

Between Memory and Hope
Advent Worship Series - Week 3
...A Time for Restoration

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

The Memory of the First Advent

SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus,	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)
SB#107 – Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	D4-T9 (3 vs.)
SB#133 – Wonderful counselor HC#10 – The Light Has Come	TB-859 – The Light Has Come HC-10	HCD1-T10
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

Call to Worship:

They are often the quiet ones, unnoticed on earth but famous in Heaven. While the more flamboyant are figuring out new ways to get people to listen to them, the quiet ones are finding new places to listen to God. While the impatient demand their way immediately, the waiters allow God to bring His best in His time. God delights in taking the quiet ones into His confidence. The Almighty chose to share His greatest secret with one of His most patient waiters. His name was Simeon.

(From *Praise and Worship Study Bible*, page 1257)

Drama: Going, Going...

Prayer

Thank You for fulfilling the desire of Simeon's heart—not only did he see You, but he held You in his arms. And I thank You, Lord, that what Simeon waited a lifetime to see has been revealed for all who will open their eyes. You are the light of the world. You are the hope of salvation for all who believe.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1375)

The Hope of the Second Advent

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

Listen to the words of Isaiah:

Reader 1: Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Reader 2: A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isaiah 35:1-10 NIV)

Leader: Listen to the words of Matthew:

Reader 1: When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect

someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

Reader 2: This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:2-11 NIV)

Leader: Listen to the words of Revelation:

Reader1: Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book. (Revelation 22:7 NIV)

Reader 2: Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12 NIV)

Leader: Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

All: Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. (James 5:7-10 NIV)

SB#923 – God is with us, God is with Us	TB-394 - Austria	HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#260 – Lo! He comes with clouds descending	TB-402 – Helmsley TB-406 – Praise, my soul	No CD HTD2-T12 (3 vs.)
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11

Candle Lighting:

Reader 1: This is a day of Restoration.

Reader 2: As Jesus announced at the beginning of his ministry on earth the start of the Day of Restoration, so we announce the good news that he continues this salvation work.

Reader 1: See: All things in Christ are made new!

[Light the first three candles]

Reader 2: We light this third candle today as a symbol of Restoration.

Reader 1: We see today the flame as a burning, cleansing fire.

Reader 2: It is the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives that restores us.

Reader 1: See the fire, and know that God is strong and mighty to save, to ransom you from death.

Reader 2: See the flame, and know that God is faithful and true to renew your spirit to new life.

Reader 1: This is a day of Restoration.

HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come	HC-45	HCD3-T15
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Prayer:

[Piano continues to play chorus]

Lord, refresh me today. Restore to me the joy of my salvation, and renew a right spirit within me. Help me to heed Your call to come away from the activities of the day and to sit quietly in Your presence and commune with You. I believe the words of the prophets, and I rejoice in the vision of Your coming kingdom—a world without war, filled with a people who walk in the light of their Lord. Darkness, hatred and pain will be forgotten. Desperation and loss will be forever wiped away in the joy and comfort of Your presence. O God, I thank You, bless You and praise You for Your sure promise, and I look forward with longing toward its glorious fulfillment (*The NIV Worship Bible*, pages 900, 914, 1394)

Message – The Signs of Restoration

SB#262 - Love divine, all loves excelling	TB-361 – Blaenwern TB-318 – Burning, Burning	HTD5-T3 (3 vs.) HTD1-T15 (3 vs. – band ending)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#62 – The Lord’s my shepherd	TB-68 – Crimond	HTD6-T6 (4 vs.)
SB#742 – When shall I come	TB-564 – At Thy Feet	No CD
SB#301 – He wills that I should holy be	TB-875 – The Wonderful Cross (Boston)	HTD1-T4 (4 vs.)
SB#482 - We’re all seeking	HC-8	HCD1_T8

With an Ear for the Trumpet

Benediction:

Looking to the end, we remember our beginning. You have been there all along. You are Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the starting point and the destination of life. We long for the day of Your return, Lord Jesus. Come to us. Abide with us. Feed us and heal us. Cleanse us and possess us. Refresh us and sustain us. Live in us and reign through us. We give You praise, our glorious Lord and Savior, as we wait restlessly for Your return.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1683)

Vocal Benediction – SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is King	TB-200 – Darwalls	HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11
SB#260 – Lo! He comes with clouds descending	TB-402 – Helmsley TB-406 – Praise, my soul	No CD HTD2-T12 (3 vs.)
SB#1025 – For Thine is the Kingdom,	TB-618 – same	HTD3-T13 (1 vs.)

