

Text: I Timothy 1:15-16

Title: “ADVENTure for Sinners”

Through the ages the church has celebrated something we call Advent. The word means “coming” or “arrival,” obviously referring to the coming of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to be our Savior. Advent is celebrated the four Sundays prior to Christmas, so today we are going to begin our Advent celebration. Advent is normally celebrated with the use of greenery (often in a wreath) which symbolizes eternal life. The lighting of candles on each Sunday during Advent along with one lit on Christmas Eve each represent a step in our understanding of what the coming of Christ really means.

We have a great opportunity over the next month to immerse ourselves in this important truth of the Advent. Next Sunday evening our choir and orchestra will present “The Nativity Symphony” joined by Jody McBrayer, former lead singer of the award-winning Christian group Avalon. The following Sunday evening, December 14, our children’s choirs and other musicians of our church will fill our hearts and minds with more beautiful Christmas music. On December 21 we’ll have our next One Day unified service where we’ll share together in the Lord’s Supper on the Sunday before Christmas. Then the climax of our Christmas celebration is our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, “A Night of Hope.” We’re making a concerted effort to reach out to the neighborhoods to the north of our church, and on December 12-13 we’ll be going street by street putting door-hangers up to invite our neighbors to share Christmas Eve with us. Next Sunday we’ll have door hangers that you can take to your neighborhood as well as some special invitation cards that you can give to people when as you encounter them out shopping or eating in a restaurant. And to cover all of that in prayer tonight we will gather at 5:30 in the Great Room for our Evening of Prayer and Praise. So we have a huge month ahead as a church.

Now open your Bibles to I Timothy 1:12. The most important way we’ll embrace the story of Advent is through the Word of God. Over these Sundays I will preach from the various places in the New Testament where we see this “divine ADVENTure” explained. **Read I Timothy 1:12-17.**

ILLUSTRATION - If we aren’t careful we will find ourselves swallowed up in the worldly mindset that settles over our culture during the Christmas season, and that can fill our heads with all kinds of false notions. Just think about some of the songs that we hear over and over this season, like “Here Comes Santa Claus.”

Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus,
Right down Santa Claus lane
He doesn't care if you're rich or poor
He loves you just the same
Santa Claus knows we're all God's children
That makes everything right
So fill your hearts with Christmas cheer
'Cause Santa Claus comes tonight!

Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus,
Right down Santa Claus lane
He'll come around when the chimes ring out

That it's Christmas morn again
Peace on earth will come to all
If we just follow the light
So let's give thanks to the lord above
That Santa Claus comes tonight!

Over Thanksgiving we watched the movie "Elf." And the movie ends with everyone singing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town"?

You better watch out, you better not cry
Better not pout, I'm telling you why
Santa Claus is coming to town.

He's making a list, and checking it twice
Gonna find out who's naughty and nice
Santa Claus is coming to town.

He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake!

Santa Claus isn't our Savior. And the best way to keep our minds thinking clearly during these days is to stay riveted to the Word of God. Paul talks about the real meaning of Christmas when He said...

1 Timothy 1:15 - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

1 Timothy 1:16 - But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

In these verses we see ...

1. THE PROOF THAT JESUS CAME

1 Timothy 1:15 - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world ...

"Here is a trustworthy statement..." Paul uses this formula only five times in the New Testament and it's always associated with some important doctrine. And certainly there is no more important doctrine or teaching than the truth that Jesus came into the world ... the Advent.

Of course, not everyone agrees that Christ actually came into the world. So how do we know that the incarnation actually occurred? I don't have time today to go into the mountains of evidence that Christ actually came and lived among us. But we know that there is...

- **HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.** We have the witness of this historically reliable book, the Bible. The New Testament is all about the coming of Christ. And even if someone won't accept the reliability of the Bible, to go with the Biblical record there is abundant evidence from secular sources that Jesus Christ came. For example...

QUOTE: Just thirty or forty years after Christ lived a Jewish historian named Josephus wrote about life in Palestine during the New Testament times. Josephus wrote: "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is lawful to call him a man, for he was a performer of wonderful deeds, a teacher of such men as are happy to accept the truth. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the leading men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again on the third day, as the prophets of God had foretold these and ten thousand other wonders about him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day."

