

Advent - Prepare The Way

Preamble

- 23 days till Christmas!
 - The preparations have begun
 - How many have already completed their shopping?
 - We will be buying food, presents, decorations, cards
 - Going out for meals with work colleagues
 - Lots of money will be spent
 - More TV will be consumed
 - The whole world is ramping up for this time of year
 - So many people in various ways are all preparing for the 25th December!
- How you prepare is based on which story your living
- There is a false Christmas story and there is a true one

A false Christmas story

- The false Christmas story puts us at the centre - the place for God and God alone
- It looks to creation for fulfilment rather than worship of the Creator.
- It makes physical pleasure our primary need.
- The false Christmas story is dominated by the comforts of the moment rather than eternal priorities.
- It is dangerously wrong when it comes to who we are and what we need
- The false Christmas story encourages us to find comfort where comfort cannot be found and to place our hope in things that will never deliver.

‘Let me be clear, There is no problem with beautiful decorations, family feasting, or giving gifts. The Christmas season can be a time when families gather again, renew relationships, and express love for one another and enjoy the relationships and the world God has graciously given to us.’ Adapted from Paul Tripp blog

- The danger is that we may just believe the wrong story and forget the true story of the coming of Christ to rescue us and give our lives ultimate meaning, that comes from knowing and walking with him above all else

True Christmas Story

- The true Advent narrative is humbling and unattractive.
- It's a sad story about a world broken by sin, populated by selfish people who are far from God.
- It's about people who were created to live for God but instead live for themselves.
- It's about conditions so desperate that God did the unthinkable in sending his Son to be the sacrificial Lamb of redemption.

- Jesus came because we were so lost, so enslaved, and so self-deceived that there was simply no other way.
- God became man in Jesus and gave his life for us so that we may be reconciled to him.
- The news that Jesus came on a glorious mission of grace to live, die, and rise in our place is only worth celebrating when you understand it's our only hope.

‘Life really is a battle of stories.’ **Paul Tripp**

- Which story will you believe
- Which story will you enter
- Which story will you live
- Which story will you tell your children
- Which story will shape your future

The story you believe will determine the way you prepare for this season.

Introduction

- In this season of Advent I encourage us to prepare for the coming of the King!
- John the Baptist was sent before Christ came to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. [17] And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous---to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” **Luke 1:16-17**

- What John the Baptist did for Israel, Advent can do for us.
- Don't let Christmas find you unprepared. I mean spiritually unprepared.
- Its joy and impact will be so much greater if you are ready!

So, that you might be prepared . . .

1. Meditate on the fact that we need a Saviour.

- We needed saving, rescue. We could not save ourselves.

Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **Luke 2:11**

- If you don't need a Saviour, you don't need Christmas.
- Christmas will not have its intended effect until we feel desperately the need for a Saviour.

- Let this Advent season help awaken in you a bittersweet sense of need for the Saviour.

2. **Examine yourself**

- Advent is to Christmas what Lent is to Easter.
- Take stock, ask the Holy Spirit to shine his light into our lives, motives and heart

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. [24] See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. **Psalm 139:23-24**

- Let every heart prepare him room . . . by cleaning house.

3. **Build God-centered anticipation** and expectancy and excitement into your home — especially for the children.

- If you are excited about Christ, they will be too.
- If you can only make Christmas exciting with material things, how will the children get a thirst for God?
- Bend the efforts of your imagination to make the wonder of the King's arrival visible for the children.
- Explain the good news - Be animated

4. **Be much in the Scriptures,**

Read, Meditate, and memorise the great passages!

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord.. **Jeremiah 23:29**

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.[6] 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. [7] 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. **Isaiah 9:2,6-7**

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, [77] to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, [78] because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven [79] to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” **Luke 1:76-79**

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] 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. [6] You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:1-8**

- Gather 'round that fire this Advent season.
- It is warm. It is sparkling with colours of grace. It is healing for a thousand hurts. It is light for dark nights.