

Advent Devotions 2022

Week One

Nothing will be impossible with God



What is Advent, and why is it important? There is certainly enough going on with Christmas preparations that we do not need one more thing to do in December. But Advent isn't a thing you do - expressions of Advent help give you the right approach to enter a season of gift-giving and family events AND keep your heart and mind aligned with the birth of Jesus. Here is your church history lesson. "Advent" means "coming" or "arrival." During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ's coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. It's like the church season of Lent that leads up to the celebration of Easter. It provides for a time of preparation so you can truly celebrate the big thing.

And so, we begin Advent with the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary to break some big news, "Do not be afraid, Mary" (Luke 1:30). His appearance to Mary is his second appearance in the Gospel following his appearance to Zechariah in the temple earlier in Luke 1:13, where he says, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah." The double saying, in which Gabriel assures both Zechariah and Mary in the same manner and with the same words links these two characters together. This is important to note because what seemed impossible became possible - Elizabeth would give birth to a child, and Mary would give birth to the long-awaited Messiah.

It is interesting to find that at the moment of God's divine interventions, assurance is offered before a message of celebration. The simple phrase, "do not be afraid," offers comfort and hope to those without hope, as in the case of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:7, 24-25); miracles to those not looking for miracles, as in the case of Mary (Luke 1:26-27); and even disruption to those going about their daily routines, as in the case of the shepherds (Luke 2:8).

What happens to the story of Mary during this season of Advent if we see the word of assurance as functioning as more than a simple courtesy or greeting? In Luke's account of Jesus' birth, a word of assurance and comfort functions as an invitation for Mary to do the unusual and the bold for the sake of the entire world because "nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). What does Advent look like if instead of starting with words of celebration, thanksgiving, and even commemoration, we begin with words that remind God's people that we can stand boldly and not be afraid? Perhaps we might live boldly into the preferred future God has set before us.