

DECEMBER 2025

Advent Devotional

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS



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THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

2025 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

DR. DAVE SNYDER

Christmas season has arrived at the front steps of our hearts. For some, the arrival of yule tide began once the Halloween decorations were stashed away. For some, Thanksgiving needed the spotlight before Mannheim Steamroller invaded listening ears (full disclosure....my favorite Christmas music each season). Regardless of whatever category you find yourself in at the start of the Christmas season, you are now invited to join in anticipation for celebrating the birth of our Savior.

Recently, one of my children asked, "Dad, what do you enjoy more...Christmas morning or the time leading up to it?" What a great question! How would you answer that? Of course, the simple answer would be an immediate, "Christmas morning!" Yet, as you think about the anticipation of Advent, each day in December presents enjoyment if your soul is welcoming. Like a good movie you don't want to end, I find the time leading up to December 25th to be worshipful. When the decorations are put away and the music returns to a much wider variety, what will your memories look like?

Join me daily in slowing down the rapid pace of Christmas anticipation to savor the anticipation of the Incarnation. Each day, treat your soul to unhurried time with the Almighty. If needed, put your phone on DO NOT DISTURB, pour a cup of coffee, open God's Word, and warm your heart to His promises fulfilled. My hope is to assist in your journey of faith this month.

Brooke and I are blessed to have four children in our home. As you can imagine, the excitement of Christmas grows as days crawl closer to Christmas morning. Each year, we are blessed to experience Advent together. In 1865, Phillips Brooks, a 19th-century pastor from Boston traveled to the Holy Land. While in Jerusalem, he borrowed a horse and rode to Bethlehem to help with a Christmas Eve service. While there, he witnessed songs of praise and folks retelling the birth story with gladness in their hearts. Inspired, he returned home and wrote a carol for the children in Sunday School at Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia, PA. Years later, these words still ring with excitement as we journey through this season.

With Anticipation,
Dave Snyder

*O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.*

*O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.*

*How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.*

*O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels,
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!*

MARK 10:45

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.



DECEMBER 1

WHAT IS ADVENT?

I still feel like a child during this time of year. Following Thanksgiving, my heart begins to beat with the rhythm of Advent. The word advent itself means “arrival” or “an appearing or coming into place.” It is a time of preparation for the arrival of our Savior, born in a manger more than 2,000 years ago. It is a time for us to rejoice in the hope, love, joy, and peace from our Father in glory in the gift of His Son. Traditionally, we find these four words in the Advent candle wreath. I believe these words are more than a candle. They are embedded in our souls as promises in this world.

I wonder if you are new at this whole Advent idea. As a child, my idea of Advent was receiving chocolates each morning, leading up to Christmas day. Advent carries many traditions with many families. For the last few years, I have driven a jeep. One of our beloved members gifted our family with a duck Advent calendar. Yes, you read that correctly...each morning was a new duck for our jeep. The ducks served as a countdown to the glorious morning of Christmas. I cannot recall if the Christmas duck was the best duck of them all!

Advent is about the coming of Jesus into the world. The focus is on Jesus. According to Hebrews 1:3, He is, “The radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.” He is the One that came as a baby and died on the cross as a man, for the forgiveness of our sins and the assurance of our heavenly home. He came to give His life as a ransom for YOU. Let that Gospel truth flood your soul.

Today, pray for your heart to be prepared this month. Look with joy at Jesus, who gave himself to die for your sins and to grant you eternal life. Trust Him with every day of your life. Perhaps with some of you, that day begins now.

