



I. **Ice breaker.** *Getting to know each other questions.* (10 minutes)

- What are you most looking forward to this upcoming holiday/advent season?

II. **Read today's scripture** out loud, slowly, either in unison or using a designated reader and move into scripture quiet reflection. (3 minutes)

- ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning —the first day.
⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning —the second day.
⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:1-10
- "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Matthew 1:23

Scripture quiet reflection: (5-10 minutes)

This is a time to personally reflect on this week's scripture. Have a paper and pen available.

1. Read. Read through the passage silently.

2. Reflect. Notice any words or phrases that particularly draw your attention and stand out to you.

How do these words/phrases speak directly to you and your present situation? Write your insights.

3. Respond. As God has spoken to you in the Scripture, respond back to God in prayer. What do you want to say to God? What else does God want to say to you?

III. **Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion.** (20-30 minutes)

1. As you reflectively engaged the Scriptures, what stood out to you from these passages?
2. "To practice Advent is to lean into an almost cosmic ache: our deep, wordless desire for things to be made right and the incompleteness we find in the meantime." Tish Harrison Warren
 - Advent is an opportunity to acknowledge the darkness to more deeply appreciate the light.
 - As we enter the advent season where might you be feeling the darkness and ache of the world?



- The word 'Advent' means 'anticipated arrival' and during this season we are reminded of the coming of the Christ child into the world as God and Man. How does the announcement of the arrival of Immanuel (Matt 1:23) help bring you hope in dark circumstances?
3. How does the account of Creation connect with the birth of the Christ child to Mary in Galilee so many centuries later? Why is it important to understand the presence of the trinity at creation and to understand Jesus as creator?
4. The New Testament references Jesus as part of the triune God who created the cosmos. Read over the following verses out loud together and discuss:
- **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:1-3**
 - **¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ Colossians 1:15-18**
 - **¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1:1-3**
 - **...Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 1 Corinthians 8:6**
 - **"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" John 1:14**

LN: The following quote by James Boice is here for reinforcement of the point and optional discussion.

"When we recognize that the members of the trinity are here at the beginning of creation, having existed before anything else then the elements we associate with the trinity...love, personality, communication, ...are seen to be eternal and have eternal value. This is the biblical answer to man's fear of being lost in an impersonal and loveless universe."

5. The Belgic Confession Article 2 says that how we know God are through Creation and the divine Word of God. Calvin commenting on the two means by which we know God said: "Our eyes are not sufficiently clear-sighted to discern what the fabric of heaven and earth represent..... and therefore, we need the scriptures to view creation rightly." Discuss as a group what you think Calvin meant?
6. Seven times in Geneses 1 God calls what He made good. And he concludes the account with. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:31



- How does God's creation conform with His nature?
- How is the creation a great equalizer of all?
- How is caring for the earth an important aspect of loving God and loving others?
- In what ways do you enjoy caring for the earth? How can you grow in how you treat the earth and steward natural resources for the future generations?

7. Read together Matthew 6: 28-32.

- How do you see Jesus using an example from His care of the natural world to illustrate His care for us?
- One of the themes of this section of teaching from Jesus is that we don't need to worry because He is in control and cares for the earth and especially cares for His children. Where are some areas in life that you tend to worry and doubt God's care?

8. Read Psalms 19:1-2. Creation reveals God in all of His glory.

- ¹ **The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**
² **Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.**
- How is the creation like an app or a signpost pointing you toward the love of God?

9. As you close remember that God's desire from the beginning of the creation of the cosmos was to gather His sons and daughters without sin, shame or obstacles. Spend a few minutes meditating and quietly enjoying: "Immanuel, God with us."