

The Advent Calendar

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, boys and girls, it's lovely to see you all today. We're going to read a Bible verse before we look at what's all in the pulpit this morning.

So we're going to read a Bible verse. We'll read where we read earlier on, where it says there in Luke chapter 2 and verse 13, Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

Hi boys and girls. Are you all awake today? You're all awake. So you're all going to talk to me. Good. I'm so glad you're going to talk to me. It gets very lonely up here. So I'm glad you're going to talk.

Are you really excited for Christmas? Yes. Okay. You are. Christmas is on what day? Saturday. Saturday. So how many sleeps until Christmas?

How many? Six. An extra day, David. I'm sorry. So on Christmas Day, what do you do? You get to open all your presents.

[1 : 09] Yes, Ross. All your presents. Hopefully, Shennas bought you a big present, hasn't he? Yeah. Yeah. So Christmas is an exciting time of year and it's good to get excited. It's really good to get excited, isn't it?

It's great to get excited about Christmas. But it's also good for us to remember what Christmas is all about. It's good for us to remember who? Who do you have to remember?

Jesus. Yeah. We have to remember Jesus in all our excitement because Christmas is really all about Jesus. You know, we can have our Christmas tree and our presents and our tinsel and our lights, but we cannot forget about the most important person because Christmas is all about Jesus. And Jesus is so important. He's the most important person in all the world. And he's the only person really that I want you to know and love and follow.

I want you to know and love and follow Jesus. But you know, it's lovely to see you all this morning. It's lovely to see you all, all your different ages and stages. It's great.

[2 : 15] It's great to have you here for this Christmas family service and try and preach a message to all of you, which is a very hard thing to do. But you know, I love the family service because you get to stay in for the sermon part.

Usually you go out to Sunday school, but you get to stay in. And it's great to see you in church. And it's great that you're part of our congregation. Because I want to say to you, you are an important part of our congregation.

You know, you're a really important part of our congregation. And it's great to see you. And it's great that you're growing up in our congregation. Now, I hope that when you came into church this morning, I hope that you came into church and you picked up one of these.

Yeah? Did you pick one up? Some of you did. Some of you didn't. What does it do? Did you try it on? You tried it on. You'll get one, Ross. You'll get one on the way out.

But don't worry. These candles, they won't burn you. They're battery powered. So they won't cause any harm to the church. So the church officer will be okay. He won't moan at me for setting the place on fire.

[3 : 17] But as you can see, there's lots of candles on this pulpit this morning. And there are some candles like this one. Like this. There's some little ones. And there's some slightly bigger ones, isn't there?

So there's some little ones. And there's some slightly bigger ones. And the bigger ones, they all have a word under them. Can you see the words? What does it say?

Hope. Peace. What does it do again? Hope. Peace. We could do this for a wee while. Okay.

Hope, peace, joy, and love. And these candles are called that because they all remind... These words, they remind us about who. Good answer. Okay. And we'll come to that in a moment. Now, did you count how many candles there are on the pulpit this morning? Did you count, Daniel? How many? Oh, close. Well, maybe there is 23. Maybe I've counted wrong. Is there 23? Should we count them?

[4 : 17] One, two... Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

You can't see that one, Daniel. It's there. Okay. So there's 24, right? How many big ones? Four. Four big ones. So how good are you at maths?

How many little ones? How many? 20. Well done, Charlie. So there's 20, 20 little candles and there's four big candles.

Now, why do you think there are 24 candles on the pulpit this morning? Do you think the minister's gone mad? Yes. So there. Finally, you can get away with saying that.

Why do you think there are 24 candles on the pulpit this morning? Is there something else with 24 in it? Now, there's 24 hours in a day, yeah? What?

[5 : 21] A calendar. Yes, that's it. This is the clue. So I'm sure you've seen one of these before. Never. Have you seen this before? What is it?

A Malteser calendar. What kind of calendar? It's an Advent calendar, yeah? What is it? Advent calendar. Thank you. It's an Advent calendar. So what does an Advent calendar do?

They have sweeties in it. Is that the most important part, Ross? Yes, okay. Okay. What do you do with the Advent calendar, though? You count down the numbers.

You count down the numbers until... Oh, you count up the numbers, actually. Until Christmas Day. Yes, you count down the numbers until Christmas Day. That's what an Advent calendar is for.

