

December 22, 2024: Advent 4–Advent with the Prophets

Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a (See also Matthew 2:1-6)

1. Where were you born? Was this the same place/area you grew up in?
2. When someone asks you “Where are you from?” do you tell them your birthplace, where you grew up, or your current home?
3. Do you have a nativity set (or creche) at home?
4. How does Micah 5:2-5 describe Bethlehem?
5. What significance do you see in the fact that Jesus came from a humble town and was born into a humble family?
6. Bethlehem was called the “City of David” because of David’s history there. The Hebrew word *Bethlehem* can be translated as “house of bread.” How does Jesus relate to these two descriptions of Bethlehem?
7. How do the descriptions of the coming ruler in Micah 5:2-5 relate to Jesus?
8. How does Matthew 2:1-6 employ today’s passage from Micah?
9. What are you most looking forward to this Christmas season?

December 15, 2024: Advent 3: Advent with the Prophets

Scripture: Zephaniah 3: 14-20

1. What brings you the most joy in this season of your life?
2. When you hear the word “joy,” how do you differentiate it from happiness?
3. In Zephaniah 3:14, the people are called to “sing” and “rejoice.” Why is joy an appropriate response to God’s actions described in this chapter?
4. Verse 15 speaks of the Lord taking away judgements against his people and turning back their enemies. How does the removal of judgment create space for joy in our lives today?
5. The prophet Zephaniah portrays God as rejoicing over his people with gladness(verse 17). What does it mean to you that God experiences joy over his creation?
6. How does the image of God singing over you challenge or deepen your understanding of God’s character?
7. What are some ways that you can cultivate joy in your daily life?
8. How can we participate in bringing joy to others?

December 8, 2024: Advent 2: Advent with the Prophets

Journey with us this Advent as we live with the Old Testament prophets. Each week we will plumb the depths of rich, OT passages that point toward Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah.

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4 (see also verses 5-12)

1. When was a time in your life when you received an important message?
2. Have you ever tried to communicate a message to someone, but the message did not get through? What was the result?
3. Read Malachi 3:1-4. What word or phrase jumps out to you?
4. Which “messenger” prepared the way for Jesus?
5. Reflect on the description of God who is like “a refiner’s fire.” How do you understand this description of God?
6. Have you ever known a time when God’s presence was like fire that brought refining to your life?
7. Now reflect on the description of God who is like “fuller’s soap.” (A *fuller* was someone who cleansed cloth and made it white). How do you understand this description of God?
8. Later on in 3:5, we find a list of violations that the people presumably had fallen into. Read this list. What do you notice?
9. During this Advent season, how do you understand the words of Malachi 3:7 – “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord...”?

December 1, 2024: Advent 1: Advent with the Prophets

Journey with us this Advent as we live with the Old Testament prophets the next 4 weeks. Each week we will plumb the depths of rich, OT passages that point toward Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah.

Scripture: Jeremiah 33: 14-16

1. How do you think the people of Israel and Judah might have felt when hearing this prophecy during a time of exile and despair?
2. Jeremiah speaks of a “good promise” being fulfilled. Why is it important to remember that God keeps his promises?
3. Have you experienced a time when God fulfilled a promise in your life? How did it encourage you?
4. The prophecy emphasizes that the “righteous branch” will do what is just and right in the land. What does justice and righteousness look like in our world today?
5. Justice can mean fairness and compassion for other people. How can we be fair in our dealings with other people? How are we as a church being compassionate toward our community?
6. Are there specific areas in your life, church, or community where God might be calling you to act justly or to advocate for righteousness?
7. Our UM memberships vows state: “Will you resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they

present themselves?” Where might you need God’s help in accomplishing this?

8. Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. How can Jeremiah’s prophecy help us prepare our hearts for the coming of the Savior?
9. How can the hope of God’s promises encourage you to face difficulties or uncertainties in your own life today?