



A SEASON OF ANTICIPATION

2025 Advent Devotional

Welcome to Advent 2025 with the Glacial Community YMCA

The season of Advent is always a special time of year. With it comes an opportunity for spiritual renewal as we celebrate Jesus' birth into the world and as we anticipate His eventual return, as He promised. This year's four themes (hope, peace, joy, and love) unfold over the four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, giving us a season of reflection and contemplation—as individuals and as families.

Advent comes with a purpose. Each year, we take time to refocus and realign our hearts and minds with the true meaning of the season. It's easy to become caught up in the commercialization of the holiday season, and there is certainly nothing wrong with celebrating all that the season brings. But in these four weeks, we invite you to intentionally take some time to center your spirit on the promises God gives us through His Son, Jesus. This guide will help you accomplish that. Take time individually and read the truths found in God's Word contained in the themes of this guide. And take some time as a family, too, to share in the hope and the light that is found only in Jesus.

We hope you will have an Advent season filled with all four of the themes of the holiday. May you find hope in any despair, peace in any trial, joy amid brokenness, and love where hate once ruled.

Happy Advent. Merry Christmas. Celebrate all God has given to us in His Son, Jesus.

An overview of this year's themes:

1. **Hope** – Reflecting on the hope of Christ's coming, past and future, and on God's promises of redemption.
2. **Peace** – Embracing the peace that Christ brings into the world and seeking peace within our hearts and relationships.
3. **Joy** – Rejoicing in the anticipation of Jesus' arrival, especially as celebrated on the third Sunday.
4. **Love** – Remembering God's love for humanity in sending His Son and reflecting that love to others.

WEEK ONE: Hope

Beginning on Sunday, November 30th, 2025

Scripture: Isaiah 64:1–9; Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19; I Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:24–37 (NIV)

Hope – in a biblical sense, hope is a steadfast trust in God’s faithfulness. It is not merely wishful thinking, as some might define it. Hope waits and endures, and can withstand fire, trials and despair.

The theme of hope, or the candle of hope in an advent wreath, might also be referred to as the Prophet Candle. And like the prophets of the Old Testament, today we hope for a Messiah to save us from the sin in the world. This hope was fulfilled in Jesus and foretold by the prophet Isaiah. In his writing, chapter 9, he foretold of the coming of our Savior:

“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. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

This theme of hope assures us we can have hope that God will fulfill the prophecies foretold in the Old Testament about our Savior, Jesus. Hope does not disappoint us.

“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” –Romans 5:5

This advent season, may you find your hope is not wishful thinking, but firmly based in the promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Advent is a time for remembering and reflecting on the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that you will turn our hearts toward you as Christmas approaches. Let us not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love that you sent to us on that first Christmas.

Help us to see that you are with us. Nothing is too difficult, too messy, or too dirty for you. Jesus came to give us the gift of eternal life through the salvation that only you, our Heavenly Father, can give when we believe on your Son, repent of our sins, and confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus’ precious name, we pray. Amen

WEEK TWO: Peace

Beginning on Sunday, December 7th, 2025

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1–11; Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13; 2 Peter 3:8–15a; Mark 1:1–8 (NIV)

The peace of God allows us to look at others through heaven’s eyes and help guide the world to see God’s here and not-yet here kingdom. Peace from God, biblical peace, allows us to trust in God’s promises (Proverbs 3:5), through restful, tranquil faith, despite the dark, scary world around us. –Hope Bolinger

One of the hallmarks of the Christmas story is when the angels appear to the shepherds and proclaim, “Peace on earth,” in Luke 2:14.

Jesus brought about peace, in the most unexpected ways, when He arrived. The Jews, particularly the zealots, wanted a rebellion. They wanted their Savior to overturn the oppressive rule of the Romans and bring about peace in a violent way.

But Jesus had something else in mind. His purpose was to bring us peace in several ways.

First, He gives us inner peace. Because of His work on the cross, we have a chance to receive salvation and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This grants us an inner peace (John 14:27). Not only do we have the peace that comes from our assurance of salvation, but we also have the peace of mind knowing God will heal this broken world and will come again.

Second, because Jesus came, we have peace with others. We put aside our differences (Galatians 3:28), especially with other believers, because we belong to the same family. We have the same purpose: to let others know about the peace of Christ.

