

Make Room

ADVENT 2025

Making Room for Advent

A couple of weeks ago, it snowed for the first time. That, of course, means a lot of things... Where can I (Matt) get my snow tires installed? Where are the shovels at? Why didn't I get the Christmas lights on the roof before this happened? And lastly, why didn't I clean up my garage before now so that we could park in it?

The garage, of course, becomes a catch-all. The kids' bikes, scooters, and summer gear get strewn about. The tools don't always get put away. Boxes that need to be looked through and then get put on shelves. But without intention or action, the garage can become the storage room, not the place where I park my vehicles.

So this past weekend, with intention, I took action. Yes, it was colder than I had hoped for, but I cleaned the garage. I got rid of the things that needed to be gotten rid of. I hung the bikes on the wall, moved the summer toys to the shed, and got the snow shovels hung on the walls. All in an effort to park my car in the garage so as not to have to scrape my windows.

There's one thing about this that's really important: in order to park my vehicles, I had to make room in my garage. Had I not made the room and just tried to move the vehicles into the garage, I would have ended up with a bigger mess, broken bikes, and damaged cars.

We, of course, would never attempt to park the vehicles without making room for them; that would be ridiculous. However, we often do that with Advent. We take our busy lives, especially December with all its other commitments, and we try to cram advent into it. Then, in the midst of it all, we wonder where hope, peace, joy, and love are.

There are things within us that are incompatible with peace; there are stories that we believe about the world that stand in opposition to hope; there are ways that we live that keep joy far away from us; there are misunderstandings that we have about love that prevent us from seeing and experiencing love for what it truly is.

This Advent, we want to make room. To take the time and space to reimagine the world in light of Jesus' first coming and look forward to his second. This year, we will enter the stories of some of the minor prophets to trace the glimmers of hope, peace, joy and love that can be seen as they anticipate a future Messiah.

The minor prophets wrote in difficult days, days of hardship and

desperation where societal breakdown was happening all around them. Corruption, abuse of power, oppression of the poor, the threat of military invasion, and economic collapse dominated the headlines of their day. The prophets came with hard words -- words calling for repentance. These words would change the direction of a nation away from idolatry, violence, and injustice and towards faithfulness, peace, and righteousness. During these days, Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom) would be defeated by Assyria and Babylon and taken into exile away from the Promised Land.

Yet, in the midst of the darkness and despair of their days, God provides glimmers of a coming time when he will intervene in human history through the arrival of the Messiah. This Messiah will live a perfect life of faithfulness, peace, and righteousness and will shepherd his people in these ways. Through the prophets, God speaks glimmers of hope, peace, joy, and love, orienting his people around their Messiah.

These same prophecies, spoken thousands of years ago, still serve the purposes of God for us today. As we enter the season of Advent, we are painfully aware of the darkness all around us. But it is not the whole story. God has not abandoned us to a cruel fate. Hope, peace, joy, and love have come to us in the person of Jesus, and his presence with us changes everything.

Each week we will read a minor prophet. There is a provided QR code that links to a video overview of the book by the Bible Project that is helpful to watch first in order to facilitate understanding.

In Advent we look backwards to the first coming of Christ and how he was the fulfillment of the glimmers, and we look forward to the second coming when he will make all things new. In Advent, we sit in the space between and we watch for the glimmers. We turn our ears to the promises. We anticipate the Light and open our hearts in readiness for what God has in store. In the midst of the darkness and all that seems irredeemable, we will listen to what God is saying through his prophets. We will:

Make room for **hope**.
Make room for **peace**.
Make room for **joy**.
Make room for **love**.
Make room for **Jesus**.

WEEK ONE **Making Room for Hope**



WATCH The Bible Project - Amos Overview

READ Amos

The book of Amos begins with the ominous words of two years before an earthquake. It places the words of Amos in a specific time and place. As the book continues, there are a series of judgements on Israel's neighbours for their behaviour. As you read, you can wonder what the response of Israel's leadership was to the words of the prophet. *Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom... great! It's about time they get what's coming to them.* Until, the words land on Judah. Even here, there is probably an anticipation of goodness coming to them.

