



The Oakletter, Dec. 7, 2025

I think I got the answer to a question I asked in worship last Sunday, and I think the answer is Advent.

Last Sunday as worship began, I asked a question that I've been asking for the last five or six years, at least: What do you think Christmas was like before Santa Claus?

According to our new BFF AI, Santa Claus became known "through 19th-century poems and commercial ideas," the key word there perhaps being "commercial." Before Christmas became commercial, what was it like?

Maybe it was like Advent. Maybe it meant, as one commentary I read last year said, looking at the world the way that God would have it be versus the way that it really is, or, as Adam Hamilton wrote in his study *Not a Silent Night*, maybe Advent was a time for looking at the world the way it was before God sent Jesus into it.

With the lights on the Chrismon tree as seen above, Advent is a beautiful time, and if Advent is a time that can be marked with a tree, maybe it can also be a time of growth.

May this Advent be a time for growth for us. May Advent be a time when Oaklette as a congregation looks at its relationship with God and considers how we can live out that relationship after Christmas with an eye toward the world the way that God would have it be. Could that look like considering the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faith that Jesus cites in Matthew 23:23? There can be growth in that.

Ned



This week at Oaklette

Sunday, Dec. 7

9:30/9:45 a.m. Sunday school

9:30 a.m. SOTB

11 a.m. Worship for the second Sunday in Advent

6:30 p.m. Evening study

Monday, Dec. 8

10 a.m. Food pantry [Terri Webb and Brenda Swoope]

7 p.m. HRM Band

Wednesday, Dec. 10

6:30 p.m., choir practice

Thursday, Dec. 11

8:30 a.m. HSOBX

10 a.m. Bible study

Saturday, Dec. 13

11 a.m. United Methodist Women

6:30 p.m. HRM Band Christmas concert

Next Sunday, December 14

9:30/9:45 am Sunday School

9:30 am SOTM

11:00 am Christmas cantata

12:00 pm Staff-Support team meeting

6:30 p.m. Evening study

Birthdays this week

Elizabeth Reichling – December 8

Brandon Walsh – December 9

Shellene Castellow – December 9

Patricia Johnson – December 10

Rilee Carroll – December 12

Jerome Perry – December 13

Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 3:1-12, NIV

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."



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