

**“Born, Born, Born, to Living Hope!” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – First Midweek in Advent  
November 30, 2022**

- I. **Genesis 12 & 18 and John 8 previously read.**
- II. **Years ago I received a book** called The Practice of the Presence of God.
  - a. It was a group of writings from a monk named Brother Lawrence who lived in the 1600’s.
    - i. It was a gift from Noma Wolf, who many of you remember as a dear friend and Christian example.
    - ii. In this book, he writes, “the practice of the presence of God ... is to find joy in His divine company and to make it a habit of life, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with Him at all times, every moment”
  - b. Wouldn’t that be an awesome blessing if this Advent became a time for you to know the presence of God in your life like you’ve never known it before?
  - c. The presence of God is powerful on many levels –
    - i. When we are struggling with trials and challenges... His presence helps our attitude.
    - ii. When we suffer, and begin to despair... His presence helps to get through it... to persevere.
    - iii. When life becomes monotonous... God’s presence fills our hearts with hope.
  - d. As we pay attention to God’s presence in our lives, we begin to see the many different “advents” where God is coming into our lives.
    - i. And, it’s also important to see the Bible as a book of advents – an entire story with God’s advents... from Genesis to Revelation.
    - ii. The Bible is the living and active Word that gives us confidence that Jesus keeps coming to us – that He is with us now – and that we have a future that is secure.
- III. **The Old Testament really helps us see the advents of Jesus.**
  - a. Yes, the Old Testament is often set aside by many Christians as a “Book of the Law” or as “old” therefore they focus on the New Testament.
    - i. But the Old Testament shows many of the “Jesus advents” – or Jesus coming to us.
  - b. Have you ever heard of a “green room”?
    - i. Some people who work in TV will know that a green room is the waiting area for guests.
    - ii. Once the time comes for your appearance, they call you in from the green room and when you’re done you go back until you’re on again.
    - iii. Lots of people look at the Old Testament like Jesus’ green room – He’s just sitting back, waiting for His appearance on Christmas Day, then after His first appearance, He’s now back there relaxing until it’s time to make His final appearance...

- c. This could not be further from the truth – we have the Bible, a book of advents, that shows Jesus making His appearance long before His birth.
- IV. **In John chapter 8**, we clearly see Jesus was present in the Old Testament.
- a. He’s talking to some prideful Jewish people who could trace their family tree back to Abraham...
  - b. But Jesus tells them, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples” (Jn 8:32).
  - c. They didn’t want to hear that because they wanted to trust in their genealogy – That Abraham makes them chosen by God.
  - d. But Jesus comes back with, “I speak of what I have seen with My Father.”
    - i. In other words, Jesus says He has personally seen things with God the Father.
  - e. Well, they wouldn’t stop going on about Abraham, so Jesus lays it on the line, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”
  - f. “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:58).
    - i. This is not the only time Jesus says something like this – for example the prayer in John 17, He prays, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory which You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (Jn 17:5, 24).
    - ii. And from Revelation, the book that looks ahead to the return of Jesus, He says, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rv 22:13).
    - iii. Do we really think that Jesus, God Himself, is just hanging around, relaxing in the green room in the Old Testament?
  - g. When we consider the advents of Jesus in the Old Testament, one of them is in the birth announcement to Abraham and Sarah...
    - i. In Genesis chapter 12, the Lord calls Abram to a new land where He will bless him as the father of a great nation.
      1. In this passage, who is the Lord? Is it just the Father alone, while Jesus and the Holy Spirit are in the green room?
      2. No! The Bible teaches us that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and all three are involved as one God.
    - ii. And yet, for Abraham, he’s got a problem...He and Sarah are too old!
      1. They are pushing 100, and still have no child.
      2. So, in Genesis 18 we read another “advent” to Abraham...
  - h. The Lord appeared to Abraham, and it says, “behold, three men were standing in front of him.”
    - i. Some people have speculated that these were the three persons of the Holy Trinity, and it makes sense that we see God the Father, Son, and Spirit announcing the birth to Abraham and Sarah.

- ii. And what happened? Isaac was born... and birth announcements kept coming for centuries to come, birth announcements all leading to the Son of God taking on our human flesh...
    - i. We've gone over this in past Advent seasons, but in the first chapter of Matthew, we read about the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
      - i. The blessing of hearing all these birth announcements is that they all point to something very special in God's eyes... you!
      - ii. St. Peter says our Savior Jesus, "was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God" (1 Pt 1:20–21).
- V. **This sermon is titled "Born, Born, Born, to Living Hope!"**
- a. That's because God's salvation history has been planned and coming to you from the beginning...
  - b. Isaac was born, Jesus was born, and you have been born to a living hope.
    - i. Isaac was a total miracle to Sarah and Abraham, and St. Paul writes in Romans 4 that Abraham was "fully convinced that God could do what He promised (Romans 4:18-21).
    - ii. Abraham hoped in the promises the Lord gave him... and then Jesus says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that we would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (Jn 8:56).
  - c. If Isaac was a miracle – the birth of Jesus was even more so.
    - i. Isaac had an earthly mom and dad, where Jesus had no earthly dad.
    - ii. As the birth announcement came to Mary, the power of God would grant her a child, to be called holy – the Son of God (Luke 1:35).
      - 1. Mary trusted fully (Luke 1:38), and just like Abraham hoped in the birth announcement of Isaac, Mary did the same.
  - d. Who's next? Who do all these birth announcements point to?
- VI. **Baptism is God's birth announcement that He has a newborn, you!**
- a. Listen to what Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Pt 1:3)
  - b. Jesus our Savior, who came to us in the flesh... went the way of all sinners... even though He never sinned... He paid the price for sin by dying on a cross.
  - c. He took on our sin, but sin and death wouldn't have the last word – as He was raised from the dead to bring us forgiveness... and a new birth.
  - d. In all of this, you were born to a living hope.
- VII. **In closing, I pray our Advent** observance will encourage you with the advents of God into your life.

- a. We have a “Book of Advents” that helps understand that Jesus wasn’t in the “green room” in the Old Testament and He’s definitely not in the “green room” now.
- b. As Brother Lawrence says, we can “find joy in His divine company and to make it a habit of life.”
- c. Isaac was born, Jesus was born, and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has given you new birth to the hope of life.
- d. “We praise You, O God!” Amen. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sermon adapted from “The Bible, Our Book of Advents,” Copyright © 2021, Concordia Seminary Press, St. Louis, MO, and Dr. Dale A. Meyer.