Then the words, "for three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent."

Who, us? But we are the chosen ones! The ones rescued from Egypt, the ones given the promised land! However, the reason for this rebuke follows: taking advantage of the poor and the oppressed, idolatrous worship, and even silencing the prophets God had risen up and forcing those who took vows to God to break them.

This book, written prior to the exile, serves as a warning for Israel's leadership to repent — to change direction — and come back to God's way of right living. They had led the nation into idolatry and injustice, and if they didn't change their ways, they would lead the nation right into judgment through the exile to Assyria and Babylon.

But the leadership doesn't listen; they keep going on in their old ways and seemingly double-down. They don't listen to Amos, instead telling him to stop prophesying, and instead listen to their own chosen prophets who only say what they want to hear.

It seems that the leadership thought of themselves as invincible due to their heritage. They placed their hope in their bloodline: that as descendants of Jacob and the Patriarchs, they would live in the land and God would protect them from their enemies. But of course, God asks for more than our ancestry. He invites us to walk in *his way*, that of right relationship with Him, others, ourselves, and the creation.

And so, as they prepare for exile, Amos recentres their hopes. Not on their ancestry or on their land, but on their God and his character. God

promises that he will one day return a remnant of them from their exile, that he will repair, restore, and rebuild his broken people. That even though they will be defeated by their enemies, even though they will lose the land of promise, their story doesn't end there. They are not hopeless. Instead, they have a hope that their God will come back for them.

In order to make room for hope, we too need to dispel of the hopes that cannot sustain us. Hopes that, while good, cannot be *ultimate* good. Hopes of everything working out right, that we will be successful in all that we do (whether working, parenting, etc.), hopes of being free from suffering, and hopes of living long and comfortable lives. Advent invites us to prepare the way of the Lord by making room for him to work and allowing him to exchange our hopes for better hopes -- hopes of his return at the end of the age, of the great resurrection, of heaven and earth being reunited in one, and him dwelling with us forever.

REFLECT

As you read Amos, how are you seeing God drawing his people to hope? How do you see him inviting you to hope through Amos?

RESPOND

One way that we can make room for hope is to exchange our false hopes for better hopes.

Where does your hope lie in things that do not lead to fullness of life? What might you need to let go of in order to make room for hope?

Another way that we can make room for hope is to choose hope.

What hopes do you need to embrace in order to allow Jesus space to work?

GIVE THANKS

Where have you already made room for eternal hope?

What glimmers of hope are you seeing?

How is hope shaping you?

PRAY

Jesus, I embrace the hope of the restoration of all things. I choose to believe that you are not done with our broken world, but are healing it and will one day heal in fullness when you return.

WEEK TWO **Making Room for Peace**



WATCH [The Bible Project - Micah Overview](#)

READ [Micah](#)

While the prophet Amos was writing to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, the prophet Micah is writing to Judah, the Southern Kingdom. By the time Micah is writing, Israel has already fallen to Assyria, and its armies are turning their attention to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Even though these are two separate kingdoms, by this point, their sins are indistinguishable.

Micah writes of their idolatry and injustice and their taking advantage of the poor and vulnerable. Once again, the leadership doesn't want to hear the words of the prophet and instead turn their ears to the false prophets — the ones they employ to tell them what they want to hear. These prophets don't call for repentance, but offer peace and comfort instead. Like Amos, Micah tells of a coming Assyrian threat and that if they don't change their ways, they will be in exile like their relatives to the north. He tells them to seek justice, love, mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. *Change your ways, don't follow the broken ways of your leaders who are shepherding you in the ways of death, but instead follow the shepherd king who will lead you in the ways of God, and then you will live securely because he is your peace.*

It's easy to turn to voices that offer us an unchallenged existence, telling us to just keep doing what we're doing when it doesn't bring life. In a lot of ways, our cellphones and social media are like false prophets, telling us that we can just escape from the pressures of everyday life, or embrace six easy hacks to make our lives easier so that we don't have to actually change.