But along with the biblical evidence there is the...

- **PERSONAL EVIDENCE.** How else can you explain the impact of the faith that revolves around this figure Jesus Christ, even 2000 years after His life and death? Jesus continues to impact people around the world to this day. And it is so pervasive you cannot just chalk it up to a mere philosophy.

ILLUSTRATION – One of our Thanksgiving traditions is we like to go to a Christmas parade down in the town of Granbury. The parade is actually a Jesus parade sponsored by various churches in the community. Every float has something to do with the coming of Christ. As I was standing there holding a candle and singing Christmas carols I thought what an amazing thing it is that a baby born in a barn in an obscure part of the world 2000 years ago would still be worshipped and celebrated in this way.

It is a trustworthy statement that deserves full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world. That's the proof that Jesus came. But these verses also show us...

2. **THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH JESUS CAME**

1 Timothy 1:15 - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save ...

Paul uses two names of the Son of God together ... "Christ Jesus." Those two names, Christ and Jesus, linked together give us the purpose, the mission, for which Jesus came.

"Jesus" was His earthly name. The name "Jesus" was a popular name in the days of the New Testament around the time that our Jesus was born.

ILLUSTRATION – According to the Social Security Administration the most popular names last year was Noah for boys and Sophia for girls. Well the name Jesus was one of the most popular

names in New Testament times. The name means “the one who saves.” It’s the NT version of the OT name Joshua. Many parents named their sons Jesus to reflect that reality. When Joseph was told by the Lord about what was about to happen he was told...

Matthew 1:21 - She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

“He will save His people from their sins.” There you have the purpose for which our Savior came ... to save!

Then Jesus is also called “Christ.” That’s His heavenly name, and it also speaks of the purpose of His coming. The angels announced to the shepherds...

Luke 2:11 - Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

The title “Christ” means the Anointed One, God's Messiah. Christ Jesus came into the world to save. He was born to save.

ILLUSTRATION - A few years ago there was a report that came out of the City of Hope Medical Center in Duarte, California. They were about to attempt to transplant bone marrow into 19-year-old Anissa Ayalla who was dying from an aggressive form of leukemia. The bone marrow needed for the transplant had to be a perfect match to Anissa's own marrow or she would likely die within five years. And the bone marrow transplanted into Anissa’s body came from her baby sister, Marissa. You see Anissa's parents had conceived Marissa in order to provide the bone marrow that Anissa needed. This little girl was conceived for a purpose ... she was born to save a life.

The whole human race is infected with a disease that is 100% fatal. And Christ Jesus was born into this world in order to save. This is the purpose for which He came. But these verses also show us...

3. THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM JESUS CAME

1 Timothy 1:15 - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

We sometimes lose sight of that powerful truth. He didn't just come to teach. He didn't just come to be a good example. He didn't just come to bring out the best human beings. No, He came to save sinners.

1 Timothy 1:15b - Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

We are not just people who need to do better. We are all lost in our sin and we need to be rescued. How does Jesus rescue perishing sinners? Read v.16.

1 Timothy 1:16 - But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Notice that this salvation is available to all, but it is not automatic. It is for those who “believe on Him and receive eternal life.”

Notice also that in both verses Paul identifies himself with sinners, “of whom I am the worst” (v.15). In v.16 he calls himself “the worst of sinners.”

Does this statement astound you? If you know anything at all about the New Testament you know that the Apostle Paul was one of the most important figures in the New Testament. No human in history has been more used by God. Yet Paul said, “I’m the worst person I know.” Does that mean that Paul was still actively engaged in a sinful lifestyle? No. It means that Paul knew what his life used to be. And he still knew his own heart that was so full of desires that are set against God.

Romans 7:18 - I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

If we keep this mindset it will make us forever humble and grateful to God for what He did for us in His Son Christ Jesus who came to save sinners. We will never lose our awe of God’s mercy shown to us in His Son Jesus. But something else will happen. It will make us forever humble and gentle (merciful) toward other people. We will never show mercy to others until we have seen how much mercy we need.

Maybe you look at your life and think, “There’s no way God could ever overcome what I’ve done.” Christ Jesus came into this world to save the worst of sinners.