

**First Fifteen: November 29 - December 3**  
**Scripture for Sunday December 5 - Luke 3:1-6**

**Monday: Isaiah 11:1-10**

**Going Deeper:** These words from Isaiah 11 embody the tension within the message of Advent. They speak clearly about the One who is the Messiah, whose leadership reveals a spirit of wisdom, courage, and strength of character. Whose actions are guided by an awareness of God's desire and intention, seeking to invite those who will listen to live their lives guided by truth, equity, and compassion. But Advent pushes us to also consider and wrestle with Isaiah's vision, not merely for who we think Jesus was, but who we are becoming because of our faithfulness to his call and teaching. Isaiah's vision included not only the rising of the Messiah, but also what has become known as "the peaceable kingdom." (Isaiah 11:6-9) His vision is more than a passing thought; it reveals the transformational work of the Messiah. This image of peace, tranquility, and reconciliation is not merely a beautiful idea, it is the message of Advent! We often think of it literally, but I wonder if you can also see the images as a metaphor of humanity... the weak and strong, the predator and prey... Where those who hear the call of Advent, respond by living into the transformative grace offered by the Messiah. *"They will neither harm nor destroy... for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord."* (Isa. 11:9 – NIV)

**Prayer:** O God, my righteousness, as I begin this 2<sup>nd</sup> week of preparation for the coming of the One who is called your Son... open my eyes, heart, and mind to where I can live more fully into my faith. Raise my awareness of how and where I can share your message of truth, equity, and compassion for all. Our world is far from a peaceable place, and yet the One who is my Messiah is known as the "Prince of Peace." God of love and mercy, are there places where I need your peace within my own heart? As the hymn says, "Let peace begin with me." In the name of the One who comes to us, and who is always with us. Amen.

**Tuesday: Psalms 51:14-17**

**Going Deeper:** The most meaningful gifts are given from the heart. This statement although true is often glossed over by shiny, expensive gadgets and gizmos. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Advent, we are invited to listen to the call of John the Baptist. His message, although integral to the message of Advent is often overshadowed by his description... *"John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locust and wild honey."* (Matt. 3:4 – NIV) He sounds like someone you might see on the Outdoor Channel. These words of David recorded in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm are a beautiful response to John's call from the Judean desert, even though they were written more than 1000 years before John began his ministry. As I read them, I am drawn to verse 17... *"My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a humble and kind heart, my God you take delight in."* (My paraphrase) I encourage you read Psalm 51 throughout this day. As you do listen to the words with an open heart and mind; I believe they give us a wonder example of a broken or contrite heart without getting stuck in shame or guilt. The heart of Advent is a message of self-awareness, and a desire to repent and live

more fully into our best selves, with the hope that within God's mercy we will always find Joy that is overflowing!

**Prayer:** *"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."* Amen (Psalm 51:10-12)

### **Wednesday: Romans 15:1-6**

**Going Deeper:** As I allow these words from Paul to resonate within me, I feel the words "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony" rising within me. This song by the New Seekers was written and recorded in 1971. It became the backdrop for a memorable Coke commercial and I believe they give voice to Paul's words in Romans 15. We who are strong are called to care for those who not... The meeting of our own desires and needs while important, are not to be done so at the expense others. These are not merely Paul's teaching, but also the embodiment of the life and teaching of Jesus our Christ. "I'd like to see the world for once all standing hand in hand and hear them echo through the hills for peace through out the land." The message and work of Advent is to take down the walls that have divided us and build connections to help us see our need for one another. As you listen to these words of Paul what is your calling to help, where are you being led to do the work of Advent in our preparation for the coming of our world's savior. How can you lend your voice to create joy, peace, and hope?

**Prayer:** Lord hear me as I pray. Help me to embrace your leading and understand your guidance for this day. I thank you for my many blessings and in my need I know you will provide. I know I am called to share with others, even when I do not feel abundance, trusting you will always provide what is needed to create connection within myself to you, and to those around me. Lord, hear me as I pray. Amen.

### **Thursday: 2 Peter 3:8-9 & 14**

**Going Deeper:** This past year has gone by so fast... in my mind and experience the past 11 months were a whirlwind. So much has happened and yet so much is still the same. These words from 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter remind us that our experience of the passage of time does not impact God's promise for our lives. God's presence is timeless and ever present. When I am feeling lost or adrift in the details or the doldrums of life, I go to Luke 12... verse 7 where Luke records Jesus telling his followers to not be afraid, God sees us and knows us... down to the number of hairs on our head. The message of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and the call of Advent is to be patiently hopeful, as we wait even when we are not confident or sure of what tomorrow, next week, or even later today will bring. These words are oddly comforting to me. They help me acknowledge in the days ahead there may be more of the same, or they may bring change, both dynamic and/or heartbreaking; but nonetheless I am, and we are called to wait, trusting in God's goodness and God's desire for all of God's children to be made whole. Which in essence is the meaning of our salvation.

**Prayer:** Our God of wonder, time, and space... you fill our lives and this world with meaning and purpose, love and grace, opportunity and challenge and I am impatient and short sighted. Forgive me and help me see your work going all around and within me. Help me understand to do this I must trust You are always good, and Your work is always restorative, but to get there I must be patient and wait. Fill my heart with patient joy today... fill me with hope that overflows and my God of wonder, time, and space... help me trust you are using me as I am... where I am... in all I do today. Amen.

**Friday: John 1:6-14**

**Going Deeper:** For me, one of the more meaningful symbols of this season is the image of light. I have been found on numerous occasions sitting in darkness with only the light of a candle to share its glow providing light for the room. As a teenager I would go out on a cold December night to walk around our neighborhood allowing the lights from the houses in their various stages of decoration to light the way. I remember these walks as being so peaceful, often providing a deep settling within my restlessness. John does not connect the light that comes to us as Jesus the Christ until verse 17. He uses his carefully crafted words to draw us into the light, affirming for our restless hearts that neither the darkness nor our fears can or ever will extinguish the light's glow within our world. Yes, there will be those who do not see, recognize, or believe... but even these cannot dimish the glow of the One who comes to us. Another week as passed, and we are drawn closer to the light. Just as we draw near the fire on a cold winter's night, I encourage you to move into the light and open your heart to his warmth, mercy, and compassion.

**Prayer:** Lord of light, shine into my world, filling my heart and those I love with your light. Provide grace to help us draw near to you and one another as we wait for your work in our lives to lead us into your healing love that binds our hearts and minds together. Give me patience, filled with hope knowing your light shines now and forever. Amen.