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

HEBREWS 1:1-2



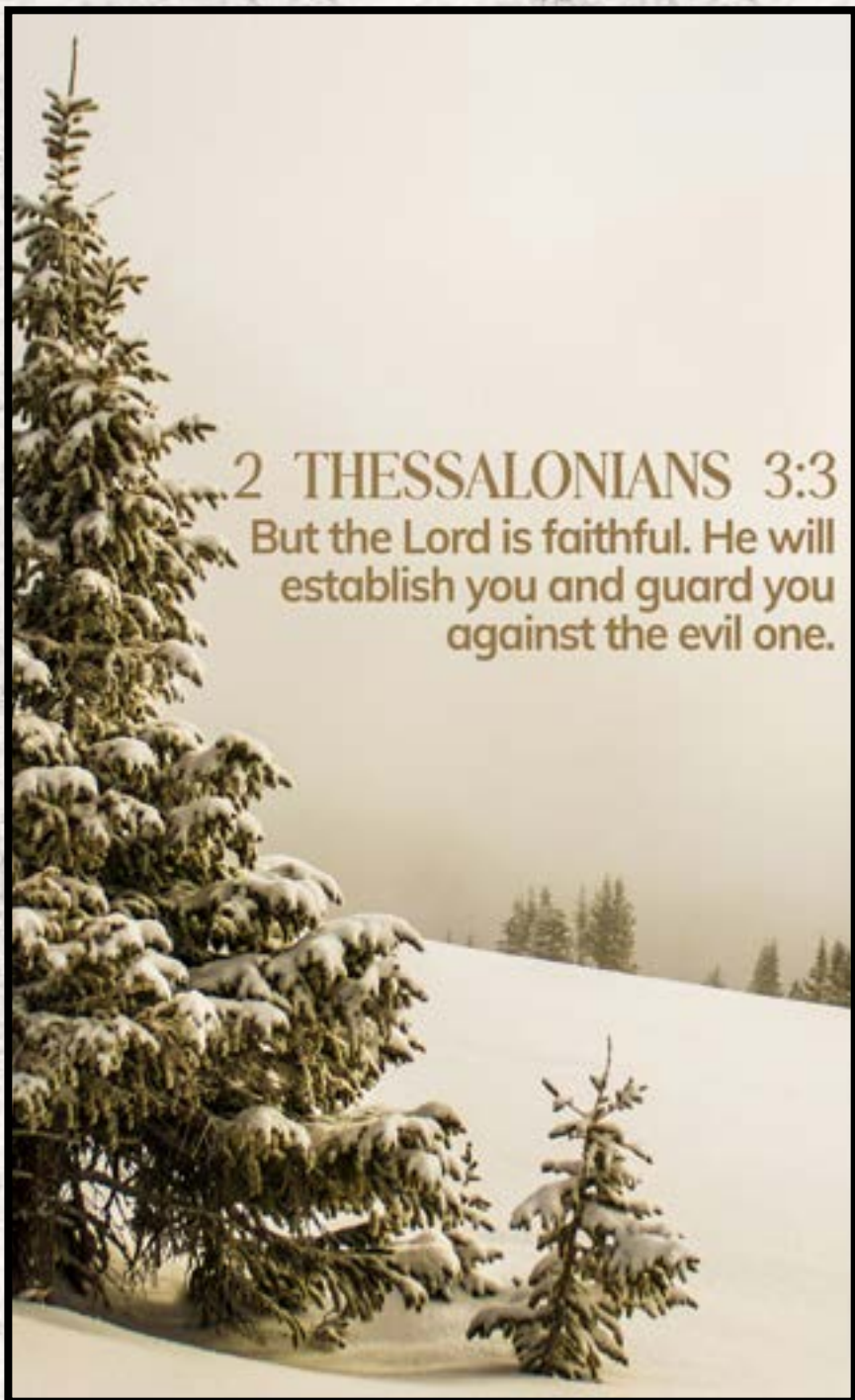
DECEMBER 2 JESUS ABOVE ALL

The beginning of Hebrews provides a beautiful entrance to the majesty of Christ. As we begin another Advent together, let us make a goal together; this month is all about Jesus. As you read Hebrews 1, you will notice Jesus is superior to everyone and everything created. He is more glorious than any gift exchanged, event planned, vacation traveled, and house decorated. The excitement, the anticipation for Christmas begins when your heart is in awe of the majesty of Jesus. With that declared, are you ready for Christmas?

We must guard our hearts this month and not get distracted with anything that has no eternal significance. Today is the beginning of a journey of praise. Our God is indeed faithful and true. Long ago, He spoke through the prophets and now...we hear His voice through the Son. He is indeed above all (John 3:31). His Name is above all names (Philippians 2:9). He holds all things together (Colossians 1:17). He is above all rule and authority (Ephesians 1:21). When we sing, when we give, when we travel, when we serve, and when we make memories with people we love during the Christmas season; may our hearts focus on exalting Jesus.

On rare occasions when I find myself in a store during the Christmas season, I'm humored by music played throughout the area. No other time in the year will songs be played, referencing the glory and majesty of Jesus. If I walked into a store in January, the music would fit the theme of the store. Yet, this month, I hear Jesus above all in certain songs. (And yes, I still do not like "Last Christmas"). I see nativity scenes throughout neighborhoods. I hear scripture cited at community events. I believe this month produces a hardwiring in our souls to place Jesus above all. Of course, not all of us do that. But what if you made that your ambition? What if this month, you invested each day in placing Jesus above all in your Christmas journey?

Today, embrace the beginning of Advent with the goal of placing Jesus above all. Look at how you will spend each day until December 25th. Make it a priority to worship Him daily. My hope is for this to be the best Christmas ever in your faith journey!



2 THESSALONIANS 3:3
But the Lord is faithful. He will
establish you and guard you
against the evil one.

DECEMBER 3 HE IS FAITHFUL

God is faithful to His promises. Can your word be trusted? Have there been times in your life when promises weren't kept? I remember years ago having a Christmas gift ruined days before Christmas morning. My parents were gracious to purchase a hammered dulcimer and had it hidden at a nearby friend's home. A few nights before Christmas during a dinner with a bunch of folks from church, one of the girls from the youth group shouted, "Dave, you are getting a hammered dulcimer for Christmas!" I was dumbfounded. I did not know how to react, but I remember going to bed that night full of annoyance and frustration. A promise was broken as she revealed the surprise. Promises kept are a glorious blessing. Promises broken create chaos and uncertainty. Christmas is all about promises kept by our gracious God.

When I think of Jesus born in Bethlehem, I see promises fulfilled. The Father sent the Son to shine brilliant light in a world of darkness. The Father sent the Son to rescue sinners from the curse from Eden. He came, conquered sin and death, rose again on the third day, ascended to glory, and is now at the right hand of the Father. The foundation of Christmas is the faithfulness of our God.

If you are feeling hurt or betrayed this season, turn to Jesus. If you are struggling to sing the next carol, trust in Jesus. If grief covers your soul like an unwanted frozen blanket, cry to Jesus. In Him, we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7). In Him, we have victory (1 Corinthians 15:57). In Him, we see unending faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13). Join me this Christmas season in worshipping the Promise Maker and the Promise Keeper.

Today, share your pains, worries, and struggles with God. Spend time examining His faithfulness in the birth of Jesus. He made a promise to love, care, and deliver you from sin. Jesus fulfilled that promise. Rejoice today.

⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.



GALATIANS 4:5-7

DECEMBER 4 FAMILY TIME

The holiday season delivers various family dynamics. For some, this time of year brings excitement while others experience sadness or tension. Grandparents wait anxiously to know when the time is right to see the look of grandchildren's faces as gifts are opened. Newlyweds are figuring out the travel schedule to see both sides of the family. Sadly, some will face the Christmas season with sadness over seeing an empty place at the dinner table. No matter how you look at this Christmas time, remember the blessing of God's family. Take a few moments and read Galatians 4:5-7.

I love this old quote from C.S. Lewis, "The Son of God became man to enable men to become sons of God." The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's eternal promise in rescuing us from sin and adoption of us into His family forever. The Son came to redeem (Ephesians 1:7). The Holy Spirit came to adopt (Romans 8:15). This is all good news! Regardless of your earthly family dynamic this Advent, rejoice in belonging to the family of God!

Can you identify someone that will spend the holiday season alone? Is there someone in your church family/work/neighborhood that has no family? This Advent season take the opportunity to extend an invitation for someone to be part of your family. It is a great way to shine the light of Jesus and remind someone of the family in which they eternally belong, the family of God.

Today, think about your family. How can you invest this Advent season into their lives? Pray and connect with someone that has no family...or no healthy family dynamic. Rejoice, for you belong to the family of God!

