

Advent is Here!

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, also known as Advent Sunday. This year, for me, Advent began with a riot of activity. It was so busy, packed with activities, not to mention that I was recovering from a bruising fall, that it just didn't seem like Advent or that there was enough time to focus on God and His precious gift to us.

Isaiah 7:14 tell us, *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel."*

Where was the joy? Where was the time to contemplate the Savior? Then my 22-year-old grandson and his girlfriend brought Advent back to me!

We made gingerbread cut-out cookies! I began this Advent tradition over 50 years ago with my own two children. I continued it on with my grandchildren until they were just too old and too busy to help Nana with cookies. What a precious gift those two gave to me.

As the dough sat it's needed time in the refrigerator, I was able to carve out blessed time to spend with God, to feel His presence, and worship Him. I could again relax into the loving arms of Jesus, true God and true man.

Advent is the beginning of the church year for Lutherans. Advent means "coming". We look forward to not only the birth of Jesus, but to His triumphant return to gather His beloved followers into eternal life in heaven. During the four Sundays before Christmas, we light the Advent wreath candles each week, reflecting on hope, peace, joy, and love. We look forward with a growing excitement to Christmas and the birth of Jesus, our Savior. Again, Isaiah 9:6-7 says,

*"For to us a child is born,
to 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."*

So, I ask you to slow down, attend worship and Wednesday evening service (if available) and turn your heart and mind to God and the gift He gives us in His son, Jesus. God's gift is better than any other gift we will receive this year.

Wishing all of you a merry, joyful, blessed Christmas! You are in my heart and prayers, and I love all of you.

Cathey