

December 1, 2024

# Jesus Is the Reason

Colossians 1:15-23

During the first few days of Advent, Kathy King drove by a house that had burned down. She didn't know the family who lived there, but each day she drove by, she saw them trying to save as many of their belongings as possible. One day, something different caught her eye. "Leaning up against a column that still stood was a large painted board. The words painted on it said 'Jesus is the reason for the season.' . . . This family was witnessing through a sign leaning up against a destroyed home to remind us what really matters: Jesus. Nothing in that house, none of our presents this season—nothing—is more important than Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

In this season of waiting, it's easy to become swept away by the glittering lights, festive songs, and holiday preparations. Yet amid the busyness, we are called to pause and remember that we celebrate because Jesus is the reason. Each day, we feel the tension between the Christmas rush and the contemplative call of Advent. We are called to lean into this season of preparation and to reflect on the joy that is promised in the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us.

In her late twenties, Hannah Strayer spent two Christmases without family, stockings, trees, lights, or cookies fresh out of the oven. She went to Togo, Africa, where it is hot and there is no chance of a white Christmas. Although her time spent in Togo was nothing like Christmases at home with her family, she understood that "'holiday cheer' was not what the angels came to announce." Instead, "the real joy they spoke of [was] the reason [she was] in Togo" as a missionary. She encourages us to "sit back and reflect on our own 'Jesus is the reason for the season' statements" and figure out if our "actions, attitudes, and thoughts . . . put Jesus at the center of [our] Christmas celebration."<sup>2</sup>

Paul writes that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15). This verse centers our focus on Jesus not as a fleeting symbol of the season but as the eternal Savior who holds all creation together. As we enter Advent, we're invited on a journey marked by anticipation, reflection, and preparation for Christ's coming. In Colossians 1:15-23, Paul reminds us to remain "well established and rooted in faith," especially during Advent, a season that demands patience and spiritual endurance.

The commercialization of Christmas can pull us away from the heart of the Gospel and the reason we should be celebrating. But in the flurry of December's distractions, may we be anchored in the reality of Christ's lordship. The gifts we give and the traditions we share should point back to the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ. His birth ushered in a hope that transforms our lives, and he is the foundation of our faith, which is worth celebrating!

How can we honor Jesus as the reason for the season this year and every year? By placing Him first in our celebrations, sharing the hope of the Gospel with others, and allowing his love to guide our actions. Let's keep Jesus at the center of our hearts and lives, not just during Advent but throughout the year.

1. What distracts you during Advent? How do you resist the temptation to get caught up in the material aspects of Christmas while remaining rooted in Christ?
2. How does Advent prepare you to celebrate Christmas?
3. How can we ensure that our actions, attitudes, and thoughts keep Jesus at the center of our Christmas celebrations?

<sup>1</sup>From "Faith Stories: A Message for Advent and Christmas," by Kathy King, St. John's United Methodist Church.

<sup>2</sup>From "Advent Meditation: The Reason for the Season," by Hannah Strayer, Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (December 1, 2021).

Written by the *Adult Bible Studies* team.