

SERIES OVERVIEW



Advent



st bart's

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overview

From the earliest of Christian times, advent has been a season of waiting in eager anticipation of Christ's return. In fact, the traditional church calendar doesn't begin on January 1, but with the first Sunday of advent: we begin our Christian year in waiting! Not with *"...the merriment of Christmas or the triumph of Easter. We do not begin with the work of the church or the mandate of the Great Commission. Instead, we begin in a place of yearning."*¹ We wait with eyes and hearts ready to receive our King, but also looking back, rejoicing in God's faithfulness in coming to us throughout human history.

God has faithfully and generously revealed himself to us over-and-over again: beginning with creation, through his redemptive actions, culminating in his Son, and will be consummated with his return. The Bible is God's story—of who he is, what he's done, what he's promised to do—but it is also a story for all of humanity to enter into. As Chris Wright attests:

The Bible presents itself to us, in its grand structure, as one whole story. Not just any story, but *The Story* of the universe. It has a beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. And it has an ending, when God will bring about the renewal of all creation. And in between tells the story of what went wrong, and what God has done in history to put things right.²

Advent reminds us that we're invited into a relationship with the living God, who comes in Scripture's story, who came in person, as promised, and will come in glory.

As we *look back* to celebrate the birth of Jesus and *look forward* in anticipation of his return, this four-part series is an opportunity to know afresh the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus. *The one who is our hope, the prince of peace, the source of Good News which brings great joy, and God's love made flesh.*

¹ Tish Harrison Warren, *Advent (The Fullness of Time Series)*. p.1.

² Wright & Stott, *Rejoice: Advent in all the Scriptures*. p.1. Note: The structure of this series is based on this wonderful work of Christ Wright and John Stott. This book is a helpful advent resource.

Quick Terms

ADVENT is a season of waiting and preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus. As Christians prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, we also look forward with anticipation to his second coming. The word *advent* is derived from the Latin *adventus*, which simply means "coming".

The INCARNATION of Christ is the Christian doctrine (i.e., belief) that God took on flesh and became truly human in Jesus. In becoming human, the Son did not abandon his divine nature, *but was fully human and fully God*.

Outline

Week 1	HOPE — <i>The Promise of a Savior</i>	Isaiah 9:2-7 (& Matthew 4:12-21)
Week 2	PEACE — <i>The Prince of Peace</i>	Luke 2:8-14
Week 3	JOY — <i>Good News of Great Joy</i>	Luke 1:39-55
Week 4	LOVE — <i>God's Love Made Flesh</i>	John 3:16-19

General Resources

- Read: "Advent (Fullness of Time Series)" by Tish Harrison Warren. 
- Devotional: "Sing in Exultation" by Jonanthan Landry Cruse. 
- Devotional: "The One True Gift" by Tim Chester. 
- Devotional: "Advent for Everyone: Luke" by Tom Wright. 
- Read: "What Christians Ought to Believe" by Michael Bird. 
- Read: "Is Christmas Unbelievable" by Rebecca McLaughlin. 
- Read: "The God who Became Human" by Graham Cole.
<https://bit.ly/3g68RBj>
- Read: "On the Incarnation" by Athanasius. <https://bit.ly/3E5gLmB>
- Watch: "The Word Becomes Human" by the Bible Project.
<https://bit.ly/3UEL8HB>
- Watch: "The Incarnation (Spoken Word)" by Humble Word.
<https://bit.ly/3OhgPUP>

- *Listen:* A Carols Playlist (curated by the *St Bart's staff team*):
<https://spoti.fi/3OaIsTK>

St Bart's Resources (including for families)

For the series overview, weekly sermons, small group material, and weekly children's curriculum, visit: stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/advent-2025

- *Read:* "The Christmas Promise" by *Alison Mitchell*. 
- *Read:* "The Really Good News of Christmas" by *Dai Woolridge*. 
- *Read:* "The Night Before Christmas" by *Oliver Lancaster*. 

ADAM LOWE

St Bart's Anglican Church, November 2025

-  Summaries by Adam Lowe (AL) & Amy Norman (AN)
-  Available to borrow from the St Bart's Church Library (stbarts.com.au/library)

how to use this series overview

For each week in the series, a Bible reading, “the big idea”, some reflection questions, and a prayer is provided.

- **PRAY**

Begin with prayer, for example:

Gracious God, please enlighten our minds, enliven our hearts, and shape our wills according to your life-giving Word. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

- **READ from the Bible**

Read the part of the Bible that we are focusing on for that week. Some key verses (from that reading) are also printed — you might even like to memorise these!

- **REFLECT**

Read the ‘big idea’ and use the questions to reflect on the Bible passage. This will help prepare for the sermon and the following week’s small group questions (provided on the St Bart’s website).

- **PRAY**

Each day a prayer is provided that you may like to use. Of course, you need not to be limited to this prayer.

