

December 21, 2025

## **Advent 4A**

Romans 1:1-7

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.*

My dear friends,

Christmas is just around the corner.

Three more sleeps, and it is Christmas Eve.

The season we have been preparing for will finally arrive.

Christmas will begin.

In this morning's Epistle Reading,

St. Paul begins his letter to the Romans.

And how does it begin?

With advice, commands, or opinions?

No!

Paul begins with the Good News entrusted to him.

The Good News is “new” in its arrival.

And it is “new” in the new life it brings.

But in another way, that Good News is not something new.

The Good News is something long expected.

It's not improvised.

This Good News God

*"promised beforehand*

*through His prophets in the holy Scriptures."* (Romans 1:2).

Advent and Christmas remind us: God keeps His promises, even when centuries have passed.

Advent teaches us patience.

Advent teaches us to wait for the God  
who always keeps His promises.

The prophet Isaiah spoke to Ahaz:

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and shall call His name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14b)

Before the manger was filled in Bethlehem,  
 God's Word has already spoken.  
 God has already promised Good News.  
 Good News that stands at the centre of all God's designs.

So, what, then, is this Good News  
 that stands at the centre of everything?

### I.

My friends,  
 The Good News is not an idea.  
 It's not information.  
 It's not an event.  
 The Good News is a person.  
 God's message to the world is Jesus.

Jesus is the Good News itself,  
 bringing joy and reassurance  
 that God's love is real and present for us all.  
 Jesus is *"Descended from David according to the flesh."*  
 Jesus is *"Declared to be the Son of God in power...  
 by His resurrection from the dead."*  
 Jesus is *"Emmanuel, which means God-with-Us."*  
 Jesus is the one who *"will save His people from their sins."*  
 And you are the people *"who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."*  
 That's the Good News—Jesus.

Jesus is *"Descended from David according to the flesh,"*  
 and *"Declared to be God's Son in power...  
 by His resurrection from the dead."*  
 Advent, Christmas and Easter belong together.  
 The Child born for us is the One who dies for us.  
 And the One who died for us  
 is the One who will come again for us.  
 The Son who is conceived by the Holy Spirit  
 is the Son who is raised by the Holy Spirit from the dead.

Jesus, whose birth we are preparing to celebrate, is fully human.

God's love for you isn't just emotion.

God's love for you isn't abstract.

God's love for you is concrete and practical.

Jesus came to us in the flesh,

physically descended from King David.

He came to love us with flesh and blood.

He was born into the human family

so He could truly suffer, die, and rise for our redemption.

*"But when the fullness of time had come,*

*God sent forth His Son,*

*born of woman, born under the law,*

*to redeem those who were under the law,*

*so that we might receive adoption as sons."* (Galatians 4:4–5)

Jesus, whose birth we prepare to celebrate, is fully Divine.

Jesus is God-with-Us.

Fully Divine and powerfully raised!

Jesus is the God the Son, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He is fully God, so that His salvation is complete and eternal.

The blood he offered on your behalf has infinite merit.

Being Himself eternal,

His suffering pays in full an eternal punishment.

The One born of Mary is the One Promised to David.

The Baby in the manger is the One who conquers the grave.

Psalm 24 sings this truth.

*"Lift up your heads, O gates...that the King of glory may come in."*

The King of Glory, *Jehovah Strong and Mighty*, comes humbly.

And yet, He comes as the God over the angelic armies.

## II.

My friends,

Jesus was with us in the manger.

Jesus is with us now in the Word.

When we receive the Good News, we receive Jesus Himself.

*"Lo, I am with you always."*

The Good News delivers Who it proclaims.

The Apostle's preaching brings

*"about the obedience (or response) of faith."*

*"Consequently, faith comes from hearing,*

*and hearing through the word of Christ."* (Romans 10:17)

Christ gives grace and creates faith by His spoken Word.

And when anyone receives & *keeps* His word in faith,

Jesus says,

*"My Father will love him,*

*and We will come to him*

*and make Our home with him."* (John 14:23 see also 1 John 2:24)

The Good News doesn't just inform us.

It delivers Jesus.

The Good News claims, calls, and creates us in Jesus.

God has given the preaching office

so that you can hear Christ's Word.