DECEMBER 5

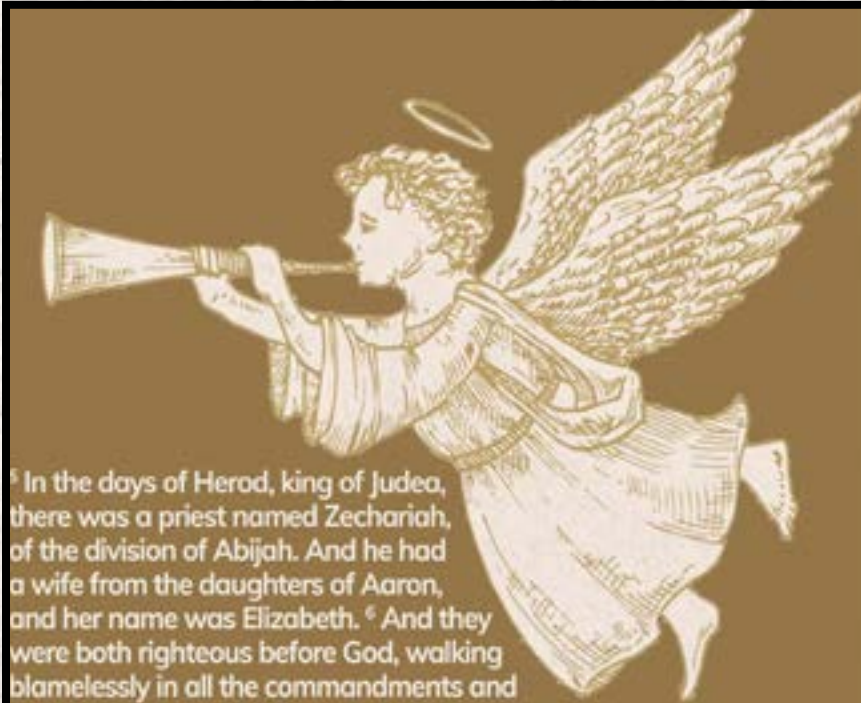
THE WILD MAN

It is safe to categorize John the Baptist as a wild man. He wore a garment of camel's hair while supporting a leather belt around his waist. His diet consisted of locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4). Yet, this unusual character in the bible was used by God to prepare the way of Jesus. In Luke 1:5-17, you will see God's plan for John the Baptist. Read it more than once so the details of the birth foretold by the angel of the Lord will be in your mind as you read today's devotional.

John the Baptist was to Israel as Advent is to us. He prepared Israel for the message of the King. He went ahead of Jesus to proclaim Him in the wilderness as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He would bring forth His Name and message, serving as the one to make many ready for the opportunity of salvation. As a humble messenger, Jesus called him great (Matthew 11:11). He came to serve and support the mission of glory on the earth. He was prepared and made sure many were as well.

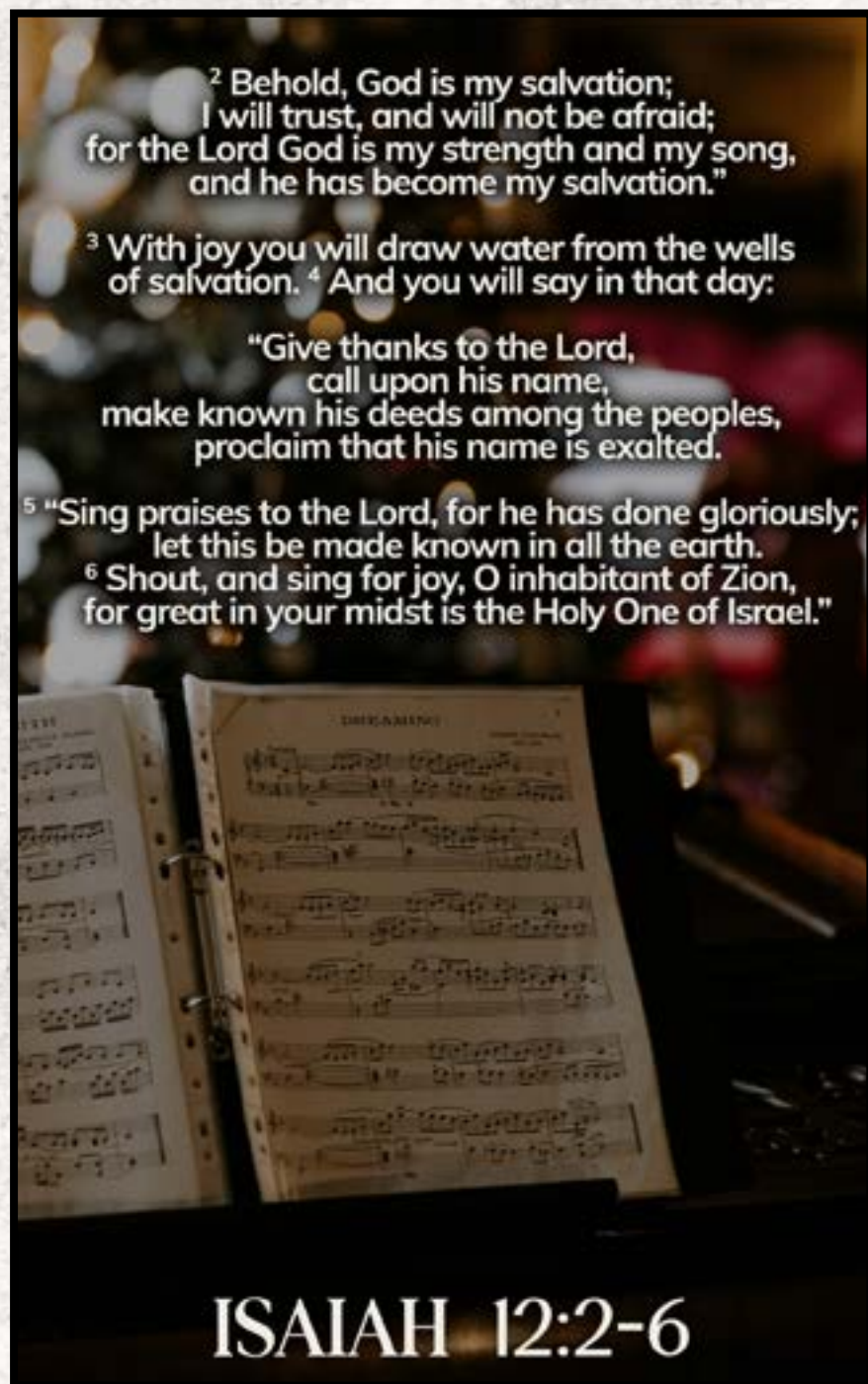
Are you prepared for heaven? Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Are you living your life as a messenger of His, for the advancement of His kingdom on this earth? Perhaps this Advent year is your time to be a messenger? When I read of John the Baptist, I'm drawn by how God can use anyone for kingdom purposes!

Today, look at your life and how time is spent. Are you living on mission? Are you living with kingdom readiness? How can you serve today as a messenger of the Gospel for others? Take a page from John the Baptist's playbook as he dedicated his life as a voice in the wilderness...shouting for the world to hear of Jesus.



⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

LUKE 1:5-17



² Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the Lord God is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation."

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells
of salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day:

"Give thanks to the Lord,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

ISAIAH 12:2-6

DECEMBER 6

SING LOUD!

It is no secret to my church family in Pensacola...I love Christmas music. I love the words of such powerful carols and the joy heard in familiar melodies. From Charles Wesley to Nat King Cole, music consumes my soul like light invading a dark room. A little secret...Christmas music is playing right now in October as I write these words for your reading in December.