And, Ross, what's inside the little door? Chocolate, yeah. So we get nice bits of chocolate inside the doors. But, you know, why is there 24 doors in an Advent calendar?

[6 : 23] We're counting down the days until what day? Christmas Day, yeah. And when's that? 25th of December. Good.

So that's six more sleeps, yeah. So, boys and girls, we have here on the pulpit, we have how many little candles? No. 20 little candles.

How many big ones? Four. And I want to tell you, this is what the first real Advent calendar looked like. This is what the first real Advent calendar looked like.

It didn't look like this, as we have them today. It looked like this, with 24 candles on it. This is the first real Advent calendar.

But, of course, well, the Advent calendar didn't have chocolate inside, and didn't have little doors. It didn't even have battery-powered candles. They were real candles, with proper flames on them. They were real candles.

[7 : 22] And that's because the first real Advent calendar was invented 180 years ago, or over 180 years ago. That's a long, long time, isn't it?

Over 180 years ago, in 1839. So that's before Mommy and Daddy were born, before Shinner and Granny were born, before, yeah, all them before them.

So 1839. Now, nowadays, Advent calendars, they're often associated with the Roman Catholic Church. But I want to tell you that the first Advent calendar was actually invented by a Reformed pastor in Germany.

He was a Reformed pastor in Germany, and he was called Johann Heinrich Wichern. Johann Heinrich Wichern. You try and say that.

Johann Heinrich Wichern. Johann Heinrich Wichern. We'll just call him Johann, right? That's the easy part. So Johann was a minister. He was a pastor in Germany.

[8 : 22] But more than just being a minister, Johann was a man who helped many poor people in Germany. Poor people who didn't have money. They didn't have clothes to buy.

They didn't have money to buy clothes. They didn't have food. But Johann, he also helped not only adults, he also helped children. Children just about your own age, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. He helped children who didn't have a mummy and children who didn't have a daddy. He helped children who were orphans. And he took them into a home, into what we call an orphanage. He took them off the streets, and he looked after them. So this man, Johann, he looked after children in an orphanage. And he taught them in a school, his own school. It was called the Mission School in Germany.

But every December, just like yourselves right now, and all the children, you're all asking the same question. These children in the orphanage, they would all ask the question. They would say, when is it going to be Christmas?

[9 : 23] When is it going to be Christmas? When is it going to be Christmas? Are you asking that question? No. Oh, you know. You know when it's going to be Christmas. When your dad comes home, it's Christmas.

That's right. Oh. He'll be home soon, hopefully. Yes, he will. So, the children would ask, when is it going to be Christmas? Now, do you know these children in Germany in 1839, they didn't get Christmas presents like you get, which is why we should be so thankful for all our Christmas presents.

Whatever we get, we should be so thankful because there are so many boys and girls in the world who do not get any presents for Christmas. So we have to be so thankful, don't we?

But during the month of December, the children in the orphanage would ask Johann, all the time, they would ask him, when is it going to be Christmas? When is it going to be Christmas? When is it going to be Christmas? And so Johann, you know what he did?

He took an old cartwheel. So like, imagine a horse and cart and a big wheel. He took an old cartwheel, big wooden wheel, and he placed 20 small red candles on it and four large candles on it, four large white candles on it.

[10 : 40] And these were to remember the 24 days of December down to what day? Christmas Day. Thank you, Colin. Christmas Day. And every day, Johann would light one candle.

He would light a red candle on a weekday. So he'd light red candles Monday to Saturday. But on Sunday, he would light a white candle, the big candle.

And he would light a white candle on Sunday when everybody gathered together for church to worship God. And so, boys and girls, this is where the first Advent calendar came from.

It was invented by this German minister called Johann. And he was caring for children who were your own age, and they didn't have much, but he taught them to count down the days to Christmas using an Advent calendar, using candles.

Now, why do you think Johann used candles? Why do you think Johann used candles for an Advent calendar? Well, what does a candle do?

[11 : 45] It gives you light, yeah? It gives you light. And then you read the Bible, and what does Jesus say? I am the light of the world.

So he used candles, because Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus says to us, I am the light of the world. Whosoever believes in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

And so for the first 24 days of December, Johann would light one candle every day. He would light a candle, a red one during the week, and a white one on Sunday.

Now, we don't have red and white candles. We just have, we have yellow ones and white ones. But let's just say on the first day of Advent, that's what we call it, the first day of Advent. Now, do you remember what the word Advent means?

