

Advent: It's the most wonderful time of the year

Don't you just love Advent? There's something truly wonderful about this season.

Advent doesn't ask us to repent in the way Lent does. It doesn't inspire us to rejoice as Easter does. It doesn't educate us in Jesus' ministry and work, as Ordinary Time does.

Advent simply nudges us to make space in our lives for Jesus. It assures us that the Son of God is coming. It asks us to prepare to welcome Him in, but it doesn't give us a list of what we need to accomplish along the way.

Instead, Advent invites us on a candlelit journey through the darkness of winter. With hope and joy and love, Advent is full of anticipation and promise. It asks us to watch and prepare and follow a star.

Christmas is this extraordinary act of unconditional love from our Father in Heaven. We are a fallen world of sinners who turn our backs on Him again and again. But God loves us so, so deeply that He sends His own Son—God become Man—to earth.

Our Father knows how the story ends. He knows the pain and suffering that lie ahead. He knows humanity will let Him down yet again.

But His love for us is so deep, so complete, so absolute, that He sends us Jesus. He gives us the greatest gift he can give, His only Son, who will redeem the world.

And what a gift.

The Christ Child isn't a gift just to Mary and Joseph or the shepherds or the three wise men or the people who encountered him 2,000 years ago. He is a gift to me and to you.

And, as we await Jesus' birth, Advent offers its own gift.

This precious time allows us a chance to find a way to travel toward Jesus, wherever

we are in our spiritual journey. We may be like Joseph, faithful and loyal and loving. We may be like the wise men, full of knowledge and ready with carefully chosen gifts. We may be like the shepherds, called out of the fields by the angels without any preparation at all.

We can listen for the angels. We can look for the star. And we can trust that wherever we are on our faith journey, those stable doors will be open to us. We can arrive in Bethlehem on Christmas morning just as we are—and Jesus will be overjoyed to see us.

That's the beauty of Advent.