



The Foothills Flyer: *Keeping the Church on Mission*

WORSHIP: The Crown Jewel of All Spiritual Disciplines

By Joe Eastman **Values: Christ the Head, Ancient/Future Worship**

Worship is the crown of all spiritual disciplines because every time we are intentional about practicing a spiritual discipline, we are worshipping. Worship includes literal worship times and times of seeking and following as well. In this article, I want to highlight an aspect of worship that we can easily forget: *the state of our hearts.*



In Isaiah chapter 1, God tells the prophet Isaiah that He takes no pleasure in the sacrifices the people are offering. He says the sacrifices which are given “give Him no pleasure, trample His courts, are worthless, and are an abomination.” What were they doing that ruined worship for God? In verses 1:10-15 we see that the people were doing everything right outwardly. They were giving their animals. They were offering incense, holding festivals, and solemn assemblies. They even spent time in prayer. It seems that their methodology was good - *but their hearts were far from God.*

The reason God rejected their worship is that “their hands are covered in blood.” Specifically, He tells His people that they are to “cease doing evil” and should “learn to do good, seek justice, reprove evil, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow.” *In short, their worship didn’t change their treatment of others.* It didn’t make them see the world more from God’s point of view. In other words, they were outwardly doing worship right, but refused to let that reality change how they acted. It is all too easy for us to make the same mistake: believing something but not allowing it to change who we are. For God, there is no such distinction. We either live out our worship in tangible ways, or we fail in worship. For the worshippers in Isaiah’s day, they lost the connection between who they said God was and how it should have changed who they are. They forgot that the worship of Almighty God should define reality. True worship will lead to change and conversely, worship that doesn’t change us is not true worship.

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The form of worship *does* matter. We are to worship God in the way He prescribes. However, let us never forget that the true point of worship isn’t to change God (i.e. add something to Him or give Him something He lacks) but to change *us*. God desires for us to be more like Jesus, and worship is one of the ways in which we are changed.



The Story Behind the Celebration of Advent

By Justin Holcomb **Values: Christ the Head, Ancient/Future Worship**

Advent begins this month! For many Christians unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there may be some confusion surrounding the meaning of the Advent season. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think that it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there's more to Advent.

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

Today, the Advent season lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. (Advent begins on the Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year.)

Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these “last days” (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2), as God’s people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s kingdom when he returns for his people. In this light, the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” perfectly represents the church’s cry during the Advent season:



O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

While Israel would have sung the song in expectation of Christ’s first coming, the church now sings the song in commemoration of that first coming and in expectation of the second coming in the future.

While Advent is certainly a time of celebration and anticipation of Christ’s birth, it is more than that. It is only in the shadow of Advent that the miracle of Christmas can be fully understood and appreciated; and it is only in the light of Christmas that the Christian life makes any sense. It is between the fulfilled promise of Christ’s first coming and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise of his second coming that Karl Barth penned these words: “Unfulfilled and fulfilled promise are related to each other, as are dawn and sunrise. Both are promise and in fact the same promise. If anywhere at all, then it is precisely in the light of the coming of Christ that faith has become Advent faith, the expectation of future revelation. But faith knows for whom and for what it is waiting. It is fulfilled faith because it lays hold on the fulfilled promise.” The promise for Israel and the promise for the church is Jesus Christ; he has come, and he will come again. This is the essence of Advent.

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Justin Holcomb is an Episcopal priest and teaches theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and Knox Theological Seminary.

We will celebrate Advent together on the following days:
Sunday, November 27 and Sundays, December 4, 11, 18
We will culminate our celebration on **Saturday, December 24 at 5PM.**
There will be no service on Sunday, December 25.

Upcoming Events in November

- THURSDAYS: **Walking in the Way (Part 1).** 6:30-8:30PM in Room 102. Explore the way of God, the storyline of the Bible, and representational thinking. Taught by the Briggs and Bannings.
- FRIDAYS: **Women's Bible Study.** At the church from 10AM-Noon. Nursery will be provided. *Ends November 11.*
- SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5: **Men's Bicycle Ride.** Meet at the church at 8 am. Contact Blake Harden at 238-0798 for details.
- SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12: **Men's Breakfast @** the church from 8-10AM. This is for men 18 years and older. We'll eat together and Pastor Mike will speak on a relevant and important topic for men.
- SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13: **Mission Minded Prayer Gathering.** 9AM in the Library. Prayer for our missionaries. Led by Victoria Cain.
- Newcomers Lunch.** Noon in Room 102-103. Open to all newcomers who have never attended a luncheon.
- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16: **Men's Theological Discussion @** the church from 6:30-8:30PM. Peter Briggs will lead.
- SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19: **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?!** Sign up at the Welcome Center and get sent to a home with other mystery guests for dinner at 6PM. This is a great way to meet new people!
- SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20: **Communion Meal.** Lunch and communion around the tables immediately following the service in the worship center.
- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23: **Thanksgiving Eve Service.** 7PM at the church. Come prepared to share your offerings of praise and thanks with one another.

The Foothills Flyer is a monthly newsletter under the oversight of Pastor Joe Eastman that is aimed at keeping Foothills on mission and keeping us committed to our 9 Core Values.

OUR MISSION: Foothills Fellowship exists to be a worshipping community of God's people whose lives are shaped by the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and who participate in the mission of God's kingdom by proclaiming the good news locally, nationally and globally.

OUR CORE VALUES: 1) Jesus Christ, the Head 2) Biblical Leadership 3) Everyone A Minister 4) Ancient/Future Worship 5) Hospitality Without Exception 6) Unity in Community 7) Intentional Families 8) Global Missions 9) Holistic Discipleship