ADVENT 2026: Mercy has Come: The Weary World Rejoices
Mercy Promised (Isaiah 9:2-7; Ephesians 1:3-10)

The tender mercy of our God has come near: **Why was mercy needed?**
Context of beginning of first Century: People in Israel were **discouraged, defeated, & desperate**

Anxiety (famine; inflation), uncertainty (high mortality rate), Gov't oppression (Roman occupation AND Corrupt Jewish leaders), insecurity (safety), spiritual darkness (their only hope was perfectly fulfilling the LAW =total *self-righteousness* & betting it would be good enough) ☹ …Tightrope? Without net (when salvation is tied to our ability to walk and Keep walking=*deadly*)

*Can anybody relate? Anxious? Uncertain? Feel Insecure in this economy? Political upheaval? All the "glitches" happening everywhere?? The more reliant we are on digital everything, the more vulnerable we become (AI)…What is keeping you grounded amidst all the hype?

Where is there HOPE? (stock up on water and bullets? Flee the state?) NO. Remember, we are *NOT* the first generation to live through uncertainty & confusion, discouragement or desperation. *We know where hope is found!! and Hope has a Name. Jesus. We know where mercy comes from; & Mercy has a name: Jesus. **And** Mercy was promised to God's people in the form of the coming Messiah; The Messiah was **promised** and **prophesized**; and the promised Messiah has a name: Jesus! In this ADVENT season, we are called to remember God's peoples' plight & desperation, remember our own, and that God has made a way to bring hope in despair, light from darkeness…

READ Isaiah 9:2-7 "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.[Jesus is the light of the world] 3 You will multiply the nation, You will [d]increase [e]their joy; They will rejoice in Your presence As with the joy [f]of harvest, [Jesus is the Bread of life]
As *people* rejoice when they divide the spoils. 4 For You will break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. [Jesus sets the captives free -Luke 4:18] 5 For every boot of the marching warrior in the roar *of battle*, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
**6 For a Child *will be* born to us [promise], a Son will be given to us; [prophecy] And the government will [h]rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace On the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and ***forevermore***.
The zeal of the Lord of armies will accomplish this."

In God's plan, *before the foundation of the earth*, He planned, knew, and chose the perfect time in world history for Jesus, His Son, to be sent to the earth as the promised Messiah -in order to redeem for Himself a people. To bring salvation. To bring eternal rescue. To bring reconciliation =to bring us into **relationship** with the Father.
-Galatians 4:3-5 "So we too, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world.4 **But when the fullness of the time came**, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons *and daughters*." *In God's perfect timing, He sent Jesus (Messiah) to rescue souls from an eternity apart from Him; to redeem them from a LAW-keeping false salvation (a redemption through self-righteousness). This WAS MERCY. Planned & Promised.

What does this teach us about the nature of God, our Father?

1. Our Father is a **Merciful** Father: In God's nature is a mercy to withhold righteous judgment that is due to us, as our just penalty for sin & rebellion against God. His very nature is mercy!

-Lamentations 3:22-23 "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His **mercies** never (cease); they never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." God's steadfast love (His "covenant mercy" -His beneficent ministry on His people's behalf) never ceases, even in the face of (His people's/Judah's) unfaithfulness. This type of mercy goes the second mile, replacing judgment with restoration. never come to an end. God is willing to begin anew with those who repent. new every morning. Each day presents another opportunity to experience God's grace. God's covenantal mercy, fidelity and personal integrity remain intact no matter what happens.

-Isaiah 30:18 "Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show **mercy** to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

-Luke 1:50 (Mary's Magnificat):**And God's mercy is to generation after generation Toward those who fear Him.**

-Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

2. Our Father is a **loving** Father: It has always been the heart of the Father to send rescue, to redeem the lost, the hopeless, the desperate. In Love, God sent the Son Jesus *to* us.

-1 John 4:9 "This is how God's ***love*** was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him."

-John 3:16 "For God so ***loved*** the world that He gave His one and only Son…"

*God is full of *MERCY* toward us – this is His intention = to show us mercy (we are undeserving)

**God is full of *LOVE* toward us -this is His motivation in sending Jesus to redeem us. =We r loved!

3. Our Father is most **glorified** in the *sending* & the *coming* of the SON Jesus – Who is the visible image of the Father. In mercy, God enacted salvation in eternity past. In first century, the Son accomplished salvation through His death on the cross. It was always Jesus who was going to be the Redeemer, giving His life in mercy so that we could have eternal life. God is glorified in the redeeming of His people. In Jesus, God's mercy found it's intended purpose in the redemption of the desperate, disillusioned, the damned and doomed =Us! We received MERCY!

*And NOW, We **display** God's glory in being recipients of His perfect Mercy. *He has lavished mercy*

-Mt. 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy" & we display God's nature best in our love and mercy toward others (especially when they least deserve it!) =ADVENT Message

-Hebrews 2:14-16 "Now since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." =GOSPEL

In mercy, Jesus was promised to come and ransom lives from sin, death, and the fear of death. This has affected all of eternity; this has changed the world. Has it changed your life?? Does this matter to you?

So, what do we glean this ADVENT season concerning God's Mercy Promised and *Delivered* through Jesus the Messiah?

READ Ephesians 1:3-10 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, 4 just as He chose us ***in Him*** before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before [d]Him. In love 5 [e]He predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. 7 ***In*** [f]***Him*** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He [g]lavished on [h]us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He [i]made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth ***in Him***, 10 regarding *His* plan **of the fullness of the times**, to bring all things together in Christ, things [j]in the heavens and things on the earth.

