

“Roots - Advent and the Family Story of Jesus”

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-3a

Graphics: manger, roots, family tree, calendar

Big Truth: Advent is a season of anticipation of Christ’s coming celebrated at Christmas, and is a time of opening ourselves once again to the living Christ coming to us in a new and unanticipated way. The story of Jesus, his family, his hometown, and his circumstance tell of a God who is redeeming and renewing the world through Jesus. The family story of Jesus intersects with your family’s story and invites us to invite Him deeper into our lives this season.

Focus Phrase: Advent and the family story of Jesus is OUR story - MY story!

1. Scripture

A. **PRAY! (Jesus, you are Lord...)**

B. In Isaiah 11:1-3, written by the prophet hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, we read this...

C. **READ Isaiah 11:1-3a**

D. I always get excited when we start a new thing...a new school year, a new tradition, a new season. It’s not that we don’t love and appreciate where we’ve been - warm summer vacation, crisp beautiful fall, or even when good things come to an end to make room for new endeavors. It’s not that we regret finding ourselves reflecting on what has been. That’s not it.

E. New beginnings are an opportunity to be refreshed and renewed...to find a new perspective so that today is filled with hope for the future.

F. This is especially true when we enter into new seasons in the life of the church. Church seasons have been celebrated and observed for thousands of years. Let that sink in for a moment. Hundred of generations of people, families, communities, and churches have experienced life in Christ through the church.

G. The traditions and seasons of the church allow our lives to have a rhythm that’s very **VERY** different from the world’s drum beat. That’s because the Savior we worship, and the Lord we follow, Jesus, is set apart from this world...and HE sets US apart from the world and its trappings, as well. We are a holy people with a promise from God in Jesus.

H. So, today we enter the holy season of Advent. A new season. A new rhythm - FOR Jesus, and WITH Jesus. These Advent messages may be a little different than what we’re used to - less application points, and more questions for reflection. We’ll take a walking tour. We’ll enter into the story again and we’ll linger awhile. God has something new to show us during this season.

I. This may be your first Advent in the church, or maybe in a while, or perhaps it’s your 70th or 80th Advent in a row. We all come here today ready for a new word from the Lord. We all come here with hopes and dreams, hurts and hang-

ups, but we're invited, even in the midst of those, to be ready to take a journey again into this ancient-future story of the coming of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

- J. This series (and the focus of this season) is called ***Roots - Advent and the Family Story of Jesus***.

2. Introduction

- A. But, **“What is Advent all about and how does the family story of Jesus intersect our own?”**
- B. In a very practical way, the beginning of Advent marks the beginning of the Christian Year...the Christian New Year, if you will. See, WE, as the church, orient our calendar around the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as we should. It isn't set by the months of the year, the phases of the moon, the four seasons, or anything else. **It's Jesus. Only Jesus.**
- C. This may be a shift for us. We keep calendars for everything in our lives. We often wouldn't have a CLUE what was coming next if not for that little 'ding' on your device that alerts us that in 15 minutes, you need to be at this place or that meeting. “When do I have that doctor's appointment? When do the kids have school break? When are we getting together with family? When's that work trip? How many sleeps until that hunting trip or football game or trip to the store? And that Christmas party...when was that again?” And other people are counting on us...to be where we promised to be, when we promised to be there!
- D. Everything and everyone of importance has an allotment of time in your life... and so, priorities go on your calendar. And it doesn't matter if you keep a paper calendar, like our Kids Ministry Director, Maddie, does, or one in the Cloud on your phone or computer, like I do. Priorities get a place in our lives.
- E. **For the church, as followers of Jesus, Advent gets a place - a top priority - at the very beginning of a new year. Because, it's all about Him.**
- F. Advent is the season of ***anticipation*** of Christ's coming that we celebrate at Christmas. It's a time of opening ourselves, once again, to the living Christ coming to us in new and unanticipated ways.
- G. This season, we'll be exploring the ***roots***, the family story, of Jesus. And this will be a journey we'll take together...like pilgrims on a quest to find who we are, why we are here, and who this Jesus is - the One who is the center of our attention, and calendar, now and always.
- H. We'll be recalling, through scripture, the people, the places, and the stories that are part of the Jesus' own deep family legacy. And, maybe even more profoundly, we'll find all the ways that His story intersects with ours.