Beyond just familiar tunes that stir your holiday spirit, think of this season as a time for praising the Name of our Redeemer. In today's scripture, we read of God's grace in drawing water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah opens our souls to join a chorus of praise for our God. As you get busy with this Christmas season, will you make time to praise the Lord? Will you proclaim His Name? Will you make Him known to others? Will you share of what He has done for you?

Let's join Isaiah's proclamation in shouting aloud and singing for joy today. One of my favorite lines of any Christmas hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1739. Soak in these rich words.

*Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb:
veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.*

I enjoy going for nighttime walks during the Christmas season. Listening to Christ-centered Christmas songs while looking at neighborhood lights serves as a great environment of worship. Sometimes life gets too complicated and worship is forgotten. Do your soul a favor today and worship.

Sing loud the praises to our King! If you are reading this today, please email me the song you chose for the day. I'd love to hear of your time of personal worship.

Today, put some Christmas music on. Read Isaiah 12:2-6. Rejoice in the joy of your salvation. Advent presents us an opportunity each day for reflecting and celebrating what matters most. Or I should say...who matters most. His Name is Jesus.



¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:1-14

DECEMBER 7

THE LIVING WORD

Jesus is the Word fulfilled. Scripture weaves in a beautiful tapestry of the eternality of Jesus. The baby we celebrate in the manger is the eternal Son of God who came as a man to save us from our sins. He is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). When we see the baby in the manger, we see the very author and redeemer of life. He came more than 2000 years ago to fulfill the promises made in the Old Testament. Here are some for your joy today.

Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) – fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:26-31

Jesus would inherit an everlasting kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-13, Psalm 89:29, Isaiah 9:7) – fulfilled in Luke 1:33, 2 Timothy 2:8

Jesus would proclaim good news to the poor (Isaiah 61:1, Micah 3:8) – fulfilled in Matthew 11:5, 21:14, Luke 4:18

Jesus would offer physical healing (Isaiah 35:5-6, 42:7-18, 53:5) – fulfilled in Matthew 11:5, Luke 7:22, John 9:6-7, 11:43-44

Jesus would ride a donkey! (Zechariah 9:9) – fulfilled in Matthew 21:5-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-40, John 12:12-19

Jesus would be betrayed (Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13) – fulfilled in Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11, Luke 22:47-48, John 13:18-30

Jesus would provide atonement for sin (Isaiah 53:1-12, Malachi 3:3) – fulfilled in Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, Luke 22:63-65, John 19:16-30, Romans 5:6-8, Hebrews 1:3

As you rejoice in the birth of Jesus, reflect on prophecies made in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. Warren Wiersbe once said, “When the child of God looks into the Word of God, he sees the Son of God. And, he is transformed by the Spirit of God to share in the glory of God.” Such powerful words to consider on this December 7th day. Rejoice today in the Living Word!

Today, look throughout Scripture to see Jesus. Read of the promises He fulfilled in Genesis 12:3-7, 14:18, 17:19, 22:8-18, and 49:10. That is just some in Genesis alone! The birth of Jesus revealed the faithfulness of our God. Rejoice in His faithful promises made and kept today.

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
⁹ Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

ISAIAH 52:7-9



DECEMBER 8

TELL THE GOOD NEWS!

Many years ago, before the invention of smart phones and social media, word of mouth carried news to others. Often, my youth group at church would go on winter trips after Christmas. I remember the excitement of sharing with my friends all the presents opened as we rode an uncomfortable bus. One Christmas, I received a super Nintendo from my parents. I remember running to my friends in the church lobby and yelling my good news. Of course, they responded with their own good news. Nobody had to force us to share our excitement. In fact, adults probably preferred we kept our voices down as we made the winter trek to the retreat center.

In today's time, it is easy to share good news. For example, if I were to post a life update about my family online, within minutes I would have folks commenting. Back in 2018, I shared online our news of moving to Pensacola to begin pastoring FBC Pensacola. An hour later, there were hundreds of comments on my Facebook post. Some comments were from people I've not spoken with in many years. Yet, the news travelled fast. After seven years, I can say it was really good news!

What news are you holding onto this Christmas? What hope defines your life? As Christ-followers, we have the best news of all time. Tim Keller describes the good news as, "Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with Him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with Him forever." I love this definition. In the Gospel, we have the best news of all time. Christmas serves as a reminder of God's glorious faithfulness in Christ, born in the manger. Will you share this good news today?

*Today, share the good news. Look into why the news is good!
Salvation was born in Bethlehem. His Name is Jesus.*

