

Scripture: Mark 1:1-8.

Text: Mark 1:2b -- "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

\*Prepare the way of the Lord,  
Make his paths straight-1"

Title: Advent and Communion

Proposition: Advent and Communion provide a time and a method by which to come closer to Jesus Christ and his blessings for you.

Date written: December 1, 1972

Dates and places used:

Dec. 3, 1972 - OAKLAND PARK, FLA.  
Dec. 1st Sunday, 1972, COMBSBURY UMC,  
MARGATE, FL.

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Introduction:

1. One day a woman called a newspaper food editor and asked how long she should bake a 22 pound turkey. The writer was not real sure, so she reached for a book to check it out, and at the same time said to the caller "Just a minute."

With that, the inquiring lady, quite courteously, said "Thank you," and hung up.

I would think that the woman who called in did not have much recognition of what the process of preparation and baking did for the turkey. She really didn't understand it, did she?

2. Today we are observing two words and events which have little meaning and are poorly understood by many quite good and well-intentioned Christians. Perhaps you are among those who do not understand the terms Advent and Communion very well, and therefore are not helped by them as much as you would like to be. I know that I seldom heard the word "Advent" when I was growing up, and only in the more recent years of my ministry have found much significance in it. People from the more liturgical churches, like

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the Episcopal, Lutheran and Catholic  
have long found significance in Advent  
but generally we of Methodist and  
American evangelistic background have  
not even known the term, much less  
found meaning in it.

3. We have been exposed to the  
word "Communion," or heard it called  
"The Lord's Supper," or "The Last  
Supper." That terminology has some  
meaning for us, but even so I have had  
many people tell me they don't come to  
church on Communion Sunday because they  
"don't understand it." That is a very  
common complaint about the Lord's  
Supper. It is impossible to understand  
a mystery, and we do not propose here  
to try to explain it. We do hope to  
make it a bit more meaningful and help-  
ful to you.

4. Why link these two puzzling  
terms in one sermon and one Sunday?  
Why talk about Advent and Communion at  
the same time and on the same Sunday  
and at the same service? Because both  
deal with the process of preparation  
of ourselves, of our spirits, for  
better recognition and reception of  
Jesus Christ.



1. Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. It is a season of time, generally beginning about the first of December, or on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew's Day, which falls on November 30. It ends on Christmas Eve. It is known in the more liturgical Churches, but it was not until fairly late in the development of Christian liturgy and ceremony that it appeared. It was unknown as late as 380 years after Jesus. Only in relatively recent years, such as the last 25 to 40 years, have people of evangelical background paid any attention to it, and many of them still don't. That's why we, of an evangelical background, pay little attention to it too, generally.

2. Advent may be thought of as the New Year Season of the Church. It offers the faithful an opportunity for preparation for the coming birth of Christ. It emphasizes several themes, among which are the coming of Christ as a baby, his second coming when he shall reign over the whole earth, and his continual coming into ~~the~~ hearts that prepare him room. This third emphasis, his coming into hearts that prepare him room, is the emphasis that appeals to most of us.

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3. The Scripture for today is a traditional Advent Scripture. It quotes from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, the famous prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, of the Savior. It points to one who shall precede the coming of the Savior, and has John the Baptist identifying himself as that one. It emphasizes the necessity of repentance as part of the preparation by the individual, so that forgiveness may be given to each person so preparing. It speaks of being baptized with the Holy Spirit by the Savior when he does appear. When we feel repentant and ~~and forgiven~~, then indeed we can be forgiven and Christ can be born in our hearts. Then we have a feeling, an experience, which is not demonstrable scientifically, but which is very real and very precious.

4. Advent can be a time of study and thinking and prayer which helps your Christian faith be a sustaining influence for cheer and good through every day of your life.

II. Communion, also, is a way of preparation for the coming of Christ.

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III. Communion, also, is a way of preparation for the coming of Christ.



1. We can find helpful significance in the way we observe Communion in our Church.

a. In the service we read prayers and Scripture and other words of the ritual which lift our thoughts from ourselves to God; which say that we place ourselves and all that we are in God's hands, because God has shown his love to us through Jesus Christ.

b. When we come to commune we kneel, or take some other reverent posture if our physical condition does not let us kneel. Kneeling symbolizes humility and submissiveness, and comes from ancient days when people kneeled submissively before a ruthless king who could have them killed if they did not please him. In kneeling at the altar of our God, we are saying that we submit to him, give ourselves to him, want to please him, are seeking new ways of living and relief from the strains of the rat race in which we must live so much.

c. When we kneel at the altar, we have a chance to shut our eyes and pray. Shutting eyes is the traditional way to pray anyway. It is to shut out sights which might

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c. When we kneel at the altar, we have a chance to shut our eyes and pray. Shutting eyes is the traditional way to pray anyway. It is to shut out sights which might



distract us from concentration on God and Christ that we close our eyes.

By shutting our eyes we are saying that we really want to put God first.

d. In at least these three ways in our service of Communion we prepare ourselves for the coming and recognition of our Lord Jesus.

2. There are four terms for Communion which we sometimes hear: Communion, The Lord's Supper, the Last Supper, and the Eucharist. Each of these terms has a ~~slightly~~ slightly different meaning from the others, and each gives us insight into the way that Communion can help us prepare for Christ's entry into ourselves.

a. The word "Communion" carries the idea of sharing together, in Christ's death and his resurrection.

b. the term "the Last Supper," stresses memory, the commemoration of Christ's death, a memorial of his suffering and death on the cross

c. The term "The Lord's Supper" tells us that Jesus is the host at the event, as he was at the original Lord's Supper. He confers the benefits, the spiritual sustenance, the pleasures, of the spiritual feast. The Lord's Supper is Christ present now, serving us.

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d. The term "Eucharist", used more by Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans and Catholics, literally means "to give thanks," and that is certainly a big impulse, a heartfelt feeling, when we experience Christ's presence, love and forgiveness in the sacrament of bread and wine.

### Conclusion:

1. Advent and Communion do seem to go together, don't you think? Both are times of preparation for the recognition of Christ as Lord and Savior. Advent prepares for the Christmas festival by insisting that we remember why Jesus came as a baby. Communion stresses personal commitment to the Christ Child.

2. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," these are words of Isaiah, quoted by John the Baptist and recorded by Mark, which tells us that we do need preparation for the greatest blessing of life, for Jesus Christ's entry into our hearts. Come to this Communion, and let him speak to you, let him be born in you, now.

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