

Remnant Life Church
November 29, 2020
Advent and Behind the Colors of Christmas
Eph 2:1-10

Why do we do what we do in church?

- Some of what we do have been done for so long that many don't know the meaning
- Most know what communion is about and we have talked at length about it at RLC
- But what about Advent?
 - If someone were to ask you to explain its significance and meaning, could you?
 - We know its something done at Christmas time but what does it mean?
 - Why the wreath and the candles?
- While were asking...
 - What about Christmas itself?
 - Much of what we see today we have seen our whole lives but does any of that have special meaning?
 - Would knowing the answers to these questions make any difference in the way you see and approach Christmas each year?
 - I believe the answer is YES
 - To know these things brings them more alive to us

Let's begin with Advent

- The season of Advent is important to the church
 - Difference between 'A church' and 'The church'
- What does Advent do beside get us excited knowing that we are in the Christmas season?
- Simply put – Advent, as well as other traditional activities in the church help to bring life into a proper perspective
 - Christmas has become overly-commercialized
 - Signs and wristlets – Keep Christ in Christmas; He is the reason for the season
 - Those of us who know Jesus Christ must remember what the true message of this time really is

READ – Eph 2:1-10

God gave to us the greatest present, the greatest gift, that could ever be given – forgiveness of our sins, salvation for our souls, and eternity with Him in heaven.

The tradition of Advent was started to continually remind the followers of Jesus that He was coming again

- He was returning to take His people, all those who call Him Lord, back home with Him
- Are we not in a time right now that we especially need to be reminded of that?

The specific origin of Advent is unknown

- When the Council of Tours met in 567 AD (the first council in Jerusalem 50 AD; Trent; Laodicia; Nicea; the First and Second Vatican Councils) an order was given for the monks to fast every day in the month of December until Christmas

- As time went on there was usually some combination of penitence and fasting known as the Fast of December or the Nativity Fast
- It was continually practiced in modified forms in the Roman Catholic Church
- When the Protestant Reformation occurred in the early 1500s' (Martin Luther's ninety-five theses in 1517) and the protestant church was born breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church, some elements practiced then were carried over
 - The celebration of Advent was one of those

The wreath and candles are a part of the visual reminder of why we observe this each year

- The circle wreath represents God
 - The circle itself denotes the eternity of God and His endless love and mercy for us, His children
 - It is green because green is one of the colors that signify hope
 - Green is the color of life
 - It is also the newness of God's creation coming out of the slumber of winter
 - It is a reminder that all life comes from God
 - Not only physical life
 - But the life eternal through the forgiveness of our sins
 - Green is also renewal and growth
 - It shows health and vitality
 - I want a green yard and green shrubs in front of the house
 - The circle green wreath is God's presence, His love and why we can celebrate this season
- The 4 candles represent a period of waiting
 - It is the 4 Sundays leading to Christmas day
 - It is the waiting of God's people for the return of Jesus
 - But it is also a symbol of the 4 centuries of time that passed between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Jesus
 - Malachi authored the final book of the OT, and then there was nothing for 400 years until Mark wrote the first Gospel of the life of Jesus
 - It is called the intertestamental period
 - A period of silence where God stopped speaking to the people through prophets in preparation for the coming of His Son to minister and walk among His creation
- The colors of the candles are significant as well
 - They vary greatly
 - We use purple, rose (pink), and white
 - Purple represents royalty but also repentance
 - The rose represents joy
 - The white is the Christ candle representing the purity, perfection and divinity of Christ

What of the Christmas decorations themselves?

- Every home that has a Christmas tree is proclaiming the hope in Jesus Christ whether they are a Christian or an avowed atheist
 - The tree is always green, which is a symbol of hope (the ugly metal trees do not count)
 - It is always of the evergreen variety
 - It never loses its color throughout the entire time it is up
 - The eternal green displays the eternal hope in our eternal God and His promises that are always kept
 - The star or angel on the top of the tree?
 - It is the proclamation of the star that heralded the birth of the Savior
 - And the host of angels who sang His praises to the shepherd

People can call Christmas whatever they want to

- People can say Happy Holidays – it's still about Jesus
- They can say Xmas – it's still about Jesus
- What are the primary colors of Christmas decorations?
 - Green and red
 - Green for the hope in God sent in His Son, Jesus Christ
 - Red for the joy in knowing our future because of the blood (red) shed for us

The season of Advent reminds us of those two things – hope and joy

- It is a powerful reminder that He loves us, will never forsake us, and is coming again
- It is also a reminder of His goodness to us
 - Regardless of what has transpired this year – God is good
 - Regardless of what the next year brings – God is good
 - Regardless of what you had to deal with this year – God is good

The circle wreath and the five candles of Advent

The Christmas tree, the star or angel on the top, the colored lights, even the gifts we give come from the first gifts given to Jesus by the Magi

This Christmas season, don't lose sight of what is most important

Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins, and He is coming again – are you ready?