

# The Gift of Advent

## Week 4: The Gift of Family



*A gift is given freely and offered in love. In the weeks before Christmas, we often race around finding just the right gifts for friends and family. The season of Advent is itself a gift—a time set apart to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. We give thanks for God's gift to us in the baby of Bethlehem.*

*This series highlights four aspects of Advent that become blessings and gifts in our lives: patience, speech and silence, hope, and family.*

## **Week 4: The Gift of Family**

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a family tree from Abraham to Jesus. Between the recitation of names, we also hear the story of God at work in our world from generation to generation. The Advent and Christmas seasons highlight the significance of family and friends in our lives. We witness Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, and the shepherds together tending their flocks. As God's children, we become part of the family tree.

### **Opening Dialogue** (*Matt. 1*)

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and friends,

**aunts, uncles, sons, and daughters,**

people who reach out to nurture and love,

**people who live by water and word—**

God adopts us and names us and claims us.

**God renews us, uplifts and restores us.**

Generations from Abraham to David to Joseph,

**to Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God;**

our generations too, and all those to come:

**We are joined in the family of God.**

### **Gathering Song**—ELW #263

### **Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**Prayer** (Luke 1:46, 49, 50)

O God for whom we long,  
we thank you for the gift of family and friends.  
Strengthen the ties that bind us together,  
that we may sing with Mary:

**My soul magnifies you, and holy is your name.  
You shower mercy from generation to  
generation.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ,  
your gift to all the world.

**Amen.**

**Psalmody**—Psalm 96

**Reading**—1 John 3:1-3

**Song**

For each perfect gift of thine,  
peace on earth and joy in heav'n;  
for thyself, best gift divine,  
to our world so freely giv'n:  
Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,  
Virgin's son, incarnate Word!  
To the holy Trinity  
praise we sing eternally!

NUN KOMM, DER HEIDENHEILAND (ELW #879 st. 5; ELW #263 st. 6)

**Gospel**—Matthew 1:1-17

**Reflection**

*The reflection concludes:*

God has given us eternal life,  
**and this life is in Jesus, God's Son.**

**Hymn**—ELW #269

## Prayers

For this time of waiting and watching for the coming of our Savior, **we give you thanks, O Lord.**

When the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words, **we cry to you, O Lord.**

For the hope that shines through the darkest night, **we turn to you, O Lord.**

For the gift of friends and family who walk with us through life, **we praise your name, O Lord.**

Gather us all under the promise of your Son, who taught us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## Blessing

The peace of God accompany your waiting, the light of Christ warm your hearts, and the joy of the Spirit fill you with hope. **Amen.**

## Sending Song—ELW #248

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon.  
**Thanks be to God.**