1. Because of divine Mercy you were **chosen** by God to be His! In **MERCY**, *YOU* are part of God's eternal plan to bring you into right relationship with God: =Your life is not an accident; your salvation is not an accident; God's mercy toward you is NOT an accident. God wants Glory in your life and from your life as you live (new creation) in His mercy!

Vs. 1: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, 4 just as **He chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world. You have been chosen; this matters. Everything in your future depended on being selected, chosen, elected, picked, & preferred by God. He wasn't obligated to pick you. He didn't have to; He didn't need to; He wanted to because He loved you & put His love on you before you were even born. **Vs. 5:** ***In love*** 5 *He* predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters*

-When is the last time you just thanked the Lord for choosing you? Blessing Him? In this *ADVENT* season, what a perfect time to lean into worship, thankfulness, having a gracious spirit.

2. Because of divine Mercy, you were **made alive** to experience *both* eternal life & everyday life. This is the **GOSPEL**: Christ saved us for eternity, but His salvation saves us daily-giving us abundant life NOW…The Gospel reminds us that our salvation is only possible *bc* God did it/not us
Vs. 7: ***In Him*** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He [g]lavished on [h]us.
-Eph. 2:4-5 "But God, **being rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our sins, wrongdoings, trespasses ***made us alive*** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)," = ***HE*** **made us alive** (He changed our hearts from death to life). He transformed us into a spiritual being that now communes with Him, and worships Him, and seeks Him in order to love Him (abide with Him) in right and daily relationship with Him!

-1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to **His great mercy** has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…" = The work of salvation is the work of God (NOT man); He did it. Being saved by grace means that Jesus is the Author, perfector, and the finisher of our Faith. It is for His glory!

And the gospel (Good News of salvation) reminds us that we can have a spirit-filled, peacefilled, and Joyous life NOW because Christ saved us to give us LIFE NOW, and life to the fullest (no matter what our earthly circumstances are)! – John 10:10 "The devil comes only to steal, Kill, and destroy, BUT I have come to give you LIFE, and to have it abundantly (Life to the fullest/satisfying life)

-The FULL life is a Joy-filled life of **purpose** (God's glory) & **meaning** (on mission w/ Christ), motivated by **Love** (God's divine love) –no matter where I live; no matter what I endure! *No matter* [Gospel: life of truest identity; security; assurance; hope; divine comfort; spiritual closeness; JOY]

3. Because of divine Mercy, you have been **<u>invited</u>** to join Jesus on His *Mission* to save the lost.
-The Lord has called us and invited us to be His hands and feet, His voice of hope & salvation to the least of these and to the Lost -to the most undeserving (like us).

Vs. 8: In all wisdom and insight [9] He made known **to us** the mystery of <u>His will</u>, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, [10] regarding *<u>His</u>* <u>plan</u> **of the fullness of the times**, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

-God has given us His WORD. He has revealed not only His own gracious, merciful, and loving nature – but God has revealed to us the big plan (the grand master design of the universe):
A. God created this world for His glory – He created us for His glory & relationship: We rebelled ☹
B. God sent Jesus, the Son of God, the promised & prophesized **Messiah** to come rescue us/*save us*
****=This is why we celebrate CHRISTMAS -why we worship on ADVENT
C. Jesus inaugurated His Kingdom on the earth at His ADVENT & to be perfectly fulfilled at His Second Coming – and in the meantime, Jesus birthed the Church – His Bride = US …to know His WORD, His will, His plan, His purpose for the world = 'The glory of God in the redemption of man'

& WE (YOU and me), are a part of His plan to rescue this world; to save the lost as we live and share the Gospel (the Good News of salvation) that only comes through Saving Faith in Jesus.

God is the main point of the story. God is the Author of the story. You were invited into His story. And now God calls us to tell the story & invite others in to share in the story through salvation.
*Why are we motivated to give presents at Christmas time, more than any other time of the year?
WHY? <u>Tradition?</u> =Why do we spend extra money on Angel Tree, Operation Christmas Child, poor?
We give because He first gave to us. We want to share His love & give good gifts to others. **BUT**, what is the greatest gift you could ever give anyone in this ADVENT season??? – it's the GOSPEL…the best news ever heard, that Jesus saves sinners like you and me!

Community Group Questions

1. Isaiah describes people walking in darkness and living in a land overshadowed by death, yet promises that a great Light will shine upon them. What are some forms of darkness, discouragement, or desperation people experience today? When have you personally experienced a season when it was difficult to see God's presence or purposes? How does the promise of Jesus as the Light of the world give you hope even when your circumstances haven't changed?

2. Isaiah promised that a child would be born who would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. These promises ultimately point to Jesus, the promised Messiah and eternal King. Which of these descriptions of Jesus do you need most in your life right now, and why? How does knowing that God's promises are fulfilled in Christ strengthen your confidence in Him during uncertain times?

3. Paul reminds believers that before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ, adopted us into His family, and redeemed us through the blood of Jesus. How should these truths change the way we view ourselves when we feel rejected, inadequate, guilty, or forgotten? Which of these blessings—being chosen, adopted, forgiven, or redeemed—most encourages you during difficult seasons?

4. Paul explains that God has made known the mystery of His will: to unite all things in heaven and on earth under the lordship of Jesus Christ. How does knowing that history is moving toward God's ultimate purpose under Christ's reign give you hope when the world seems chaotic, broken, or out of control? How might this eternal perspective change the way you respond to the difficulties you are facing today?

5. The good news of Advent is that Jesus came into our darkness to bring redemption, forgiveness, peace, and eternal hope. Who in your life might be experiencing a season of darkness, loneliness, grief, fear, or uncertainty this Christmas? What is one intentional way you could demonstrate the hope of Christ to that person—not simply through words, but through practical love, encouragement, generosity, or gospel conversations?