



WEEK 1 – HOME ALONE (HOPE)

Sunday – Mark 13:24-37

Advent in a pandemic looks very different. Although we look forward to being home for Christmas, we've already been "sheltering at home" for a long time, and we may be lonely. It might even seem scary, like Jesus' warning about the end of the world in Mark 13.

THINK: What signs do you look for that hint that better times might be coming? (13:28-29)

PRAY: Lord, as we wait for you to light up our world, help us to be at home and at peace, and help us to be wide awake to watch for your signs of hope. Amen.

DO: Watch the "Home Alone" movie (1990, PG). What scares or worries Kevin? What helps him feel safe? Does he get help from unexpected places? Do you ever feel forgotten? What helps you feel love?



Monday – Isaiah 64:1-9

Advent is traditionally a season of preparation. Just as the people of ancient times desperately waited for God to send a redeemer, we prepare ourselves once again to celebrate and welcome the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet preparation requires acknowledging where we have fallen short, and letting God reshape us.

THINK: Imagine that you are clay and God is the potter giving you shape. (64:8) What lumps and flaws would you like God to fix? What new shape would you like as God re-forms your life?

PRAY: God, all have sinned and fallen short of your hope for us. Yet we know that we are still your people, and your steadfast love endures. Come to us once again, loving God. Amen.

DO: Choose one thing to change about your life. Make a plan to work on it this week.

Tuesday – Psalm 80:1-7,17-19

This ancient prayer describes God two very different ways: as high as a king enthroned in heaven, and as humble as a farmer in the middle of a muddy field of animals. The prayer asks for God's forgiveness and begs God to come intervene in human history, saving us from ourselves.

THINK: What has made you sad this year? Do you feel like people have laughed at you?

PRAY: "Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved." Amen.

DO: Watch the Christmas special, "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer." Why did the other reindeer make fun of Rudolph? What special gift does Rudolph have, what does he learn about himself, and how does he help in the end?

Wednesday – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Paul greets the Christians at Corinth, letting them know how grateful he is for them. They have great spiritual gifts, which strengthen them as they wait for Christ to be revealed.

THINK: What gifts have you been given, and how do they help you, or others, during this waiting time?

PRAY: God, we know you are faithful, and so we wait with confident hope for Jesus Christ. Although we may be separated by the pandemic, help us to use our gifts to strengthen the fellowship we have with family, friends, and our church. Amen.

DO: Use one of your gifts – baking, drawing, calling, fixing, ?? – to encourage someone else today.

Thursday – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Humans aren't made to be alone. We need friends and family to pick us up when we fall down, to help us stand strong, and to persevere. God intends for us to have strong relationships (see also Genesis 2:18-23).

THINK: Who do you turn to when you need support? Who do you know you can count on?

PRAY: Bind us together, Lord, with cords that cannot be broken. Even when we are apart, help us to remember and pray for one another. Remind us to reach out to others and share your love. Amen.

DO: Call someone who might be feeling lonely and visit with them.

Friday – Matthew 1:1-6... 16-17

Jesus was the son of God, but he had a human family as well. Mary, his mother, and Joseph, his adopted father, were both Jewish people descended from Abraham. Jesus was a continuation of the story of God's people, just as the story of Jesus and God's people continues in our lives today.

THINK: Do you recognize some of the names of the men and women in this list? What were their stories? What does it mean that they are part of Jesus' family?

PRAY: Lord, thank you for our families. They shape who we are and help us understand how the world works. Help us to remember that you are part of our family too. Amen.

DO: Get out a photo or scrapbook and tell some stories about your family members.

Sing-along Saturday – “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” (UMH 218, <https://youtu.be/AkjH7sowY4U>)

This carol recalls the angels' Christmas message of “Peace upon earth and good will to all” (Luke 2:14). Pay attention to verse 3 and 4, which remind us that though life's load may seem hard, God has promised better days to come.

THINK: Does the world need to be quiet and peaceful to hear this message of peace, or can it cut through the babble of human busy-ness and the bright lights and brazen carols of the commercial holiday?

PRAY: Holy Spirit, loosen our tongues and hearts. May we sing with the angels of God's promised peace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

DO: Who or where in your life are things not peaceful? Make a change as we prepare for Christmas.