

How deep and wide is the love of God! How does this dual message make you feel? Does it inspire to live in certain ways that reflect your appreciation for what God has done and is doing in your life? Meditate on these questions and write your reflections here.

Thursday, December 4

Read Isiah 9:1-7. Pastor Jack mentioned that the dual message of Isaiah and the Apostle Paul reflect our understanding in United Methodism of Prevenient Grace. God's prevenient grace is that grace that "goes before us." This means that God loves us, is forgiving and merciful toward us before we even are aware of God's existence! But God's grace doesn't end there. God's grace guides us toward our belief in God and the forgiveness made possible through Jesus the Christ. That is Justifying Grace. AND that grace continues to work within us that we continue to grow in our faith and relationship with God and others. That is Sanctifying Grace. Truly God's grace is wonderful. Give thanks to God as you meditate upon God's grace. Write your thoughts here.

Friday, December 5

It was mentioned early in the message that we will be looking for and experiencing "thin places" during *Our Advent Pilgrimage*. Think about your experiences during Advent in past years. Can you identify moments of experiencing God in special ways during Advent? What will you be looking for during this Season of Advent? How might you be proactive in seeking out your "thin places" during this Advent 2025? Meditate upon these questions and write your reflections here as you praise God for God's great grace!

Message Notes November 30, 2025

Our Advent Pilgrimage – Jerusalem and the First Temple *

- I. The primary difference between a journey and a pilgrimage is the _____ of the pilgrimage.
 - A. A pilgrimage, according to authors Andy Langford and Ann Langford Duncan "is a journey with fellow pilgrims to a new place in search of an _____ about one's own self, others, and God."
 1. Pilgrimages are meant to shape our _____ lives.
 2. Many pilgrimages are led by _____ or _____.
 - B. The destinations on Our Advent Pilgrimage are often described as "_____ places" where the boundary between the _____ and _____ worlds feels especially close or permeable.
- II. Our first mentor on this first week in Advent will be the _____ Prophet _____.
 - A. Isiah has _____ messages for us to consider on this first Sunday in Advent.
 1. The _____ of the Hebrew people is Isiah's first message as he attacked _____ social systems of his day.
 2. The second message is one of _____ and _____ through a long-awaited Messiah.
 - B. Isaiah was a _____ Prophet of the people of Israel for about 50 years beginning in _____ B.C.E.
 1. Despite and maybe because of the _____ of that time, Isaiah witnessed God's people turning away from God.
 2. But all is not lost and Isaiah also offered a _____

*Isaiah 9:1-7

message of _____, led by God's Anointed – the _____.

C. When the first Christians read Isaiah, they couldn't help but perceive that _____ had fulfilled Isaiah's vision; and we today _____ that vision!

III. One of the unique characteristics of our denomination is our views of God _____.
 A. preventient Grace means grace that _____ our relationship with God.
 B. Justifying Grace which is when we begin to _____ in God and _____ our lives with God's way.
 C. Sanctifying Grace which is the belief that God's grace _____ works in our lives.
 D. God doesn't forgive us when we're doing _____ and living life in a right relationship with God; no, God forgives us while we still _____ from God. That's preventient grace!

IV. One of the most important demonstrations of God's love: _____.
 A. At the heart of every service of Holy Communion is the Prayer of _____.
 B. Holy Communion may be a _____ to encounter the divine as we make Our Advent Pilgrimage.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, December 1

Andy Langford and Ann Langford Duncan – a clergy father and daughter team – is a journey with fellow pilgrims to a new place in search of an expanded understanding about one's own self, others, and God." (From their book. *Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus.*) Have you ever been on a pilgrimage? Maybe you

experienced a retreat as a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages can be both physical (a special place where you feel close to the divine) or experiential (reading the scriptures, prayer and meditation or singing a hymn or praise song). It is our hope that this year's Advent Message Series will be a pilgrimage. What are you looking forward to during this Season of Advent? What blessings are you anticipating? Meditate on these questions and write your thoughts here.

Tuesday, December 2

Pastor Jack mentioned that we will have Biblical mentors or guides on *Our Advent Pilgrimage*. This simply means that we will learn about the Biblical people who have experienced God in deep and meaningful ways. Perhaps you've had a mentor or guide to help you understand certain concepts or teachings. What were those experiences like for you? Maybe you've been a mentor or guide for others. Could God be calling you to be a mentor or guide for others during this Season of Advent? Maybe you could invite someone to *Our Advent Pilgrimage* and accompany them on their pilgrimage. Pray about this and share your faith with others! Write your ideas here.

Wednesday, December 3

Read Isaiah 9:1-7. The Hebrew Prophet, Isaiah, is our first guide on *Our Advent Pilgrimage*. Mentioned several times during the message, Isaiah's message was two-fold: a warning about the faithlessness of the Hebrew people and the promise of grace and mercy through the Anointed One of God – the Messiah. As strange as it may sound, these messages were offered simultaneously. This teaching is reflected in the Apostle Paul's writings when he wrote to the Romans, "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) God's love for us is so great that God's mercy and love is given us while we were still living in darkness and sin.