Week #3	
DRAMA	
Going, Going, . . .	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
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Scripture:	Luke 2:21-35
Synopsis:	After endless years of waiting for the consolation of Israel, Simeon is ready to move on to the next phase of his life – death.
Characters:	Simeon – an elderly man Thurston J. Osgood – director of Levi’s House of Eternity
Props/Costumes:	A row of chairs (or any other reasonable facsimile) to simulate a casket.
Setting:	The inside of Levi’s House of Eternity.
Running Time:	3:00 minutes.

[*Thurston is walking around tidying up when Simeon enters.*]

Thurston: Good evening and welcome to Levi’s House of Eternity. My name is Thurston Jefferson Osgood. How may I help you?

Simeon: I’d like to look at a casket.

Thurston: Well you’ve come to the right place. Levi’s House of Eternity prides itself on supplying all of Jerusalem with everything a dying man could ever want or need.

Simeon: I just need a casket. [*walks over to casket*] Something like this.

Thurston: That is one of our entry-level models. I’m sure that a man of your standing would want . . .

Simeon: [*ignores Thurston and climbs “into” casket and lies down*] Nope. This will do just fine.

Thurston: Please sir, I’ll have to ask you to step out of the merchandise. That particular piece is already scheduled for the inevitable termination of Matthew of Bethany.

Simeon: But it’s so comfortable.

Thurston: Yes, well we’d like to think that all of our models are simply to . . . ahem, die for.

Simeon: *[sits up and climbs out]* Pretty catchy slogan. Do you have any more just like this?

Thurston: I'm sure we do have some of the Model 2350 plain, but wouldn't you like to take a look at our entire selection?

Simeon: Not really. See, I don't have a lot of time and I'd like to take care of things as quickly as possible.

Thurston: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Are you terminally ill?

Simeon: No.

Thurston: I see. Have death threats been made against you?

Simeon: No.

Thurston: I don't understand, then. How do you know you don't have much time left?

Simeon: I've seen the consolation of Israel.

Thurston: I beg your pardon?

Simeon: I've seen the consolation of Israel; just like I was promised.

Thurston: I see. And just what exactly is this consolation of Israel? Did we come second in some race or something?

Simeon: No, the consolation of Israel is the Messiah. And I've seen him with my own eyes.

Thurston: And now you must die because you're a sinful man.

Simeon: Yes. No! I'm going to die because I'm old; really old. But the Holy Spirit promised me I would not die until I saw the consolation of Israel.

Thurston: So now that you've seen him it's "Good-bye, Charlie?"

Simeon: No, Simeon. My name is Simeon.

Thurston: Okay, so "Good-bye Simeon." So when's this little expiration thing going to happen?

Simeon: I don't know. It could be any time.

Thurston: Okay, but we close in 45 minutes.

Simeon: I don't think it will be that soon. I just want everything to be ready.

Thurston: Well, let's go into the office and we'll fill out all the paper work. [*they start to exit as they finish their lines*] By the way, how long have you been waiting for this consolation thing?

Simeon: About sixty years.

Thurston: So was it worth it?

Simeon: I'd gladly do it all over again.

Thurston: What did it look like?

Simeon: It looked like a beautiful baby boy. The cutest little baby you ever did see.

[*Blackout*]

Between Memory and Hope
...A Time for Restoration
Advent Sermon – Week 3

“The Signs of Restoration”

Imagine waking up one wintry weekday morning to see all around you – everywhere you looked – things that once were dead coming to life. You walk along a well-worn path through the woods, and see in your wake grass and flowers spring to life. You make a frosty boat trip through a polluted lake, and see fish and water plants leaping up through fresh water. You climb over and through the rubble of an abandoned section of a city, and amazingly, brick and mortar rise to create whole buildings as you pass.

What is happening? In the dead of winter it is spring – it is greater than spring. It is something amazing and impossible. It is the restoration of all that once was good and right. But see! We are to live lives that are every bit as transforming as that. Instead of adapting to death, we are to be bringing along with us an atmosphere of life that changes and restores life to what has been dying and forgotten.

John the Baptist asked a singular question. He had to hope of the Advent of Messiah, when the world would be restored to God’s intended creation. And so he asked if Jesus was this One, or if we all should keep waiting, and keep looking.