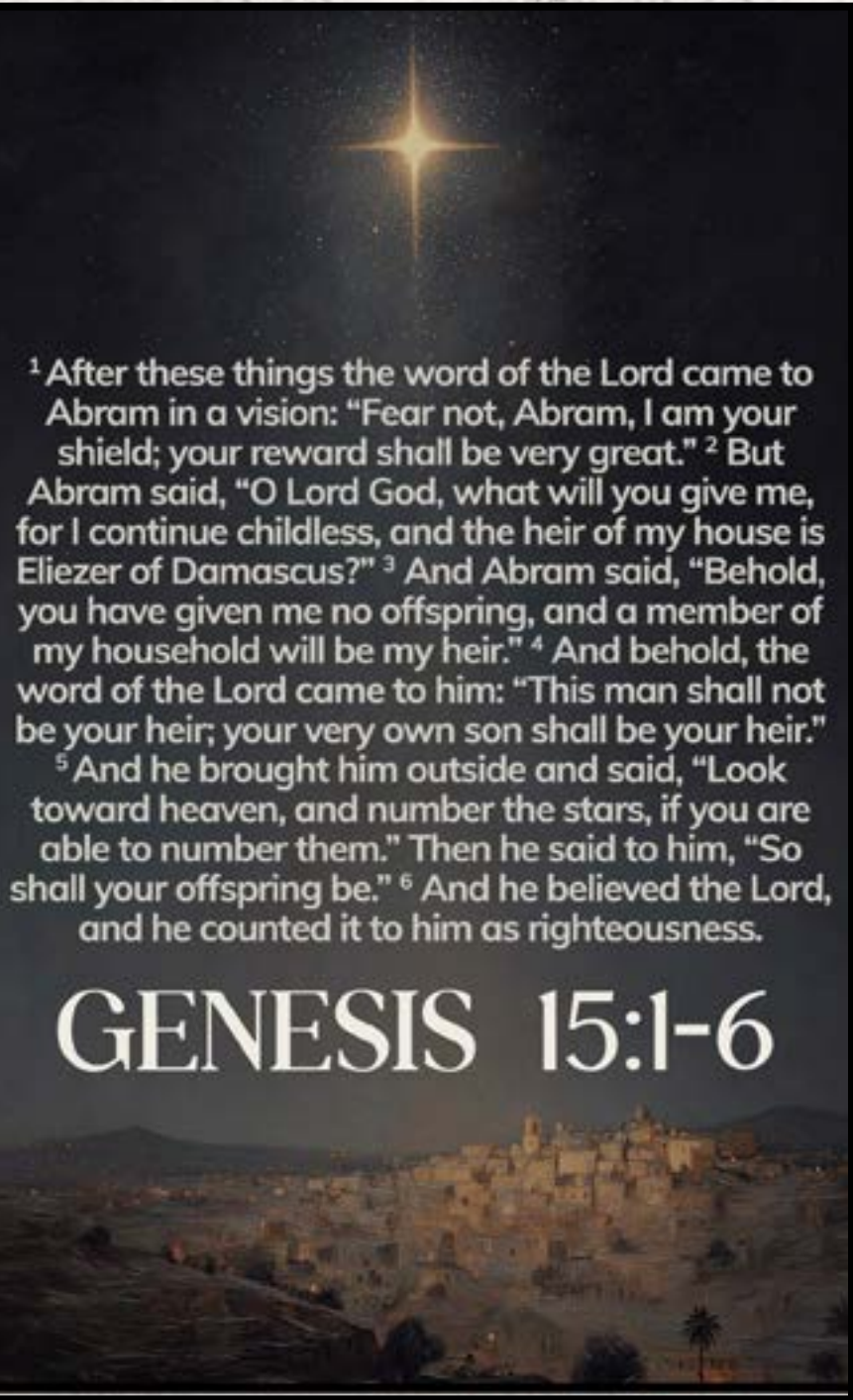
DECEMBER 9 LOOK UP

Tucked inside the Abrahamic covenant, you will discover two words, “Look up.” When was the last time you looked up at the night’s sky and marvel at God’s creation? One of my favorite places to look up at night is in southern Illinois. When distance separates the city from the country, stars are better admired. It is truly glorious to see God’s glory on display each night!

As I read Genesis 15:1-6 in preparation to write today’s devotion-
al, my mind went to the shepherds’ scene in the field at night. In
Luke 2:8-14, the shepherds experienced the glory of God fully
displayed in the angels announcing the birth of Jesus. I imagine
that night of stargazing turned into a worship service. In Mat-
thew 2:9-11, the wise men followed the star all the way to Jesus. I
like what Dr. James Kennedy stated, “The star of Bethlehem was
a star of joy. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceed-
ingly great joy. All true joy comes from Him.” Just like in Abra-
ham’s experience, God revealed His faithfulness in the night sky.

Are you in a season of doubt or anxiety? Are you struggling to
trust where God is leading and what He is doing in your life? Is it
difficult to embrace this Christmas season, because of so many
unanswered questions? Perhaps tonight, you can treat your soul
to LOOK UP and see His glorious handiwork in the sky. As He
knows each star by name (Psalm 147:4), He knows you. Put that
truth into your heart and mind today.

*Today, look up. See what God has done in placing the stars in the
sky. He is the same God that is faithful to lead you today. Cast
your worries to His attention. Exalt His Name by seeing what He
has provided you in the Son.*



¹ After these things the word of the Lord came to
Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your
shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But
Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me,
for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is
Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold,
you have given me no offspring, and a member of
my household will be my heir.” ⁴ And behold, the
word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not
be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.”
⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look
toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are
able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So
shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord,
and he counted it to him as righteousness.

GENESIS 15:1-6

DECEMBER 10 HOPE FOUND

The world was broken while the earthly parents of Jesus arrived at Bethlehem. Perhaps hope was hard to see as Mary and Joseph desperately searched for a place to stay. Sadly, as the story continues, we see no rooms left in the Inn. One of my favorite songs this time of year is *While You Were Sleeping* by Casting Crowns. The song has this powerful line:

*Oh Bethlehem, what you have missed while you were sleeping,
For God became a man and stepped into your world today,
Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history
As a city with no room for its King while you were sleeping.*

Just think about what transpired when these faithful soon to be parents arrived at Bethlehem. No place to sleep! No guaranteed roof over their heads or a dependable place to lay down. For most people, this is awful. For a pregnant lady, this is beyond awful. Yet, this was in the plans of God's great design for redemption. Micah 5:1-6 painted the picture before the scene occurred.

Rather than coming to earth amidst fanfare and in lavish settings, the King of Glory and God's own Son was born among animals. He came on a rescue mission; to save us from our sins and give us everlasting life. Jesus, the hope of glory, fulfilled the OT prophecies. Mary and Joseph, by God's grace and plan, experienced God's promises accomplished.

I'm not sure what is happening in your world today, but God knows. Trust Him and cling to His promises fulfilled in Jesus. Sin was paid, death was defeated, and redemption was poured out. Rejoice!

Today, remind yourself of God's promises. Take a tour throughout the Bible of promises made and kept. Spend some time in prayer, meditating on the promises of God.

¹ Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops;
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel
on the cheek.

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.

