

November 29th



Advent 2020

*"They fancied themselves free,
and no one will ever be free so
long as there are pestilences."*

—Albert Camus, *The Plague*

—A SEASON OF SADNESS & CELEBRATION—

“INFIRMITY & HEALING”

Series Introduction:

- ‘Advent’ is the English translation of the Latin word ‘adventus,’ which means “arrival” or “coming.”
 - ⇒ *It was a season of _____ that preceded a season of _____. In the Advent season, we recognize that our experience of life in a fallen world is often characterized by sadness. And yet, we can also celebrate hopefully in light of all of God’s promises that are ours in Christ.*
- What the world offers to us to deal with our sadness is the generic “Christmas Season” which can serve as a distraction for us, but which does not substantively address the very real hurts and difficulties that we experience in the world.
- As we reflect this Advent season upon Scripture (the birth narratives primarily), we will see that both sadness and celebration are evident in the lives of those who experienced the first advent of Christ.

Key Point: This season we want to consider that the birth narratives compel us to _____ in all that God has already done for us in Christ and in all that He will bring to completion in the future!

Infirmity in Scripture

- **God’s original creation of mankind in His image was very good (Gen. 1:26-27)**
 - ⇒ Man was in harmonious relationship with God, others, and the world around him.
- **Mankind’s sin introduced disharmony into these relationships.**
 - ⇒ Mankind experienced separation in His relationship with God (Gen. 3:8) and now conflict with one another (Gen. 4:8).
 - ⇒ Mankind experienced the consequences of sin through physical infirmities in which the body either did not function as it was intended to (Gen. 11:30) or was susceptible to disease (Lev. 13) and to aging which would culminate in death (Gen. 5:4).

“infirmities”— ἀσθένεια (astheneia)—feebleness (of mind or body); by implication, malady; morally, frailty;—disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness.

“Modern western people tend to think of disease as an abnormality located within the body, in or beneath the skin; thus healing requires physical or biomedical intervention. People in the biblical accounts tend to think of sickness in more holistic ways. The source of sickness for them lies not only in the bodies of the sick, but also and sometimes especially in their social environments and in the larger universe.”

—J.B. Green, *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- **The consequences of sin in the world are experienced in terms of disharmony, but God has promised to heal and restore His people.**
 - ⇒ God promised that His people would experience peace in the world through the work that He would one day accomplish.
Isa. 57:17-19—¹⁷ Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ¹⁹ creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the Lord, “and I will heal him.”

Key Point: The experience of disease and infirmity should _____ to us that we and the world in which we live are both marred by the effects of sin and that the cosmic intervention of God is required to restore and redeem.

Infirmity & the Story of Advent

Zechariah & Elizabeth — Luke 1:5-25

Some Observations:

- (1) Although they had experienced infirmity (barrenness), their lives were not _____ primarily by that.

- (2) Nevertheless, their experience of infirmity was very real and very painful.
“reproach”
- (3) The words of the angel promised Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would soon have cause for celebration.
“joy” “gladness”
- (4) Their cause for celebration would not merely be the healing of their infirmity, but also the work of God in relation to the coming of Messiah.

Key Point: The _____ of Zechariah and Elizabeth’s infirmity pointed to the greater healing that would be accomplished through the coming of Messiah.

Anna — Luke 2:36-38

Some Observations:

- (1) Anna had experienced _____ early in her life and was now experiencing the infirmities of old age.
- (2) Anna’s life was not defined primarily by these things, but instead by _____.
“to give thanks”

Key Point: The focus of Anna’s life was on the goodness of God displayed in the sending of Messiah and not on the _____ of her circumstances.

Knowing God’s Peace in the Advent Season

1. The Advent season offers us a chance to properly _____ our infirmities.

⇒ *In our weakness, we are reminded of our _____ and God’s provision!*

Heb. 2:17-18—¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

2. The Advent season offers us a chance _____ God’s goodness to us in Christ.

⇒ *Having peace with God allows us to live with _____ and transforms our understanding of our suffering!*

Isa. 53:4-5—⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Rom. 5:1-5—⁵ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.