But instead of giving him a straight answer, Jesus’ reply forced John to consider the evidence. Jesus’ answer forces us to ask the question he wanted John to consider. Just what are the signs of restoration? He points us all back to Isaiah, to say that the signs are that healing is underway: on the world, on God’s people (as a whole), and on individuals – this salvation is here! And he also says that signs of restoration include proclaiming this good news.

One of our Christmas story characters was open to this news. His name was Simeon. He was there, waiting, expecting, looking for Messiah, when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple for his dedication. It had been years of waiting for the “hope of Israel,” and on that day, Simeon saw. Simeon knew. The time of restoration had begun. Simeon believed.

But many others did not. They did not see with the eyes of a man like Simeon. And in some ways, the people of God are still disbelieving that Messiah has come, that the restoration of the world is for real and for us: we are still looking. Many are now waiting for the Second Advent. We read and mentally process the facts of what was happening in John’s time. We read that blind were given new sight; that lame people were able to walk; that the impure were made clean; and that the deaf were given new hearing. We even think we get it when we read about them proclaiming the good news.

Somehow it all seems rather remote in time. It’s as if this restoration was intended to be limited to the early Church. Or worse, we try to replicate these physical healings to

become an “authentic Church” in our actions. Most simply are content to pray fervently for the Second Advent to renew our world.

But what if we read these signs of restoration for the principle behind them? What if we understood the larger picture as a way of telling us that Messiah’s presence – God with us – means a reversal of all that is dead? Do you remember the Bible stories about reversing death? Micro-resurrections, I call them. A daughter, a brother: dead to the world, family and friends already were beginning to adapt to death. But the presence of Messiah brought a reversal: a restoration of life.

How would that principle look in our world, today? What are some micro-resurrections that we could point to as signs of restoration? Instead of talking about the blind, the lame, the deaf, how about: bankruptcies cleared! totaled cars like new! immigrants treated like human beings! women in ministry no longer denied!

And what about the part about proclaiming the good news? I think it’s not a matter of preaching or teaching. Rather, like the disciples, it’s a matter of practicing: of living out the good news.

We are to live lives that are in themselves transforming. We are not to be satisfied with merely struggling with circumstances; not simply compromising with the structure of evil, or with a system that brings death. We are to be agents of transformation. We are to be radiating out a different spirit and attitude that itself begins to change the atmosphere around us. This spirit, of course, is the Spirit of God in Christ.

Where there is injustice, we live justly. Where there is unrighteousness, we live rightly. Where there is no mercy, we live mercifully. To proclaim the good news is to live the good news. When John asked Jesus if the world was experiencing the advent of Messiah, Jesus showed him the answer.

Where Jesus walked, new life sprang up where death had once prevailed. What should we – as followers of Christ – be leaving in our wake as we walk through the valley of the shadows today?

I think Isaiah 35.8-10 points the way. These verses at the end of our Old Testament text present us with pictures of the way *through* death. It is the way prepared and transformed by the presence of Messiah. “And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness.” The Way of Holiness. The manner in which we conduct our lives is to be in the pattern set by the Lord. The way we live is to be a reflection of his holiness. It is the call of John the Baptist, prior to the First Advent.

It is the call we can hear even today, prior to the Second Advent. It is the Restoration Way of Living that is laid out by the life of Jesus. First, we see that Isaiah speaks of the Lord’s return for the ransomed. To ransom is to rescue from death by paying the ransom price. “The once-deserted land” is now alive, with living water.

From the very beginning of his ministry, we see that Jesus was all about ransom: restoring and renewing that which is dead. And he accomplished this by the sacrifice of his own body. His own person. That gift was for us, now, today – the gift of the presence of God in Christ – in us.

That is how we do it in these in-between times. That is what our life and ministry should be about. Inasmuch as the presence of Christ is seen in us, the power of his resurrection can be felt and experienced – by us and through us by others. It begins with faithful action: action that redeems, ransoms, restores.

Between memory and hope is a time for restoration.
What will *you* leave behind where you walk today?

BETWEEN MEMORY AND HOPE
...A TIME FOR RESTORATION
Advent Worship Series - Week 3

Children's Message

“Set them free!”

Have any of you ever been lost? Or have any of you ever been trapped or caught somewhere when you couldn't get yourself out?