Much like the leaders of Israel shepherded the people into injustice and idolatry, we can allow ourselves to be shepherded in all sorts of directions. Much like Israel, we need to make room for true peace and turn our direction towards the true good shepherd and away from directions that promise success, comfort, or other false senses of peace. We are able to rest securely in true peace because we know that God is good, that he is our strength, and that his peace won't just create an absence of conflict, but instead bring about new ways of being free from violence.

REFLECT

As you read Micah, how are you seeing God drawing his people to peace? How do you see him inviting you into peace through Micah?

RESPOND

Where in your life do you need the peace of Christ?

What do you believe needs to be changed in order to experience this peace?

One way that we can make room for peace is by exchanging our false peace for better peace.

Where in your life are you choosing the false peace of distractions, escapes, and success that are not leading to fullness? What might you need to let go of in order to make room for peace?

Another way that we can make room for hope is to choose peace. In Philippians 4:4-9, Paul invites us to rejoice in God, to give our requests to Him in prayer, and to practice gratitude - and He tells us if we do these things that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds. He also tells us to set our minds on the good, the beautiful, and the right, and that as we do, the God of peace will be with us.

How can you put this into practice today? How can you intentionally embrace the God of peace?

GIVE THANKS

Where have you already made room for peace?

What glimmers of peace are you seeing?

How is peace shaping you?

PRAY

Jesus, I believe that you are the Prince of Peace, and I choose to embrace you as my peace today. Would you help me to see the good, the beautiful, and the true so that I can live into your peace today? Thank you that you are my peace.

WEEK THREE **Making Room for Joy**



WATCH The Bible Project - Habakkuk Overview

READ Habakkuk

Like Micah, Habakkuk writes in the space between the fall of Israel and Judah, and he is witnessing both the injustice and idolatry of Judah as well as the effects of the advancing armies of Assyria and, soon, the Babylonians. The book begins with a question he repeats from the Psalmist — one that has formed prayers for countless generations, “How long, Lord?” He sees the violence, wickedness, and injustice of his people and the nations, and he asks... *why are you not intervening? Why won't you listen? Why won't you save?*

What follows is a conversation between God and Habakkuk, where God tells him to pay attention because he is at work. Even though the surrounding nations and empires only want more for themselves at the expense of others, there will be a reckoning for these ways of death.

God resets Habakkuk's vision by reminding him that *He is in His holy temple*. God isn't far off or distant, but he is here and he is present. This demands a response. Habakkuk responds by reorienting his focus, moving away from the depravity of the wicked and placing his eyes on God. He recounts the greatness of God saying, *“I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.”* (Habakkuk 3:2)

He then, in poetic language, recounts the exodus and God's deliverance of his people in the crossing of the Red Sea. He confirms his trust that God will, in his mercy, execute judgement on the invading nations, and in a cry of trust, says he will wait patiently. He fights against an apathetic or despairing waiting, and chooses joy instead. He writes that despite things not going the way he hopes — failing crops and no livestock — he will choose joy (Habakkuk 3:18-19).

He is able to make room for joy by resetting his focus. When his eyes are on his enemies and their evil, he only has despair, but when he puts his eyes on God, it changes his perspective. Joy is not about happy feelings; it's about embracing God and his goodness. It's about seeing things from the perspective of the truest reality and seeing that regardless of our situations, God is still good and will redeem

everything. He is still mighty to save. Habakkuk makes room for joy, and the joy of the Lord becomes his strength.

In order for us to make room for joy, we too have to set our eyes on the truest reality that God is on the throne and that he still has mercy for us. Despite our circumstances, despair doesn't have to have the final say. But we have to make the choice. There is so much bad news out there — nations are still seeking to expand their territories, wealth and power are still unable to be satisfied, and those with power still trample on the vulnerable. When we keep our eyes only on the brokenness of our world and its systems, we can get swallowed up by despair. The invitation of Habakkuk, much like Paul's in Philippians 4:8, is to set our eyes on God and his goodness. When we do, we find that joy is always available.

