

WHAT IS ADVENT? - TUESDAY MORNING - DECEMBER 2, 2025

Good morning, Grace Harbor! It's Dan. Happy Tuesday. I hope you're staying warm wherever you are because it is CHILLY here! But it's a beautifully bright and clear morning, and I have a hot cup of coffee, so I'm all ready for our time together this morning.

I don't think I got the chance to tell you yesterday that we have the official lighting of the town Christmas Tree in the Village Green tomorrow. This is one of my favorite events we have all year. It's a big Christmas block party, and it feels like everyone in town comes out!

There's hot chocolate and snacks. There's live music. There's games. And, of course, there's the chance to get your photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus!

Practically every business and organization in town is responsible for some part of the event. Our church does a cookie booth. And by that, I mean: we give away 500 cookies!

As you can imagine, this event takes a lot of work. There's actually a tree lighting committee that starts meeting in the summer to be sure everything is organized!

And for our part, we start organizing the cookie baking a month ahead of time. That's because, while we have folks who bake cookies for us every year, there are always families who are either new to our church or want to help

out for the first time. And we don't want them to feel stressed out by any of it.

We want them to have fun—both when they make the cookies and when they attend the event. So we put intentional thought into our preparation to be sure everyone gets the most out of it.

And you know what? That's actually not a bad way to think about the special season we just started on Sunday called Advent. It's when we spend four weeks getting our hearts ready for Christmas.

I mean, we **could** just wake up on Christmas, open some presents, eat some cookies, and have a good time. But Christmas is about so much more than that.

But don't worry. We have plenty of time to talk about all of this as Christmas approaches.

For now, let's prepare for our day. We're going to do that by practicing one of our core disciplines: setting intentions.

Take a minute and think about what you're doing today. It might look the same as yesterday, like going to school. But that's ok because ordinary days are a part of extraordinary lives.

And a BIG thing we are going to talk about over and over again is the idea that HOW we do things is as important as WHAT we do. And HOW you approach your day today may be

different than HOW you approached yesterday.

So, let's do a little time travel using our imagination. Whether you are a kid heading to school or an adult heading to day full of work or errands, let's pretend the day is already over, and we're getting ready for bed. How do you want to be able to describe today? Let's pick one word that captures how you want your day to feel.

Maybe it's 'fun'—you want to have a day that brings you joy. Maybe it's 'patient'—you know today might have some frustrating parts and you want to handle them calmly. Maybe it's 'helpful'—you want to help someone else have a brighter day. For me, with 500 cookies to be ready to hand out by tomorrow, I'm choosing 'organized' because I want to stay focused on meeting that goal.

Take a moment to think about the word you want to be able to use to describe today. If you're not sure, that's okay—your adult can help you think of one. Once everyone has their word, go ahead and share it with each other. If you need more time, you can pause the podcast, and I'll be right here when you get back.

[Pause]

Now, here's something important to remember: We can't control everything about our day, and despite our best intentions, things may go wrong – or at least differently than we planned. But the word we focus on helps us decide how we might respond.

So, for example, I'm planning on driving around to all of my volunteer bakers this afternoon to pickup the cookies and bring them to the church. But what happens if I get a flat tire and can't make it to everyone's house?

I could focus on how I **can't** do what I planned to do and get mad about it. OR, I can remember that my goal was to be organized, and I can find a **new** way to be organized – like calling some friends and asking them to help me pick up the cookies.

Ok, let's close our time together this morning with a prayer. If you want to, you can close your eyes and fold your hands: Dear God, we thank you for all of the exciting things that are coming today and tomorrow and over the next couple weeks as Christmas approaches. Help us to balance both getting ready for all that's coming and being fully present today. Amen.

All right, friends! Have a great Tuesday, and I'll talk to you tonight!

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