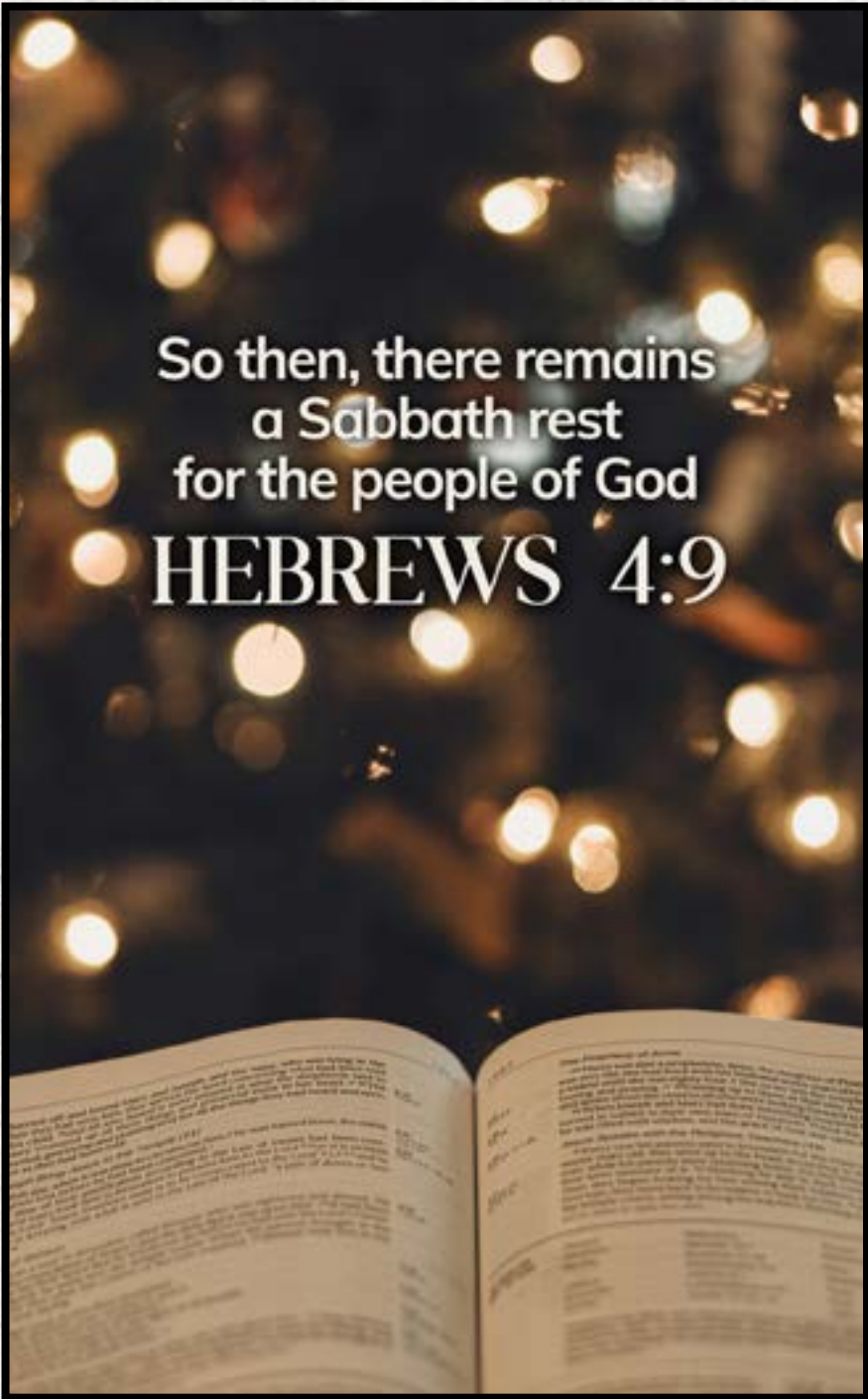
³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

⁵ And he shall be their peace.
When the Assyrian comes into our land
and treads in our palaces,
then we will raise against him seven shepherds
and eight princes of men;

⁶ they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,
and the land of Nimrod at its entrances;
and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian
when he comes into our land
and treads within our border.

MICAH 5:1-6



So then, there remains
a Sabbath rest
for the people of God
HEBREWS 4:9

DECEMBER 11 TIRED YET?

Are you tired yet? It is hard to believe ten days have passed this month. How much have you done so far? Would you consider yourself to be a Martha or Mary this Christmas season? (For more understanding of that question, read Luke 10:38-42). The Marthas of Christmas tend to be busy. Organizing gifts, cooking meals, making party plans, overscheduling, and nonstop decorating can consume each day. Are you a Martha? Jared C. Wilson cautioned, “Her busyness was a distraction from Jesus.” Avoid the distractions this Christmas season!

Or, do you follow Mary’s example? Are you carving out time to stop and rest in the presence and joy of the Lord? When was the last time you stopped what you were doing and enjoyed the power of the Gospel? Christmas presents great opportunities for worship and adoration. Avoid letting all the “To do lists” interfere with your awe in the Savior’s birth. We can’t afford to miss this season of wonder. C.H. Spurgeon once said, “Our hope in Christ is the mainstream of our joy.” Hope becomes more alive when rest is applied to busy holiday planning.

Each Christmas season, my concern is busyness taking over and then January arrives. I do not want to look back and regret not soaking in peaceful, intentional time with the Redeemer. I believe Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) and with that belief, I want to rest in Him today.

Are you tired yet? Choose what is necessary. Make time for what matters most. Learn the discipline of saying, “No” when needed. Your soul will thank you today as you find rest and joy in Christ. Advent is all about Him. Let today be about Him in your journey.

Today, stop and rest. Before you run your errands or continue with holiday planning, rest and focus on the purpose of Advent. His Name is Jesus!

She will bear a son,
and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people
from their sins.

MATTHEW 1:21



DECEMBER 12

AVOID FAMILIARITY

His Name is Jesus and He came to save. The instructions from Gabriel could not be clearer. As we are another day closer to Christmas, remember the power and grace found in His Name. It is easy for any of us to become too familiar with the birth story of our Savior and not see the magnitude of such statements like Matthew 1:21. Reading of Gabriel's announcement, the journey to Bethlehem, the birth, shepherds, wise men, etc. can become too routine if we aren't careful. Today, avoid familiarity.

Read the verse as if it is the first time the news has been announced. The silence from the Old Testament years is now over. Jesus, prophesied throughout so many years, is now on His way to arrival. It is important for our souls to avoid reading the nativity story without anticipation, love, and hope. Alistair Begg warns, "Each Christmas, we face the temptation to allow familiarity with the Nativity scene to breed complacency and to blind us to the awe-inspiring truth that as we look at the baby in a Bethlehem manger, we are looking in on God Himself in the form of a servant." Our God came to save. Our God came to restore. Our God came to redeem. His Name is Jesus.

Today, look with joy over the power of His Name. His Name defined His mission and gave us eternal life (Acts 4:12). Praise His Name today and avoid familiarity.

Today, reflect on the Name of Jesus. Read Matthew 1:21 and then see in the Gospels why His Name matters.

DECEMBER 13

THE JOURNEY

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

LUKE 2:1-5



So often we read Luke 2 during Christmas time and skip over important details. The journey Mary and Joseph took together was an expression of both faith and obedience. As the chosen couple to bring the Christ into the world, they knew the journey would involve radical dependency on God's strength. Read Luke 2:1-5 and avoid skipping over the details. Allow the scene to capture your mind and heart.

How long are your car rides during the holidays? Do you drive long distances to see family and friends? A couple years ago, my in-laws moved from Yorktown, Virginia to Pensacola. I love having them just a few minutes away! Before their move to Pensacola, our drive each Christmas was quite a journey. From our driveway to their Yorktown driveway was 915 miles. On those long car rides, patience was greatly tested. We drove in the comfort of a van and the privilege of hotel lodging on the way. Mary and Joseph's journey...not so much.

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem would take 4-7 days, depending on weather and physical ability to traverse many hours. Many estimate it was close to a 90 mile journey. Mary, a young but very pregnant woman, showed great courage and trust in following the required census. Joseph, a man trusting God while loving his wife, showed great strength in the journey. They traveled as a team, led by the Spirit in preparation to deliver the Son.

Faith and obedience are not always easy. For some, 2025 has been a difficult year. Yet, here we all are at Advent, looking forward to celebrating the birth of our Savior. Today, look at the incredible journey by Mary and Joseph. See their willingness to go where needed for God to give us His Son. Their journey was arduous, yet they overcame. You can overcome as well.

