

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Word: blessings for a new beginning *adapted from *A Sanctified Art Advent Series, 2024*

Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare our homes and our hearts to celebrate Christmas once again, when the birth of Jesus ushered in a new age; new ways of living and loving with hope, joy, and purpose. Advent is a journey toward this new beginning. And like on any journey, we need reminders, words of blessing that feel like steady ground as we step forward into the unknown.

Join us this Advent as we return to the familiar scriptures and traditions that root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. You are a blessing, we can't go alone, hope is always worth the risk, and love knows your name.

As you journey through this season, may you find words for courage and hope to begin again as we look forward to celebrating the ultimate Word coming to us; the Emmanuel, God with us.

Message Description:

The Gospel of Luke introduces John the Baptist as a key player in the birth of Jesus and in his ministry to come. He is not the Messiah, but he paves the way for the One who will baptize with water and spirit. He does the good that is his to do. John harshly denounces the perpetrators of economic disparities, but he also provides them paths for redemption—for even they have good that is theirs to do. In this week's story, it's significant that we hear the same question asked three times, as this is a question we often ask ourselves: "What, then, should I do?" Sometimes we may be too daunted by the enormity of the world's problems to respond. However, we need to be reminded that small, ordinary actions add up. You can't solve all the world's problems, but you can do something that matters. We must trust that we each have something to offer and that other parts of the community will bring what we cannot. What is yours to do?

Key Scripture: Luke 3:1-17; Isaiah 58

Questions based on this week's teaching:

1. Our world, lives, churches, and communities are weighed down by problems that can feel too big to solve. How do you combat helplessness and powerlessness?
2. What is an example of bearing "fruit worthy of repentance"? The Greek word for "repentance" is *metanoia*, which means to turn, or change one's mind. In what ways can bearing fruit turn you in a new direction? How might you begin again and plant seeds for good fruit to grow?
3. In his book, *You Are Changing the World: Whether You Like It Or Not*, author David LaMotte proposes two questions for discerning what is yours to do. The first is, "What is bugging you?" What frustrates, enrages, or persistently tugs at you? Some callings are born from the need to make something right. A corollary question is, "What inspires you?" LaMotte adds: "What do you see happening in the world that makes you sit up a bit straighter and feel a little more hopeful about the human race?" After responding to either of these questions, the next thing to ask is, "What small thing can I do about it?" How do you respond to these questions today? **[Listen to his TedX Talk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDHrgQ5Nml4>]**