Anybody remember? What does the word Advent mean? The word Advent means coming, or arrival. So we talk about an Advent calendar. We're counting down the days until we remember the arrival of Jesus into the world, the coming of Jesus.

[12 : 52] And so on the first day of Advent, Johann would light the candle. Then on the second day of Advent, he would light another candle.

And then on the third day, we'll say, we're just making this up as we go along. But this is the third day of Advent, which would have been what day? A Sunday. And he would have lit this candle. Now, what's the name of this candle? Hope. The name of this candle, so the four candles, they were all given a name.

And he named this one, what's that word? Hope. He named this candle Hope, because the first candle was called Hope, because the birth of Jesus gives us, the birth of Jesus gives us, now, when we talk about hope, our hope is unsure.

It's uncertain. Sometimes we say, well, I hope the weather is nice tomorrow, or I hope I see my friends this week, or I hope I get a good Christmas present, or I hope it snows on Christmas Day.

[13 : 57] When we use the word hope, we're not sure. We're not certain. We don't really know what will happen. But when the Bible uses the word hope, the Bible speaks about things that are sure, things that are steadfast, things that are certain.

In fact, the Bible says that hope is the anchor of our soul, or Jesus is the anchor of our soul. Jesus is like the anchor to a ship, fastened to the rock in the midst of a storm.

It's sure and steadfast. It's sure and steadfast, what's the word? Hope. Sure and steadfast hope.

You know, boys and girls, when I was young, I remember learning a hymn, and it was all about our hope in Jesus, our hope in Jesus, and it would be great if you could learn it too.

It's a wonderful, wonderful chorus. It says, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. I'd love you to learn that if you can. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[15 : 22] And so the birth of Jesus gives us hope. The birth of Jesus gives us hope. But then after the first Sunday of Advent, our minister, Johan, and the children in the orphanage, they would have continued to count down the days until Christmas Day.

And each day they would light a candle. So we've done, what number was this? One. Three. So then on the fourth day, they would put that one on.

Then the? Fifth day. Put that one on. Then the? Sixth day. Put that one on. The seventh day of Advent, yeah.

Then the? Are we on sixth or seventh? Eighth? Ninth. Ninth. And then? Okay, so we're on the tenth.

This is a big candle now, isn't it? So what does that mean? Peace. This candle is peace. It was called peace. So there was, what's this one? Hope and peace.

[16 : 27] And it was called peace because the birth of Jesus gives us peace. The birth of Jesus gives us peace. In fact, one of the most well-known prophecies about the birth of Jesus is it was written by a man called Isaiah.

Say his name. Isaiah. And what's amazing about Isaiah is that he wrote these words that I'm going to read. He wrote them 700 years before Jesus was born.

700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah wrote in Isaiah chapter nine, he said, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

Then he says, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Prince of Peace. So Jesus is the Prince of Peace. And that's why at the birth of Jesus, the angels, they all appeared before the shepherds, and they appeared, as we read there in Luke chapter two, they appeared singing, glory to God in the highest, and on earth, what?

[17 : 46] Peace. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill towards all men. So boys and girls, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, who came to bring, what did he come to bring?

Peace. Jesus came to bring peace. Not peace and quiet. Now adults love peace and quiet, don't they? Adults love peace and quiet. But Jesus didn't come to bring peace and quiet.

Jesus came to bring peace with God. Peace with God. And we need peace with God, because our sin separates us from God. In fact, the Bible says our sin makes us enemies of God.

But no one wants to be an enemy of God, do they? Do you want to be an enemy of God? No. You want peace with God. You want friendship with God. You want God to be your heavenly Father.

And that's why Jesus was born. Jesus was born so that we could enjoy, what's the word? Peace and friendship with God. Jesus was born to bring peace.

[18 : 53] And so, Johan, the minister, and the children, they would have counted down the days until Christmas. Now, what day are we on now? This is number 10.

And they would have continued to light each candle. So this is number 11, 11, 12, 13. Now we're going over the other side of the pulpit.

This is the one, Daniel, that you can't see. This is 14, 15, 16, 17.

And we reached, what's this one? Joy. So this is another Sunday. Joy. Okay? So there's, what's this one? Hope. Do it again.