Today, pray for strength in your journey. Perhaps the road to this Christmas has been difficult. You are in good company! God not only knows, but He guarantees strength and victory. Trust Him today. Rejoice, for the journey to Bethlehem gave us the blessing of salvation.

DECEMBER 14 GOING HOME

There is just something about being home for Christmas. There is just something about waking up and entering the living room with people you love and treasure the most on this earth. Home for Christmas has changed in my life. From racing home after college finals to my parents' house to waking up on Christmas morning with my wife and four excited kids; home for Christmas is a blessing on this earth. Where do you hope to be on Christmas morning? Who do you hope to enjoy the holidays with?

In 1943, Bing Crosby famously recorded, "I'll Be Home for Christmas." Originally written by Kim Gannon and Walter Kent, the song was written in recognition of soldiers filled with hope in being home for Christmas. The song quickly became a Christmas classic.

Jesus has promised us a future home. In John 14:1-6, we understand that He went before us to prepare a place. Through His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus provided us salvation and eternal life in heaven. What a joyful gift to celebrate... especially on Christmas!

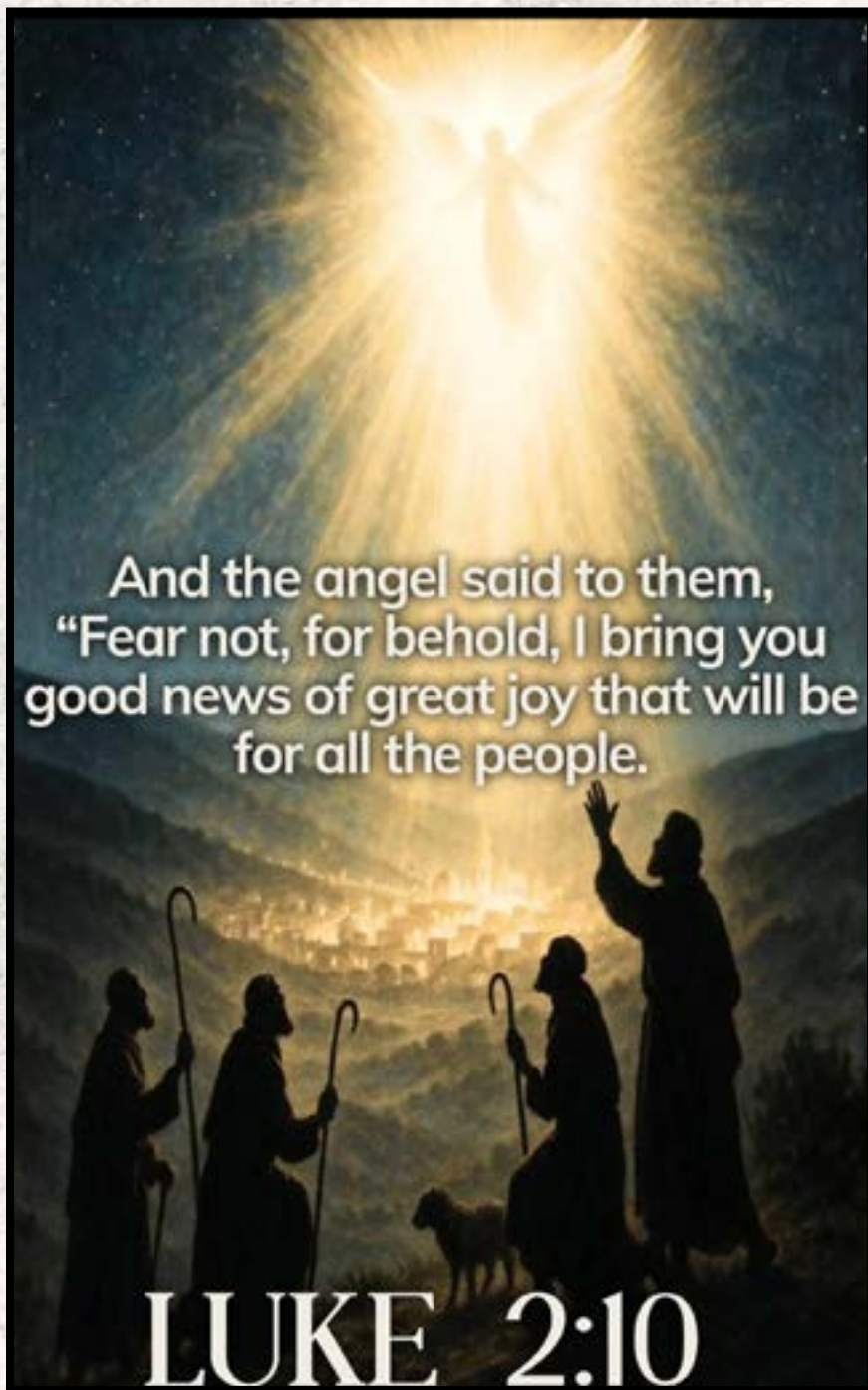
As a Christ follower, this journey on earth is not your final one. You have a future home in glory that awaits. This Christmas remember the hope you have in Jesus. Regardless of how good or bad the days or seasons may be; your future home is a guaranteed blessing. Matthew West stated, "Christmas is a time to return to the wonder, hope, joy, love, and peace offered to us when we turn our focus to the gift of Jesus." Place your focus on the promises Jesus made. He has guaranteed a future home in glory in the Gospel...and He has also promised guidance in your temporary residence today (John 14:26).

For some, this may be their first Christmas in heaven. As you miss family and friends no longer in your living room, take comfort and hold fast to the hope you have in Jesus. By His grace, you will indeed see them again.

Today, pray with gratitude over the hope of heaven Jesus delivered. Pray with joy over the guarantee of a future home that will be a blessing your heart cannot fathom. Place your hope in the victory of your salvation in Jesus.



Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **1 PETER 1:13**



DECEMBER 15 JOY IN HIS ARRIVAL

On a normal night, shepherds were interrupted with a joyful message from the heavenly host. The proclamation of a baby born in a manger, the hope of the world. I like how the writer makes it known that this was, “good news of a great joy that will be for all the people.” Jesus is the gift and treasure of joy for this lost world. The shepherds were privileged to have a front row seat to the joy of the Lord. Christ was born. Joy arrived.

