



Advent Week 1 (November 28)

Light & Sacrifice

Read: John 1:1-5

Light: One Advent Candle

Advent is the season of waiting, the season for reflecting on the events leading up to the birth of Christ. And, in our Western Culture, it is also the season for...shopping. The four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas bombard us with advertisements, deals, and all the things we didn't know we needed. We shop, we wrap, we fill that empty space under the Christmas tree with boxes galore.

With all the buzz and excitement around the things that we can buy, give, and get, it might seem strange to focus on the idea of sacrifice leading up to Christmas. Sacrifice, or the giving up of something that is important to us, seems to contradict the glittery nature of the season. We often say that "it's better to give than receive," but sacrifice lands differently. It's heavy and even implies some element of loss.

When Jesus came to earth to live among people, he revealed a new kind of light. He embodied a new kind of love. And with that light and love, countless sacrifices would be made- by Jesus' parents, by those who followed him, and by Jesus himself. This new light to the world illuminated what it means to live in a totally selfless way, and as we reflect on the Advent and Christmas story, we are invited to live that way too.

John 1:5 says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." It's no secret that there is a lot of darkness in our world. Maybe God is inviting us to be the light, right here and right now. Maybe our actions make a bigger difference than we think- and the invitation to embrace sacrifice this Advent might not only change us, but have the potential to have impact far beyond what we could even imagine.

This week, consider what living selflessly and sacrificially could look like for you or your family this Christmas. Journal about or discuss the following questions:

- What would it look like for you to live with extra generosity this season?
- Is there someone you could include in a favorite holiday tradition?
- Is there an activity, purchase, or habit that you might benefit from letting go of this year?

Pray: Jesus, as we look forward to celebrating your birth, help us see what it means to truly be light in this world. Show us where we might let things go and intentionally make sacrifices so that light can shine as brightly as possible. Amen.