3. Advent and the Family Story of Jesus

- A. In our opening scripture, we read about a metaphorical *stump*...of a man named Jesse. Jesse was King David's father - the very same David who slayed Goliath and who was, by God's admission, "...a man after God's own heart." As great as David was, and as important as he was in the family tree of Jesus, he's not the point. That's not where we begin with the family story of Jesus.
- B. The family story of Jesus starts way back at Creation...as the Spirit moved across the void and created all things, including the first humans - Adam and Eve...then Noah and Abraham and Sarah and Moses and Miriam and Joshua and on and on...until we get to the prophets like Isaiah...and then to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.
- C. The Christmas story - the coming of Christ - is the pivot point for all of Creation. On one side of Jesus is the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. On this side of Jesus's birth, is our call to follow Him, as we wait for his return.
- D. God, the Creator of the Universe, stepped into the ordinary lives of the people of earth with a message. That message, which we read in John 1:5, is that, "Light shines in the darkness." That Light, which illuminates every heart, has come to us in the person of Jesus. And the reason for this story is because sin entered the world through that first Adam and Eve...and could only be set right through the presence of God himself among us...Jesus, Emmanuel, whom we worship and follow.
- E. That's why Advent and Christmas are so central to the church, as we enter into the family story of Jesus. God's Light of the world is shining in the darkness in every part of our lives. That's why we retell this story each year.
- F. And that's why we enter into this story **together**, as a family of God. Holidays are important to our earthly families, as we gather around important events that bring us together - birthdays, meals, holidays. For the family of the church, Advent and Christmas matter because we're gathering around these events which were at the very pivot point of the history of the world...of the church's story and history.
- G. And, the Advent of Jesus also marks the pivot point in YOUR life, as you allow Jesus to be YOUR Light. When you put your faith in Jesus, your life pivots from sin and death, to forgiveness and life.
- H. So come to this season expectantly, with the family of God, which is the family story of Jesus. But what IS the family story of Jesus?

4. The Family Story of Jesus

- A. We all come from someone, somewhere, and something. To put that another way, we come from a people, a place, and a story. Jesus is no different - for he has as human a family tree as we do.

- B. Isaiah 11 tells us a lot about Jesus' family story. And then, if you read the first chapter of the gospel of Matthew, you see a LOT more detail about Jesus' family tree...back through David and Jesse and all the way back to Creation.
- C. Jesus came from **someONE** - his people, **Israel**. He came to us from **some-WHERE** - the place, land, terrain, and towns of **first century Palestine**. He came to us from **someTHING** - the **covenant story** of his people's dramatic relationship with the Creator God of the Universe, Yahweh. And it was Yahweh God who extended His love toward his people...and toward you and me, so that Jesus' story can be OUR story.
- i. **(Family Tree)** Like Jesus, you and I come from a **people** - an extended family line. My brother-in-law - Stacy's brother - is passionate about her family's ancestry tree. I have a family tree, too, and we've done some good research back many generations, but mine looks like a low bush compared to hers presented here. He's done a ton of work to connect the dots and follow the leaves. We ALL have a tree like this. It's part of our story. We come from a people.
 - ii. We also all have a **place** - a hometown and homelands. These are places where, when someone asks you where you're from, you say, "I'm from Lancaster or Western NY." Turn to one other person who may not know where you're from near you and simply answer that question to each other: "Where are you from?" We come from a place!
 - iii. We all, as well, come from a **story** - the story of our own family. And every story is unique. Our family stories include heroes and heroines...and also have scoundrels and secrets. Our families includes mothers and fathers, grands and great-grands. Our families have children and siblings - some adopted, some who've died, and others who are no longer part of our lives.
 - iv. See, every story is a story of joy and tears, peace and strife. That's why an important part of your story and mine is **God's relentless covenant pursuit of you and your family...for generations**. In God's kingdom economy, nothing is wasted or lost...it's all used for God's loving pursuit of you, your family, and every family.
- D. In other words, Jesus has a people, a place, and story to and through which he comes to us as Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus' people, place, and story is where we'll start, but that's not where we'll stay. Jesus' people, place, and story is revisited and studied so that His story can be the **transforming truth for you and your own family, place, and story**.
- E. Jesus is inviting you to begin to look for Jesus at work in your family story - the people, the places, and the stories from which you came? Each one of us is who we are because of our family, our upbringing, and our story.