Pretend for a moment that we were planning a running and chase game. There are two teams: a group that is chasing, and a group that is running away. Some of you will be caught, and once caught, you will be held by the other team until some of your own team members come to rescue you. But what happens if everybody on your team is captured?

Now, I know that the some of you are bigger and stronger than the others. You might be saying to yourself, “I could get myself out of any trouble.” And that might be true! The strong don't always need help. But what about the weaker or the smaller ones? Who is there to help them?

If I were to come and help one team – the ones being chased – I know where I'd start. I would come to help out the smallest ones first, the weaker ones, and also the ones who had been captured the longest.

Well, when Jesus came to announce help for those who were hurting, he wasn't talking about any game. He was talking about real life. About the kind of hurt that comes from the pain of sin in our lives, sometimes from other people who are stronger or more powerful than we are.

When Jesus comes into your life, he sets you free. He gives you an inner strength that no outside power can defeat. And he gives us the promise of being with us always. Jesus has come – and he says, “Set them free!”

Prayer

Between Memory and Hope
Advent Worship Series - Week 3
...A Time for Restoration

Supplemental Materials

Invocation

How blessed is the one whose Savior is the Lord! We lift up our voices to you, O Lord of the Ages, and declare our faith in you. For you lift up the lowly, heal the hurting, and satisfy the hungry.

We come to you today in faithful anticipation. Restore, to those who are lost, a place in your Kingdom, O God, we pray. Amen.

Benediction¹

“Let nothing disturb thee, nothing fright thee;
All things are passing, God never changeth!
Patient endurance attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth in nothing is wanting;
Alone God sufficeth.”
God and proclaim the good news!

A Prayer for the Day²

(Pastoral Prayer, alternate Invocation or Benediction, or after the Candle Lighting)

“Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory now and for ever. Amen.”

Offertory Prayer

O God, our Redeemer, we can bring to you only as you have given to us. You have given to us the blessing of true life, and we worship you with these our gifts, and by the dedication of our lives in service to others, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Accept this offering of praise, we pray. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in the gospel, the message of God’s redemptive word, revealed fully in Jesus Christ and soundly preserved in the whole of Scripture by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God wills the salvation of society as well as of individuals and that the Kingdom of God is to come in all its fullness in this life, on earth, and that eternal life awaits all who have turned to God in repentant faith.

¹ Teresa of Avila, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: S/A song #956.

² From *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime*, compiled by Phyllis Tickle. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

We believe in the Holy Spirit who makes us new creatures. He sanctifies us, builds us up in Christ and keeps us in communion with all believers who await faithfully the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Salvation Story Study Guide, pp. 129, 124, 126

Call to Worship

Leader: Happy are those whose help and hope is in the Lord.

Response: Our help rests in you, O God.

Leader: The one who made heaven, and earth,
the sea and all things in the sea,
the one who executes justice for the oppressed,
and gives food to the hungry.

Response: Our help rests in you, O God.

Leader: The one who sets the prisoners free,
and opens the eyes of the blind.
The one who lifts up those who are bowed down,
and watched over the strangers.

Response: We come hoping, O God. Help us. Amen.

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Scripture Study

Restoration

The readings for this Sunday point us to the reality of the rich blessings poured out on the world at the first coming of our Lord, even as they point us to an even fuller expression of that kingdom reality in the future second coming. In this in-between time, we can experience a renewal of God's spirit in our lives; a strengthening of the weak; freedom and relief for the captive and burdened; mercy, grace, and bounty given to those who have been brought low and are hungry. To those who suffer still, the call is given to be patient and trust in the Lord.

Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet's hope for restoration includes the physical world: all creation will experience the renewal of salvation in that promised advent of Messiah.

James 5:7-10

Using the farmer's patient faith as an example, the writer urges those who are still suffering to take courage in the sure coming of the Lord. Many others in the course of time have suffered, and remained faithful: hold on, endure!

Matthew 11:2-11

As a sign that the promised Kingdom inauguration is real, the word goes out that the prophet's [Isaiah's] signs of restoration have begun: the healing is underway, and the good news is being proclaimed. Those who receive the Promised One will be blessed with the saving restoration of God's presence.

For a call-to-worship or benediction:

Psalm 146:5-10

Part of a hymn: to the eternal creator God, who promises also to bring justice to the oppressed and captive, and healing and nourishment to those in need.

An alternate reading

Luke 1:47-55

Like the Psalm, a hymn of praise to God: who restores the fortunes of those once laid low. God remembers his promises!