



NEW DAY COMMUNITY CHURCH



Advent Devotion Guide



**BASED ON THE BOOK, THE HEART THAT
GREW THREE SIZES BY MATT RAWLE
FINDING FAITH IN THE STORY OF
THE GRINCH**



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First Week of Advent

When Everything is Wrong

Monday: "The story tells us that the Grinch hates Christmas. The Grinch wasn't just having a bad day. It's not that he received an awkward present under the tree or somehow missed an invitation to a Christmas party. He HATED Christmas. In the same way, the season of Advent beings in the church not with joyous celebration, but with the reality of sin and suffering in our world. The season of Advent starts with an unapologetic dive into suffering, and there is a strange tension between the words we hear from Scripture and the decorations we see. The suffering we read about of God's people somehow does not fit the lights, tree, garland and bows."

Tuesday: Read Isaiah 64: 1-2, 6-7

Wednesday: "Is it wrong to hate? Maybe it depends on what you hate. Through Amos, the Lord also says, 'Hate evil, love good' (Amos 5:15a). It seems to counter the Christmas message to mention the word hate, but if we light candles of peace, hope, love and joy, all that light is meant to dispel something. Lighting the candle of peace means we hate war. Shining a hopeful light means we hate despair's shade. A worshipful joy should stamp out our mourning, and the candle of love reminds us that 'love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good' (Romans 12:9)."

Thursday: Read Amos 5: 21, 23-24

Friday: "Have you ever experienced unmet expectations? The Grinch, too, experiences unmet expectations when the outcome of his plan to steal Christmas falls short. Gabriel's announcement to Mary went against Mary's expectation. Yet, unmet expectations are the very thing we need. The birth of God's Son to a poor Galilean woman was not what anyone expected. Her laying him in a manger was not expected either. And yet the manger is the throne of God, and it is disarming."

Saturday: Read Luke 1: 26-29

Second Week of Advent

When Christmas Isn't Christmas

Monday: "Jesus's birth is God's in-breaking into creation to 'preach good news to the poor....release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed' (Luke 4:18b). According to Isaiah, the coming Messiah will be known as the Prince of Peace. The peace that Jesus offers is not a means of control or oppression, yet it's celebrated because there is no conflict. This holy peace is a true reconciliation between God and humanity, and neighbor to neighbor. It is being at peace with one's self even when all the toys have been put away and the decorations removed. That is the kind of peace that Jesus comes to bring and it goes far deeper and involves far more than the usual trappings of the Christmas season. This kind of peace is something even the Grinch cannot steal."

Tuesday: Read Luke 1: 51-53, Isaiah 9: 6-7

Wednesday: "Could it be that the Grinch might know more about the Christmas story than the Whos? Could it be that his frustration is that the Whos have been missing the point of the season all along? He lives alone on Mt. Crumpit and never seems to be invited to the party. Their perceived lack of hospitality certainly doesn't fit our Christmas story. The Grinch is other. He is an outsider. With all of the merriment and singing, his loneliness must sting. What if God is even working through one whose heart is two sizes too small? What if it's been our heart all along that needed to grow?"

Thursday: Read Zechariah 7: 9-10

Friday: "Hope offers a different narrative than what your eyes see and ears hear. This is why Isaiah is so important. Isaiah offers hope during a time of war and conflict. 'A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots' (Isaiah 11:1). It is not just any shoot. It is not just any leader. This new shoot, or Nazareth, will have the spirit of the Lord resting upon him. This shoot will know wisdom, not just information. He will have understanding, not just data. He will judge by what the eye sees and what the ears hear. He will not just offer the word of God but will be the poetry of God, because the ordered lines between humanity and the divine will be blurred in his person, so that where one ends and the other begins will be indistinguishable. Let us seek peace so we know for what to hope. Peace brings us into hope, and that hope shows us an everlasting peace."

Saturday: Read Isaiah 11: 1-9

Third Week of Advent

When Light Shines

Monday: "Darkness is an interesting thing. The absence of light can help hide things we don't want people to see and obscure the things to which we'd rather not call attention, but darkness isn't altogether bad. Our other senses are heightened when our eyes have to take a less dominant role. Maybe this is why Luke records that Jesus was born in the evening. (Luke 2: 8-9). Maybe the glory of the Lord accompanying the angel seemed just a bit brighter and even more noticeable to the shepherds in the dark. It's not that darkness isn't necessary to see light, but darkness certainly makes light more noticeable."