Week 1

Hope — The Promise of a Savior

Isaiah 9:1-7 (& Matthew 4:12-21)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

READ ISAIAH 9:1-7 (& MATTHEW 4:12-21)

REFLECT. Recent research indicates that Australians have experienced an ‘erosion of hope’ in recent years with growing pessimism about the future.³ People feel pressured by life and uncertain about what is ahead. We can look forward to many things—even trying to adopt a ‘positive outlook’—but is there cause for a real and lasting hope? As Isaiah prophesies to God’s people, he does so at a time of upheaval. It was a period of darkness, marked by the dominance of the Assyrian empire, military aggression, regional instability, the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and growing fear that Judah would be next. The people not only felt hopeless, but also had turned away from the Lord. Yet, it is into this darkness that Isaiah conveys God’s promise of a coming light: the long-awaited King—a child to be born, who would be called: *wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace!* But who could this be? As Jesus begins his preaching ministry, Matthew connects the dots with this very chapter of Isaiah! Jesus is the true source of hope who doesn’t wallpaper over our mess but plunges into the thick of it, paving a way for our salvation through his death and resurrection. *He invites us to put our trust in him and know lasting hope.* AL

- What do most people hope for? *Why is Jesus a sure ground for lasting hope?*

PRAY

Saving God, we thank you that Jesus is the promised Saviour and therefore the source of our ultimate hope. Please help us to rest and delight in him. Amen.

³ Australian National University, *The Erosion of Hope*. see: <https://bit.ly/4rncmD5>

Week 2

Peace — The Prince of Peace

Luke 2:8-14

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Luke 2:13-14

READ LUKE 2:8-14

REFLECT. The nativity scenes on Christmas cards often look so peaceful! But as the writer Luke introduces in verse 1, this is not a peaceful situation. Mary and Joseph are forced to travel to Bethlehem, for the ruler in Rome (Caesar Augustus) is counting people across the Roman Empire to tax them. With everyone moving around for the census, it would have been obvious who is in charge. And yet it is into this situation an angel appears to the shepherds to announce a Saviour has just arrived! The people of God had been waiting for a rescuer and saviour, someone to overthrow their enemies. To bring *lasting* peace, they needed someone with strength to defy the Roman Empire. The angel points to the one the people had been waiting for — a Saviour, the Messiah. But this was not just *another* person sent by the Lord to deliver the people, but the Lord himself! Suddenly a whole army of angels appears to confirm that with the arrival of this child, God’s peace rests on those he has chosen in accordance with his saving pleasure. This child, the Prince of Peace, will not bring peace like many will expect. He won’t raise an army, but will overthrow the greatest enemy humanity faces - the very power of sin and death, through his death and resurrection. AN

- What type of Saviour is needed to bring lasting peace?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for the lasting peace brought by Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank you that he has permanently overcome sin and death, and help us be ready to welcome the Lord when he returns in glory to restore all things. Amen.

Week 3

Joy — The Good News of Great Joy

Luke 1:39-55

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. Luke 1:50-51

READ LUKE 1:39-55

REFLECT. Mary's song is not only a beautiful tapestry of God's promises, but *also the joyful proclamation that the time of fulfilment has arrived.* Mary knows joy, not only because of God's graciousness in choosing her (i.e., the Lord has been *mindful of me*), but because the child that she bears is the Saviour of the world! Note that Mary sees with such a clarity (no doubt by the very inspiration of God's Spirit) that she does not focus specifically on the child, but the inevitable effects which will be wrought by the arrival of God's Kingdom through him. This Kingdom will be one, as *Nijay Gupta* puts it:

[in which] God will act to right all the wrongs, raise up valleys, and flatten mountains. That is what this hope-filled era was all about. The incarnation was not just the beginning of a new season. It was the formation of a new world. The time had come.⁴

Like us, Mary had plenty of reasons to be anxious and afraid. But she knows joy because she recognises the goodness of the Lord (*his mercy, his actions, and the fulfillment of his promises*) and how that changes everything. AL

- How can the Good News of God's King and Kingdom cause us joy?

PRAY

Gracious Father, we thank you that the arrival of your King also signals the inauguration of your Kingdom. Please help us to see the implication of this with such clarity that our lives would be gripped by your joy. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

⁴ Nijay Gupta, *Strange Religion*. p.123.

Week 4

Love — God's Love Made Flesh

John 3:16-19

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. John 3:16

READ JOHN 3:16-19

REFLECT. Love is one of the greatest longings of every human, yet our experience of love—for all sorts of reasons—regularly disappoints. We can look for love in all sorts of places, but there is only one love that will never disappoint *and* has the power to save: God's love. How can we be confident of that? Because God's love for us has been concretely demonstrated and expressed through the gift of his Son.

A love that knew no limits, not even death.

A love that lives on, because Jesus lives.

A love that can be known, because God has revealed himself to us.

A love that can be experienced, because God gives us his Spirit.

A love that saves, because his death broke the power of sin and death.

John didn't come up with this idea on his own, but it is very the implication of Jesus' words in verses 5 to 15. As Jesus shares the necessity to be 'born again' to enter God's Kingdom, people are perplexed as to *how* that would be possible. To help them understand, Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up a snake in the desert, so he must be lifted up on the cross. It's by looking to him, *believing in him*, we become recipients of God's saving love. AL

- What amazes you about God's love? *What gives you confidence in God's love?*
- How do you express love for God? *How could you grow in that expression?*

PRAY

Loving God, thank you that your love for us knew no limits, not even the giving of your one and only Son. Help us to look to you and grow in our love for you. Amen.