Okay, just to make sure you're listening. What is it again? That's good. Okay, so, we've reached here. This is the 17th day, which was the third Sunday in December, which is the third white candle being lit.

[19 : 57] And the candle is called Joy. And the third candle is called Joy because the birth of Jesus brings us, birth of Jesus brings us joy.

And that's what the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds, that when they were out in the fields watching the flocks, we read that the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were afraid.

But the angel said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And so, boys and girls, the birth of Jesus brings us joy.

Brings us joy. And the Bible, it actually encourages us to sing for joy. A lot of the Psalms tell us to sing for joy or even shout for joy because Jesus brings us joy.

[20 : 58] Jesus brings us joy. Jesus brings us what? And joy. joy. Jesus brings us hope, peace, and joy. But the Bible says that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. And you know, when we know Jesus in our heart, when we know Jesus in our heart, we will know great joy.

We will know great joy. You know, there are times where sin can make us sad or sickness can make us sad or even sorrow makes us sad.

When we lose people we love, sorrow makes us sad. But when we have Jesus in our heart, even in the midst of sin, sickness, and sorrow, we can have, what's the word? Joy.

So we need to have Jesus in our heart. Do you know, one of my favorite Christmas carols, do you like Christmas carols? Yeah, you do.

[21 : 57] Do you sing them in school? Yeah, sometimes. Do you know, my favorite Christmas carol is one called Joy to the World. And it's written by a man named Isaac Watts and it's based upon the words of Psalm 98.

And Isaac Watts, he wrote, he wrote the words, joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room.

And heaven and nature sing. Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room.

And heaven and nature sing. And you know what I always find so challenging about those words? Is that it says, let every heart prepare him room. Let every heart prepare him room.

And you know, it's a great question to ask ourselves. Have we prepared our heart for Jesus this Christmas? Do we have room in our heart for Jesus? Do we?

[22 : 59] Do we have room in our heart for Jesus? Have we got room in our heart for Jesus? And you know, there's a wonderful prayer, a very short prayer, that you can pray and keep asking the Lord to be, to become a Christian.

Because you're never too young to become a Christian. And you're never too old. As Myrtle Burns will tell you, you're never too old. But you know, there's a wonderful prayer. And it's a great prayer. It's just very simple. Just to pray, Lord, make my heart your home. Lord, make my heart your home. We need to prepare room for Jesus in our heart.

And you know, when Jesus makes our heart His home, we will know, we will know what? What's this? Hope, peace, and joy in our heart.

We'll know hope, peace, and joy. And so boys and girls, in the orphanage, when the boys and girls in the orphanage in Germany in 1839, when they were asking the question, when is it going to be Christmas?

[24 : 03] When is it going to be Christmas? Johann. What was the name of the minister? Johann. And all the children, they would count down the days until Christmas. They would light a candle each day.

And so, this is the 17th. So this will be the? The 18th. Yeah. Then the? 19th. Then the? 20th. 20th. We'll go with that one, Ross. 20th, yeah? 21. Then, 22. Isn't it? No, that's 21, is it? You tell me. 23.

And then? 24. Wow. And what's the name of this candle? Love. Love. So we have what? Hope. Hope. Wait. Not all together. Hope, peace, joy, and... What is it? Hope, peace, joy, and love.

[25 : 04] Hope, peace, joy, and love. And the fourth candle was called love because the birth of Jesus was a demonstration of God's love. The birth of Jesus brought us love.

Now, boys and girls, as you know, the Bible tells us that we are to what? One another. We're to? Is that easy? Yes.

Who said yes? Oh, it's not easy at all, is it? We're to love one another. You know what that means? Boys in the manse. Not fighting with one another. Maybe it happens in other homes too.

Fighting with brothers or sisters or even mom and dad or even friends at school. We're not. We're to love one another. We're also to love our neighbor, aren't we?

We're to love our neighbor. We're to demonstrate our love for one another because God has demonstrated His love for us. And the Bible tells us that God is...

[26 : 04] God is love and God has demonstrated His love towards us not only in the birth of Jesus but also in the death of Jesus.

He demonstrated His love in the death of Jesus. God has demonstrated His love for us. He has shown us how much He loves us by the birth of Jesus and also the death of Jesus.

In fact, it was Jesus who said, greater... What's the word? Greater love has no man than this that a man laid down his life for his friends. And so we are to love God because He first loved us.

