

**WEEK 1:** *Renew*  
**PEACE**

**Scripture Readings (NIV)**

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**Isaiah 2:1-5**

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw  
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:  
2 In the last days  
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established  
as the highest of the mountains;  
it will be exalted above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it.

3 Many peoples will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the temple of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.

5 Come, descendants of Jacob,  
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

**Psalms 122**

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."

2 Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is built like a city  
that is closely compacted together.

4 That is where the tribes go up—  
the tribes of the Lord—  
to praise the name of the Lord  
according to the statute given to Israel.

5 There stand the thrones for judgment,  
the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
"May those who love you be secure.

7 May there be peace within your walls  
and security within your citadels."

8 For the sake of my family and friends,  
I will say, "Peace be within you."

9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your prosperity.

**Romans 13:11-14**

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

**Matthew 24:36-44**

36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."



# Devotional

 Watch Video

## Transcript

### *A Journey of Renewed Peace*

This is the first Sunday of Advent. We begin the journey for renewed peace. Should I go or not? We have the option to move forward in renewal or remain where we are. We know it can be unsettling, unknown, uncertain, and upsetting. But the journey is prepared for us to step forward in faith. Our text from the Gospel of Matthew talks about those who do not even know there is a journey going on.

People were eating, drinking, marrying, living life, and working, and they did not know there was a journey. This is not wrong. They were just doing their thing, focusing on their own lives. Matthew's call of Advent is to wake up and pay attention to what is going on around you. These are not bad things as we live day to day.

It's not about adding something more to our calendar or doing this or that, but the call is "be ready because the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Be alert. Be ready. So what are we ready for? Isaiah's passage gives us some different insight. It is a vision, a dream, a look into the future, Isaiah says, in the days to come.

Not now, not today. One day, someday. It's like the pageant contestant being asked, What do you want in life? And of course, the clichéd response: world peace. It's a dream. A look into the future. Not now. Not today, but one day. We can renew our understanding of peace; that it's not far away. We know what goes on in our world with wars and rumors of wars, strife and conflict, nations and people and our treatment of one another.

But adventure is about anticipating something great on the horizon, something better than we could ever imagine. But the cross reminds us that while there are elements yet to come, there is something *now*. We live in the power of the resurrection *now*. We can have a vision for God's dream, but we can practice that *now*. And this calls us to choose the way of peace *now* in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities, in person and online.

What could be more practical than taking our lives, our culture, our community, and carving away anything that does not look like the vision we have for God's reign of peace? Isaiah's vision for peace invites us to live in such a way as to live for peace now. Are we known—are you known as a person of peace for the reign of God?

Are we an influencer of the way of peace to others; peacemakers at school and offices, in government and community? Christians have stands on policies and laws as citizens. Christians have become known more for what we are against. But what we must be better known for is the notion that we live under the rule and reign of a God who will bring peace.

So be alert. Be ready. Let us renew our idea of peace today. We can live as a people today under the rule and reign of God who brings peace for today. We can choose to journey today, to live in the advent promise of renewed peace.

## Children's Moment

▶ Watch Video

### Transcript

#### *The Mystery of Christmas*

Everything is changed. It is now the time of purple. Purple is the color of kings and queens. No one could wear purple except royalty.

Roman citizens could wear a little stripe of purple, but that was all. Purple is a serious color.

Something serious is about to happen. A King is coming, but he is not the kind of king that people thought was coming. This King had no army, no house, and no riches. This King was a baby born in a barn.

The King who was coming is still coming. This is full of mystery. You know, a mystery is hard to enter sometimes.

That is why at this time of year, this season we call Advent is so important. Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it's there. This time of year, you will see people hurrying in malls, buying things and doing this and that.

But they'll miss the mystery. They don't know how to get ready. Or maybe they just forgot. The church learned a long time ago that people need a way to get ready to enter or even come close to a mystery like Christmas. The church set aside four Sundays—*four Sundays* to get ready for this mystery. This is such a great mystery that we need time to get ready.

During this time, we are all on the way to Bethlehem. We are all making this journey. We are all getting ready to enter the mystery of Christmas.

This journey was not just back then. It is also now. *Stop. Watch. Pay attention.*

Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.

I wonder what you will do to get ready for the mystery of Christmas.



# Candle lighting + Prayer Resource

## Reader One:

Our Advent journey to RENEW begins with contemplation and a willingness to change. We must realize we are not always where God would want us to be. We acknowledge we have not yet arrived. Renewal asks the question, what needs to change in my life? We are invited to renew our commitment to one another. To bring peace to relationships, peace to strife, peace to brokenness. We shall go in peace.

## Reader Two:

Isaiah says that in days to come, the nations shall stream to the mountain of the Lord, God will judge and rule and there we will beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks; there, we will learn war no more. God will teach us peace.

## Reader One:

We light this first candle to burn as a sign to RENEW peace among all people.

*(Light one candle on the wreath.)*

## Reader Two:

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that God may teach us the ways of peace.



## Prayer of Peace

God of justice and peace,  
from your throne you pour out mercy and  
kindness, that all the earth may marvel in  
awe and wonder.

We lift our eyes in hopeful expectation peace,  
we open our hearts to yearn for the coming  
days of peace.

We extend our hands as instruments of peace  
today for Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns  
for ever and ever.

Amen.

## Intercession

May God hear these prayers,  
which come from the unlikely corners  
of our lives.

We seek peace.

We seek to be peacemakers.

We pray in intercession for peace:

Global wars and conflicts,  
Relational conflicts,  
Political, Ideological, Theological  
Polarizations,  
Anxieties, worries, fears

Let us be your instruments of peace,  
as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

## Contemplative Practice

### Speak:

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Ps. 122:1, NRSV).

### Reflect:

Where do you see peace in Isaiah 2 and Matthew 24?

Reflect on the peace that God's light will shine on the mountaintop, revealing the goodness of new life.

What makes God's peace different from the seeking of "world peace?"

### Engage:

Take a prayer walk with another person, take a hike, walk in your neighbourhood, or just about anywhere.

As you walk, look around you for signs of peace.

### Pray:

Gracious God, we seek you everywhere with expectant eyes that invite us to see peace in the world today. Make me a channel of your peace. Amen.

## Benediction

Be a people of peace.

Let peace live in your heart and share the peace of Christ with all you meet.

Share peace by demonstrating compassion and not fear.

Share peace by giving the benefit of the doubt.

Share peace by prayer for our world.

As you go out into the world, share peace with those you meet.

Amen.