Tuesday: Read Luke 2: 8-15

Wednesday: "When the Grinch begins shoving the Who family's Christmas tree into the chimney at night, he notices young Cindy Lou Who standing and watching him. She asks why the Grinch is taking the tree away. Without so much as a blink, the Grinch says that the lights on one side of the tree aren't working, and he's taking the tree to his workshop where he will fix it up and bring it back. A Christmas tree with broken lights is like a Grinch with a heart two sizes too small. The Grinch still has a heart. It's just not big enough to be much good. There's something missing."

Thursday: Read John 1: 1-10

Friday: "The Grinch is sure that he will be successful in his attempt to ruin the Whos' Christmas. He momentarily stops pushing the gifts off the mountaintop in order to hear the lamenting wails he is sure are about to radiate from the town below. But there's something startling in the Grinch's story. His curious listening momentarily stops his awful idea. As he intently listens for the disappointed Whos, he forgets to nudge the gifts over the mountain's edge. The Grinch's own sureness of success leads to his own failure to erase any sign of Christmas. Or could it be that somewhere, deep down in his small heart, he's unknowingly looking for a reason not to follow through? Could it be that God is at work even in the Grinches of our lives, even in the Grinch within each of us? When they wait, they leave room for the Holy Spirit to keep the toys on the cliff's edge, the gifts that will eventually become the vehicle through which they find peace and reconciliation."

Saturday: Read Luke 1: 26-38

Fourth Week of Advent

When Joy Is Our Song

Monday: "Something was terribly missing from the Grinch as well. He stands on the mountaintop listening for the lamentations that he knew would follow when the Whos discovered his wonderful, awful idea. But when he listens, he hears singing. He's heard the Whos sing before, and it was noise to him; but this time it stirs his soul, and it makes his heart tremble. Why? What song could they possibly sing that would be so powerful to even transform the heart of the Grinch? We don't know what the Whos sang, but we should rightly imagine that it wasn't a sweet Christmas carol about reindeer or snow. It was probably a song that spoke a deep and profound truth, a song that you can't help but sing when you wake up to find that everything you have is gone. 'Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?'"

Tuesday: Read Psalm 136

Wednesday: "At the end of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, we see that the Grinch, the outsider, the other, the one who should be feared and excluded, was the one who is now at the head of the table, carving the roast beast, as they all sit together in table fellowship. Not only does it seem that all things are forgiven, but the Whos have given the Grinch a seat of honor! Something beautiful has taken place, and how perfect it is that enemies are now around the same table sharing a meal, with the least of these at the head of the table. The true insight of this story is the joy of reconciliation."

Thursday: Read Micah 5: 2-5a

Friday: "Joy is the steadfast assurance that God is with us. God is with us yesterday, today, and tomorrow. One of the most profound things about our Advent discipline is peace, hope, love and joy's relationship with time. Advent is a season when we prepare for something that has already happened. The experience of time is part of creation. Time is simply God's way of making sure everything doesn't happen at once. Why was Jesus born when he was? Scripture says, 'When the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law' (Galatians 4:4). Jesus was born when time was full. Time itself needed to be unburdened. This points to the mystery of joy: joy is timeless."

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

The Heart That Grew Three Sizes

Saturday: Read Luke 2: 1-16

"Christmas is abundant. Christmas is our human cup running over with divine favor and grace. Christmas is more than denominational lines. Christmas is more than our petty divisions and Twitter squabbles. Christmas is more than our traditions, hymns, candles, and wreaths. Take everything away, and Jesus was born anyway, and continues to be born within us through God's grace every day. Love truly did 'come down at Christmas.' "

Sunday: Read Matthew 2: 1-11

"Joy is a 'flash of eternity,' and when placed in the context of our Advent discipline, it makes perfect sense. Love is an expression of the past. We gather because of God's love in the person of Jesus two thousand years ago. Peace is our work in the present. Putting down the sword and working toward reconciliation. Hope projects us into the future, ultimately when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Joy in its timelessness brings all three together at once. Peace, hope, and love, the past, present and future, all proclaiming that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is always with us-eternal joy."

This devotion guide is based upon the book, *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes* written by Matt Rawle. To watch the video lessons associated with the study, create an account associated with New Day on Amplify Media.

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