He sent His Son to die on the cross to take away our sins. And you know, that's what Johan, this minister, that's what Johan wanted the children in the orphanage to know more than anything.

He wanted them to know the reason why Jesus came into the world. That they came into the world... Jesus came into the world because He loves us and He wanted to die for us.

[27 : 13] Jesus came into the world so that we would know Him and that we would love Him too.

And you know, this minister, Johan, his longing was that all the children he looked after and cared for, that they would know...

What's the words? They would know the hope of Jesus, the peace of Jesus, the joy of Jesus, and the love of Jesus. He wanted them to know what?

The hope of Jesus, the peace and love. Yeah, He wanted them to know that. And that's what I want you to know. I want you to know.

I want everybody to know. More than anything else, I want you to know the hope that is found in Jesus, the peace that we can have through Jesus. I want you to know the joy of following Jesus and the love that Jesus has demonstrated to us, not only by being born, but also by dying on the cross.

Bye, Callum. I'm not going yet. Maybe you want me to go, do you? Bye-bye. So, what is it? One. Hope. Love.

[28 : 27] Okay? Now, before we finish, a little test. Do you like tests? Oh, you like tests, do you?

Right, you love tests.

Okay, I'm going to ask you some questions just before we finish, okay? Just to make sure you're awake and listening. Okay? First question. What was the name of the German minister who invented the advent calendar?

Johann. What's his surname? Oh, that's very hard. Johann Wichern. I can hardly pronounce it myself. Who did he show the advent calendar to?

Children. Children. Where were they in an orphanage? So, they didn't have a... They didn't have a mummy or daddy. Why did Johann use candles? No.

Why? Remember, who is the light of the world? Jesus. Yeah, because Jesus is the light of the world. How many candles did he use? 24.

[29 : 29] How many big candles did he use? How many little candles did he use? 20. Okay, you're good at maths. What were the four candles for? To mark the Sundays in Advent.

What are they called? Hope, peace, joy, love. What are they? Hope, peace, joy, love. One more time. Hope, peace, joy, love.

Okay. And they were given these names. Why were they given these names? Because the birth of Jesus has brought us hope, peace, joy, and love.

And we want all the boys and girls, all the mummies and daddies, all the aunties and uncles, all the grannies and shenners. We want everyone. We want everyone to know the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings to us.

And has brought to us. Not only through his birth, but also through his day. So will you remember? What is Christmas all about? Or who is Christmas all about?

[30 : 34] Jesus. Because Jesus has brought us. One more time. Hope, peace, joy, and love. So I hope you remember that. Okay. Hope, peace, joy, and love.

Well, thank you very much for listening. So we're going to clasp our hands. And we'll say a prayer together. Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the wonder of who Jesus is. That he is the light of the world.

And that he came into this world to take away the darkness. And to bring us into that most marvelous light. We give thanks, Lord, that there is hope in Jesus. That there is peace with God through Jesus. There is joy in knowing Jesus. And that the love of God has been displayed to us. Through the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Oh, Lord, help us, we pray, to see none other save Jesus only. That our eyes would be fixed upon him. To know him and to love him. And to keep looking to him day by day. [31 : 32] Because he is the author. And he is the finisher of our faith. Go before us, then, we pray. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, boys and girls, you did very, very well. What is it? One more time. Hope, peace, joy, love. Okay. Hope, peace, joy, love. You're listening. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion.

We're going to sing in Psalm 18. Psalm 18. It's in the Scottish Psalter. We're singing verses 28 to 30.

Psalm 18. Verses 28 to 30. And so after the psalm, we'll have the benediction.

And then the live stream will go off. And then we'll do our Christmas presents. Okay? You have to sit really nice and listen out for your name. Okay? Okay? So we're going to sing Psalm 18.

[32 : 30] Scottish Psalter. Page 221 in the Blue Psalm book. Verse 28 down to the verse marked 30. And it says in verse 28.

The Lord will light my candle so that it shall shine full bright. The Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light. By thee through troops of men I break and them discomfort all.

And by my God assisting me, I overleap a wall. So we'll sing Psalm 18 verses 28 to 30. We'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise.

Psalm 18.

Psalm 18. Psalm 18.

[34 : 05] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. So we'll stand to step out. Thanks. Harmonized world. Amen. God bless your name. From I've loved you, says the love of God. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. So that's life. God bless you. God bless you. Please call me.

God bless you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.