

December 9, 2012

ARE YOU READY?

by Lisa Smouse-Hufnagle

Hi everybody, I am Lisa. A couple months ago Pastor Clarissa approached me and asked if I would be willing to share a message. Me being me, I procrastinated, and as it got closer, I began to panic. I thought I am NOT ready, and WHAT will I talk about? I considered, well, we are in the advent season, but meanwhile, I wasn't really sure what that meant, so I did some research.

I found the dictionary definition of Advent is: the arrival of a notable person, thing or event.

I learned Christians celebrate the Advent four Sundays before Christmas. The tradition symbolizes the waiting and then coming of Jesus Christ.

Some details about Advent are:

- There are four candles lit each Sunday of the Advent season, and the fifth candle is lit on Christmas eve or Christmas day.
- The darkness of the candles represents the darkness in our lives before we invite Christ into our heart.
- The lighting of the candle represents Christ coming into our lives.
- The first candle lit stands for hope – that is, Jesus Christ the hope of the world.
- The second candle represents love. We remember God's great love for all by sending the Christ child.
- The third candle stands for joy. There will be great joy when Jesus comes again.
- The fourth candle symbolizes peace. The eternal peace of Christ's second coming.
- The fifth candle represents purity and hope. The Christ child is pure.

The candles are circled in a wreath symbolizing that God has no beginning and no end.

After doing my research I really started to consider the overall theme of Advent, and that is “the Christ is coming”. And then I thought **am I ready?** and boy, that really got me thinking. I started to remember some highlights of my year of 2012 and all the changes that have happened – and I began to think about things in my everyday life and whether I am ready for the challenges that are coming my way?

Some highlights for me this year were:

- For Easter break our High School band took a road trip to Florida to perform at Disney World. We had to do a lot of fund raising to afford this trip. As I was fund raising, I wondered if I’d have enough money to cover the majority of my trip, and it turned out all the hard work paid off. I was able to go to Florida with the band, and the whole experience was just incredible. The competition was cool, and winning the awards made me feel really proud. Our trip to Florida is my example of hope. Hope that my hard work would pay off and my fund raising would be enough to get me there. Hope that I played well enough and was a great band member. Hope that that bus would not break down. And hope that I had enough money for all the food I truly love to eat 😊.
- The second event I’d like to share was that I went to a Christian Athletes camp this summer called FCA (that stands for Fellowship of Christian Athletes). At this camp, besides learning skills to help with my sport of Cross Country, I also got to share a deep spiritual experience with the other kids that attended, and my leaders. I was given The Athletes Bible called “God’s Game Plan”. This Bible has been a great tool that helps me find God’s answer to different challenges. My most favorite time at camp was on Wednesday night at chapel. We had this amazing experience where we waved a white flag in the air to God and accepted him into our lives. That night I was ready and I surrendered myself to God. FCA Camp, as with Advent, is my example of peace; peace in the quiet time when I’d talk with God. Peace in nature as I ran my course. Peace in my heart during chapel and when I accepted God as my savior.
- The next thing I want to share is the Warrior Dash. My brother and I did this 5K race in August. A few months before the race I signed up to follow them on Facebook. I watched some videos of

people doing this race and thought, YIKES what have I gotten myself in to?, and I wondered, am I really ready for this??? As race day got closer, I began to plan my funeral arrangements ☺. The day of the race came, and as we drove to the site, I battled with my brain as it said, “I’m so excited, I’m so nervous”, “I think I’ll do well. I think I might throw up”. While running the race I saw a sign that said “Obstacle ahead” and I wondered what that obstacle could be? Some of the obstacles were running through tires, crawling in trenches, low-crawling through barbed wire, jumping through fire and swimming through mud. I really didn’t think I could do it, and I had a lot of fear when I saw the barbed wire and the fire. With facing my biggest fears came my greatest feeling of accomplishment. It is said, “God never gives you too much to handle,” and He didn’t! The Warrior Dash to me was a great example of life. In life you always have choices of whether to go through the obstacle or sometimes take the easy way out and avoid it. It’s like coming out of the darkness into the light. Meanwhile it seemed like there might be a bigger lesson to go through the obstacle and learn from any mistakes that I made. I think the reward is bigger when I do that because what a sense of accomplishment to go through the challenge. In Joshua 1:9 it says *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”*. We all have a common fear – the fear of failure. I will do my best to be fearless because I know God wants me to do more.

- The next thing I’d like to talk about is that this year in school has been kind of tricky at times. My schedule has been somewhat hectic lately, and I sometimes feel like I’m rolling blading while carrying a dozen plates in each hand. Any false moves and something is gonna crash. I am learning to drive. So after school I get my homework done, eat dinner, spend some time with my dogs and do a few chores all before 5:30! Then it’s off to the Defensive Driving Course until 8:45. Sometimes trying to find the time that I need to do everything has been challenging, and I am learning how to manage my time and keep my plates in the air and balanced. That’s the key word, balance, balance, balance. I am getting ready, and staying ready.

- Lastly, I will share that my Grandma came to live with us for a little while. She started to have a few problems in her home, and she needed to be near her family. My Grandma was always happy to see me and loved to have some fun talks. She not only is named Joy, but she gives me joy and such great love. At first I was not sure if I was ready to have my Grandma stay with us for a long time. Then when it was time for her to leave, I thought, I am not ready for her to go.

So to sum things up, we find ourselves with a promise of eternal life. But, we just aren't quite there yet. We're on our way and sometimes there are ups and downs and balancing plates. Today's scriptures readings in Luke and Philippians tells us to not give up and to have hope and joyous expectations even though there are struggles in life and it might be hard along the way.

God bless you and Thank you!