May you find that in the middle of a world far from peace your heart is settled on the peace found only in Jesus.

Prayer:

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation:
Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

– Book of Common Prayer

WEEK THREE: Joy

Beginning on Sunday, December 14th, 2025

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; I Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-9, 19-28

“Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be okay, and the determined choice to praise God in all things.” –Kay Warren

The Joy Candle, otherwise known as the Shepherd Candle, reflects the joy that comes through Jesus’ arrival, and through the salvation He has gifted us. But just what is joy?

It is an extreme happiness that cannot be deterred by present circumstances. This type of joy comes from God alone. Joy can often be experienced when a Christian thinks about salvation, eternal life, or Jesus. It is an eager anticipation about wonderful things to come. The shepherds experienced this as they ran to Bethlehem to see Jesus.

And just what does the Bible say about this joy?

- God fills us with joy (Romans 15:13). We cannot force ourselves to experience joy. It comes from God alone.
- It’s a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). We experience more joy when we spend time with God. We must keep in mind that joy only comes from God, but when we spend more time with him, we allow him to fill us with it.
- No one can take joy from us (John 16:22). Given to us by God himself, no one can rob us of our joy. No matter what circumstances we encounter, no one can take this away.
- Joy rests in things from God such as salvation and righteousness. (Psalm 51:12)

Jesus coming to our world in the form of a baby brought great joy to all people. And by Him promising to return, we live today with great anticipation and joy, free of despair.

May your joy this Advent season be unmoved as you find it based solely on God and his promises.

Prayer:

God of hope, you call us home from the exile of selfish oppression to the freedom of justice, the balm of healing, and the joy of sharing. Make us strong to join you in your holy work, as friends of strangers and victims, companions of those whom others shun, and as the happiness of those whose hearts are broken. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

– Revised Common Lectionary

WEEK FOUR: Love

Christmas Week–Beginning on Sunday, December 21st, 2025

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1–11; Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26; Romans 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Jesus, in Matthew 22:36–40

Love plays a vital role in the Christmas story. Because of Joseph’s love for Mary, he didn’t divorce her when he found out she was pregnant with what he thought was a child out of wedlock with another man (Matthew 1:18–19). Mary had a natural motherly love for Jesus, and ultimately, we see God’s love for everyone by sending His son for us (John 3:16).

Jesus focused on preaching love throughout His ministry. Two of His greatest commands involve love: Love for God and love for your neighbor, as seen in His words above in Matthew.

We cannot walk with Christ without it, and we cannot have the Christmas story without it. As Linus states in A Charlie Brown Christmas, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

Love is the greatest of all the virtues on the Advent wreath and encompasses Jesus’ entire purpose for being on earth (1 Corinthians 13:13). And the Bible speaks of this love in almost 300 places. One of the most quoted is 1 John 4, where the apostle John states, simply, “God is love.” And it is His love for you and me that sent Jesus to our world to show us Himself and make a way for us to know Him personally. Because He loved us, we love Him, and we can love others.

May you experience a love that is everlasting, faithful, and true this Christmas – a love from an eternal and gracious heavenly Father.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, the whole meaning of Christmas can be explained in this theme of LOVE. You sent your gift of pure love to us that first Christmas. Love descended from heaven to be born of a virgin. Love lay in the scratchy hay of a manger in a meager barn in Bethlehem. All your love, God, was robed in the delicate skin of a baby and wrapped in swaddling clothes. This final week of Advent helps us to reflect on the magnitude of love that was made manifest in Jesus.

The greatest gift of all came that first Christmas. It wasn’t wrapped in a beautiful package and set under a decorated tree. The greatest gift came wrapped in the flesh of baby Jesus and laid in the rough wood of a manger. Our perfect gift would later be rewrapped in the scars of our sin and nailed to the rugged wood of a cross on Calvary, all because of love.

Father, this final week of Advent, fill our hearts and minds with the significance of that truth. Thank you, Lord, for loving us enough to send Jesus. In Jesus’ precious name we pray. Amen.

Thank you for celebrating Advent this year with The Glacial Community YMCA.
Merry Christmas and all God's best to you in 2026!

