

Advent 2018: Yahweh is our righteousness



Righteousness?!

We live in an era steeped in self-righteous anger and hyperpolarization of right and wrong. Why would we choose *righteousness* as the theme for a season of anticipating joy, peace, and love?

An unscientific sample of Assembly folk found that *righteousness* is rather easily classified and then dismissed as a “Bible word” we rarely use otherwise, and that it mostly means the same thing as *justice*. One astute Assemblyite noted that in the Old Testament, to be a righteous person seems to refer to trying to act justly, rather than a narrow definition of people as *right* or *wrong*.

Maybe Yahweh’s dream for us is to live righteously, striving for just actions and relationships that face us toward Yahweh. If so, that is something to await and work toward.

The first lectionary passage of the season, proposed in churchwide worship materials as the Advent theme this year, is Jeremiah 33:14-16, which ends with the phrase “Yahweh is our righteousness.”

Maybe the work of Advent is to watch together for signs of incarnation, of Yahweh’s righteousness growing in us, around us, and beyond us. Perhaps together, in spite of pervasive turmoil, we can nurture hope, love, joy, peace, justice, and restoration.

Advent is a time for us to remember where Jesus enters God’s story, which is also our story, and to puzzle out what it means for us to live righteously in a world seized by fear and greed. Yahweh is still the ultimate example of right-ness and goodness in the world, and now Yahweh is revealed to us in human form, in Jesus. Through the embodied example of Jesus, and the women and men who surrounded him, Yahweh shows us an example of how to live righteously in a weary, flawed world.



Sunday morning overview

Dec. 2: Awaiting Righteousness

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36
Sermon: Ted Koontz; Second hour: Indoor labyrinth

Dec. 9: Awaiting Peace

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6
Sermon: Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president; Second hour: Messiah sing-along
Fellowship meal

Dec. 16: Awaiting Justice and Joy

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18
Sermon: Karl Shelly, co-pastor; Second hour: extended sharing time

Dec. 23: Awaiting Restoration

Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)
Sermon: Anna Yoder Schlabach, co-pastor; Second hour: carol singing

Dec. 30: Love Revealed

Breakfast potluck at 9:30am followed by worship; no Sunday school
1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41
Lessons and Carols

Jan. 6: Light Revealed

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
Stories of Light



Along with righteousness, you may wish to watch for these:

We will look for changing symbols of incarnation in a banner made by late Assembly member Beth Miller “Signs of Salvation” (1994).

Keep an eye on the Assemblyline for information about these events:

Dec. 15: Advent spiral (a labyrinth-like experience for children)

Dec. 21: Longest Night service (a simple service that acknowledges the darkness within and without)

Dec. 24: Christmas eve service (a soup and bread supper with a short program)

There will be no impromptu oral announcements during Advent, so please submit announcements to the Assemblyline and read each week’s edition to stay updated.

Throughout these weeks, we will sample songs proposed for the forthcoming hymnal Voices Together. There is so much marvelous music for this season, both familiar and new, that we will start singing a little before 9:30am each week. Let the music draw you into worship.

Assembly’s Advent planners were drawn to the text of Noche Anunciada, a selection in the new hymnal, in both the original Spanish text by Felix Cesar Luna and an English translation by Adam M.L. Tice. Those who speak both languages will note the differences in the translations:

*Noche anunciada, noche de amor, Dios ha nacido, pétalo y flor.
Todo es silencio y serenidad, paz en la tierra, es Navidad.*

*Night long awaited, God comes to earth; blooming like roses, love given birth.
Still in the starlight, silent and clear, peace comes among us; Christmas is here.*

*En el pesebre, mi Redentor, es mensajero de paz y amor.
Cuando sonrío se hace la luz y en sus bracitos se hace una cruz.*

*Sleep in a manger, safe and adored. All that is broken shall be restored.
Light for our shadows, grace for our loss; born of our dying; bearing our cross.*

*Ésta es la noche que prometió, Dios a los pueblos y ya llegó.
Es Nochebuena, no hay que dormir, Dios ha nacido, Dios está aquí.*

*Now is God’s promise born in the night; wake to its fullness; live in its light.
Christ comes among us; people, draw near! Come to the manger; Christmas is here.*