REFLECT

As you read Habakkuk, how are you seeing God drawing his people to joy?

RESPOND

One way that we can make room for joy is to take our eyes off of the broken of the world and its systems.

What stories are you drawn to in your life, in the news, in your algorithms? Are they drawing you to despair or to joy? What might you need to let go of in order to make room for joy?

Another way that we can make room for joy is to choose joy; we see Habakkuk choosing joy by reflecting on God's greatness and how he has delivered his people.

How can considering Jesus' work in his earthly ministry, beginning with his birth at the first advent and culminating in his death and resurrection, cause you to embrace joy in order to allow Jesus space to work?

GIVE THANKS

Where have you already made room for joy?
How is joy shaping you?

PRAY

Jesus, I choose to embrace joy today by declaring that you are our Saviour. Thank you for your salvation. Help me to refocus my gaze, moving away from things that bring me to despair and instead on those that bring joy.

WEEK FOUR **Making Room for Love**



WATCH The Bible Project - Zephaniah Overview

READ Zephaniah

Zephaniah's prophecy is one of stark judgment. It also comes in the years between the fall of Israel and the fall of Judah. Zephaniah's message is that God's judgement will come on both Judah and the nations. When it comes to *the day of the Lord*, a euphemism for times when God acts in decisive ways to intervene in human history, he will remove the unjust, the wicked, and the idolatrous from the land. Zephaniah's message is one of wrath against the enemies of goodness.

We hear of God's mercy in reaching out to Jerusalem, wooing her and her inhabitants to repent and walk in the way of righteousness. And yet, they still chose corruption. In the midst of all this talk of wrath, anger, and judgement, there are still words of a God who, at his core, is love. His actions will leave behind a remnant of people who are meek and humble, not the violent and the proud. They are the fearful, the lame, the exiles, and those who have suffered.

He will be the mighty warrior who will deliver them from those who have made them fearful, those who have opposed them, and those who have caused their hands to hang limp. They will choose righteousness, truth, and will follow in his ways. As a result, they can rest in the land, because no one will make them afraid.

We see in the final verses of this book that God, who is the Mighty Warrior, is gentle. He forgives the people for their sins, he takes delight in them, and instead of rebuking them, he now sings songs of love over them.

God removes the powers that brought them fear — both human systems and violence as well as the demands of the idol gods of the nations. God makes room for his people by taking away their fear. As read in 1 John 4:18, "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." The God of perfect love drives out their fear, delights in them and sings songs of love over them. God himself makes room for them to experience love.

Just as Zephaniah writes of a day of the Lord where God intervenes in

a decisive way in human history, God does the same for us.. The gospels tell of *another* day of the Lord. This intervention is found in Jesus' judgement on the powers of sin, death, and evil as Jesus takes them on through his death and resurrection. Jesus, driven by love, made room for us who were living in fear of death to experience his salvation. The same God who delighted over the remnant in Jerusalem delights over you. The same God who sang songs of love over Jerusalem sings songs of love over you. May the God of perfect love make room for you by driving out fear.

REFLECT

As you read Zephaniah, how are you seeing God drawing his people in his love?

How do you see him inviting you into his love through Zephaniah?

RESPOND

One way that we can make room for love is by telling God of our fears and shames.

Where does fear and shame have room in your life? What might you need to let go of in order to make room for love?

Ask Jesus to meet you in your fear and shame.

Another way that we can make room for love is by receiving the love of God. Sit with Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. Pray this prayer for yourself, asking God to reveal to you his perfect love. Consider his death on the cross as you do, remembering that it is how we best know his love. Perhaps a good practice would be to memorize this prayer so that its words can shape you.

GIVE THANKS

Where have you already made room for love?

How is love shaping you?

PRAY

Jesus, I believe that you delight in me and sing songs of love over me. I believe that you are perfect love, and I ask that you would, in your perfect love, drive away my fear and shame. Help me to know your love that is higher, wider, and deeper than I could ever imagine.



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