate the second coming through the lighting of the white Christ Candle.

Moreover, it is a significant reminder that during these cold, wintry days in North America, we will begin having more daylight and less darkness as we head toward the spring solstice.



While these themes are no longer new, they do comfort me. Life's journey is filled with peaks and valleys, often representing significant milestones, celebrations, and heartaches.

Focusing on the "good news" of the Christ Child's arrival can be a helpful and essential reminder that life is much bigger than my day-to-day focuses.

Advent invites me to look beyond my front door to share these heartfelt themes in ways that could impact the lives of other humans.

Scripture tells us that during his life, Christ asked his followers to "feed the poor, clothe the naked, and care for widows and orphans."

Advent is the perfect season to apply his directive and put it into action.

Therefore, I am encouraged to pivot my gaze and focus on a few things I can directly impact, rather than the larger structural challenges our communities face that need to be rebuilt but often feel overwhelming and slow to change.

Whether that is participating in a "Toys for Tots" campaign at the grocery store, a clothing drive at work, or a canned goods and non-perishable foods promotion at church for the food pantry, my heart is warmed and my spirit is uplifted as I partake in these seasonal initiatives.

Truthfully, there are few things more joyous than watching a child rip open wrapping paper, eyes full of wonder, to reach the new toy they have been dreaming of during this season of love, light, and laughter.

Knowing that an unhoused family has received warm clothing to navigate the chilly weather through my efforts is a precious re-

reminder that Christmas is as much the season of giving as it is of receiving.

As we move through these next couple of weeks in anticipation of what is to come, I invite you to reflect on this season and, where possible, share the gifts of Advent.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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