The sermon and teaching of the Bible are where

the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and strengthens believers,

bringing the Good News of Christ for us.

You are gathered here in Christ's name.

By the promise of His Word, Christ is here.

*"For where two or three come together in My name,  
there am I with them."* (Matthew 18:20)

Christ is here to bind and loose.

Christ is here to loose you from your sins.

The name Jesus means "God Saves."

Jesus is God-with-Us to save us.

St. Paul belongs to Christ.

And so do you.

The preaching of Christ calls you *"to belong to Jesus Christ."*

*"...God sent His Son, born of a woman,  
born under law, to redeem those under law,  
that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

*Because you are sons,  
God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,  
the Spirit who calls out,  
"Abba, Father."*

*So you are... a son;  
and since you are a son,  
God has made you also an heir." (Galatians 4:4–7).*

The same Word that announced Christ's coming

- Now announces your forgiveness.
- Now places you within Christ.
- Now prepares you for His return on the Last Day.

We live in the tension of Advent.

You are already redeemed.

But that redemption is not fully revealed.

We wait for the one who has already arrived,  
arrives, and will arrive again.

Jesus is with us now.

And yet one day, we will be with Him even more.

St. John promises:

*"Dear friends, now we are children of God,  
and what we will be has not yet been made known.*

*But we know that when He appears,  
we shall be like Him,  
for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2).*

## III.

My friends,

God-with-Us creates love among us.

*"The Word became flesh*

*and made His dwelling among us."* (John 1:14a)

God does not love us from a distance.

*"The virgin will be with child*

*and will give birth to a son,*

*and they will call Him Emmanuel"—*

*which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:23)*

He entered our flesh to redeem our flesh, body and soul.

You are those *"who are loved by God and called to be saints."*

You are those who receive

*"Grace and peace...*

*from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."*

(Romans 1:7)

*"And you also are among those*

*who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."* (Romans 1:6).

When God truly dwells among His people—

Faith responds to His Word.

God's love fills hearts.

People love God.

And they love God by loving His people.

The Bible says in 1 John:

*"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ*

*has been born of God,*

*and everyone who loves the Father*

*loves whoever has been born of Him."* (1 John 5:1)

That is why I am so encouraged by you.

I am so happy to be in two loving congregations.

Jesus loved us concretely, in practical ways.

You love each other the same way.

I am so glad that you look out for one another.

When someone is in trouble, you pray and help.

You encourage people when they are discouraged.

You give groceries to one another when money is tight.

You give practical gifts.

I'm so glad to have two churches whose members visit shut-ins.

You visit people in the hospital.

You are kind and gracious people.

I see your smiles when a baby starts babbling  
during the quiet parts of the service.

I see you introducing yourselves to visitors.

I see you staying after church and visiting with each other.

I see you gently including the person sitting apart.

I thank God for the encouragement of God's kind and gracious people!

God loves you, and it **shows** in your interactions with each other.

Keep up the good work!

*"Let us not become weary in doing good...*

*as we have opportunity,*

*let us do good to all people,*

*especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

(Galatians 6:9–10).

This is the fruit of belonging to Christ, not the root.

Your love of one another does not contribute to your belonging.

Jesus alone contributes to that.

Jesus alone is the One who saves His people.

And He sets you free to love freely.

God-with-Us not only changes eternity.

God-with-Us changes how we live here and now.

He fills the here and now with love.

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My friends,

Advent teaches us to wait.

We eagerly wait for Christmas Day,  
as we do for the great and glorious day of Christ's return.

We wait for Him who came to be with us in Bethlehem.

We wait for Him who comes to us in His Word.

We wait for Him who will come again.

As we wait,

Jesus fills us with love.

His Word sustains us and encourages us.

His promises fill us with love and hope.

Because God always keeps His promises.

And so, Paul's final word in our Epistle Reading is not pressure.

It's a promise and a blessing.

*Grace to you and peace,*

*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This Lord Jesus is the Good News promised beforehand.

The Good News delivered to you by the Word.

The Good News received by faith.

The Good News overflowing with love.

The Son of God became David's Son,

flesh of our flesh

and bone of our bone,

so that you,

in your flesh,

may belong to Him forever.

*May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, amen.*