- F. What might Jesus begin to show you about your own heart in this season? Is your heart saddened because of the world? Do you long for more peace or joy? This season is a time to receive that from the Lord.
- G. What gifts he has placed into your life along the way? We just finished a week of giving thanks in tangible ways. What other gifts has God placed in your life and how is He asking to use them?
- H. How is He bringing continued redemption and restoration to you and your family line - your tree, its branches and leaves and fruit? Where is God leading you and your family into more and more redemption and restoration as a family? This is a great season to start a daily family devotional using our Roots book. This season is also a great time to reconcile with a family member, here or at home, and begin to let the Spirit repair and renew that relationship.
- I. And how does God want to send you out into the world to be an agent of redemption and restoration in the lives of OTHER people and families?

5. The Roots of Jesus

- A. For Jesus and his people, that redemption and restoration began the moment Jesus was born...when the stump that was part of his family tree - cut-off and barren - began to grow new life.
- B. The prophet Isaiah, seeing deep into the future of God's history-making pivot point who is Jesus, told the world that, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord."
- C. A shoot came up. Roots went down into Creation past and a righteous Branch began to grow for the future...to bear holy fruit for the world to see and taste and eat.
- D. Jesus is the shoot. Jesus is the Branch. Jesus' fruit is the fruit of love and grace and redemption and restoration from the sin of the world. Those roots go down deep - deeper than any evil or sin - so that ALL sin and ALL evil are defeated by this Jesus - this Branch - to which we're invited to be connected, once again and in new ways.
- E. The birth story of Jesus - including his genealogy in Matthew - tells us of a Savior who entered into the world through a very human family. A family like yours and mine.
- F. As we begin to see God at work in the wild and amazing family story of Jesus, we may begin to see Him at work, powerfully and faithfully, in our own stories...and own families.

- G. That would be a profound gift, even a miracle for some for our families (all of our families?), this Advent. Maybe you've been praying for this.
- H. When God helps us notice how He is already at work, we learn to turn our eyes from seeing only the brokenness around us and in us, to seeing the fullness of God's miraculous work happening.
- I. God wants to draw us, and others, to himself. And THAT is the Good News of Jesus and his birth as one of us. That invitation from our Creator God can only be answered by walking to the heart of God with Jesus himself.
- J. Advent and the family story of Jesus is OUR story - MY story - YOUR story!

6. Conclusion

- A. Isaiah told the world that Jesus would be filled with the Holy Spirit. And that the Spirit would give wisdom and of understanding, counsel and power, the knowledge and the fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
- B. The family story of Jesus - his people, his place, and his covenant story - is the grand story of redemption throughout the bible.
- C. And, you know the most amazing part? This family story of Jesus was not FOR the family of Jesus. It is for YOUR family. It is for our CHURCH FAMILY. It is for the worldwide Family of God. It's OUR story.
- D. As we enter this story, this week, consider your own family line as far back as you have records. Who were the ones who sought to walk faithfully? Who were the ones who stumbled and fell?
- E. Who you are today is a combination of those who walked faithfully and those who stumbled. You're not alone. In the family story of Jesus, there are prostitutes, murderers, liars, and cheats. At the same time, there are women and men who worshipped, served, gave, prayed, and sacrificed for God.
- F. Where can you see your family story - as mixed a bag as it may be - as the pathway that has led you and your family to this place, at THIS time in the history of the world? How does your appearance, your way of thinking, and your location point to your family story? And your family story of redemption in progress?
- G. How is God calling you to use all that for His glory, rather than simply in spite of it? Spend time this week reflecting on where you've come from and then ask God how He wants to use YOUR story for His Glory!
- H. Advent and the family story of Jesus is OUR story!
- I. Let's pray...
- J. PRAY!**