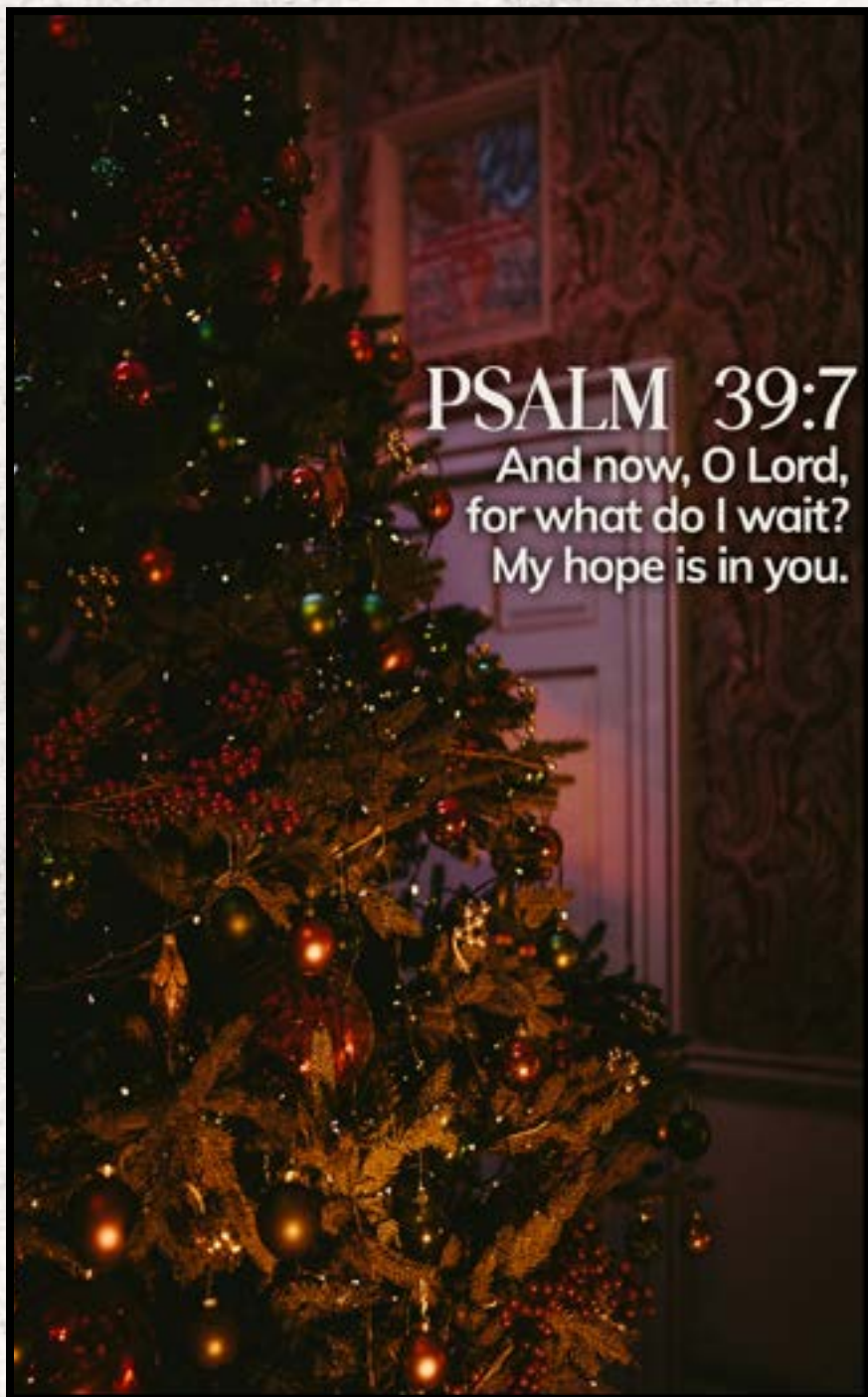
As you continue in this busy Christmas season, make sure your joy is set on the Good News of Jesus. The Gospel is the Good News. Jesus came, the deliverer of joy, to the lost and broken. We can celebrate this Advent season, because joy is possible. Jesus came to save sinners, and He will return again. We are not left in this world to walk aimlessly and without hope. Joy promises each of us a better story.

In 1719, Isaac Watts published a book of poems, based out of the Psalms. Taking the truth from Psalm 98, Watts wrote a poem in celebration of the joy of Jesus in the church and for the world. The original poem was not designed to be used as an Advent hymn, yet the church adopted it as a song of joy for the arrival of Christ. A century after the poem was written, parts of the poem were used to celebrate the birth of Jesus in the Advent. You may know these words:

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven . . . and heaven . . . and nature sing.*

Yes, joy arrived in the manger. We celebrate Him as the Savior of the world. His name is Jesus and He is where joy must rest. This Advent season, celebrate the good news of a great joy that is for.. YOU.

Today, pray for your heart to rest in the hope of the Gospel. The good news that Jesus came, and He will return. He came to rescue you and to give you eternal life. This is joy like no other!



DECEMBER 16 IMPATIENT MUCH?

As a child, the month of December was oftentimes a long month of waiting. I remember seeing a few presents added under the tree every other day...leading up to the night before Christmas. I remember picking up mysterious wrapped boxes and shaking them with curiosity of what was inside. December was a month of waiting. I hoped for many things on Christmas morning. Hope is brought to the frontline in the battle of waiting.

I must admit, I am not a very patient person. Waiting sometimes takes its toll on me. In a fast WIFI world, I don't like waiting. Can you relate? Yet, in times of waiting, our hope can grow. Some wait for good news. Some wait, fearful of bad news. We all take turns in the world of waiting. If you are in a waiting season of life, where is your hope?

Today, I want you to spend a few minutes in Psalm 39. In verse 7, David recognizes his waiting season and boldly proclaims his hope in the Lord. David knew that all he had in his life was hope in the Lord. Yes, he made plenty of mistakes. I imagine you and I have regrets as well. Yet, he chose to wait and hope in the Lord.

After the final chapter of the Old Testament concluded, the people waited. Many argue that period of waiting lasted a little over 400 years. In this intertestamental period, there was no voice from God through a prophet. Yet, in the time of waiting...people kept hope alive. Their faith led them to believe in a future joy. This waiting season of hope would one day experience the birth of hope in a manger in Bethlehem.

If you are in a season of waiting, keep hope alive in the Gospel. Remember, God did not leave you alone to battle through sin and this world alone. He sent Jesus, born in a manger, to be your living hope. Trust Him today while waiting.

Today, pray as you wait. Trust the Lord with all the unknowns in your life. Remind yourself of His faithfulness. In whatever circumstance, remember the great reward in waiting. He is with you. He won't leave you.

But godliness
with contentment
is great gain



1 TIMOTHY 6:6

DECEMBER 17 THE GIFT OF CONTENTMENT

In all the years of life, I have never opened a gift labeled, "Contentment." Yet, I can sadly share many gifts opened that were not desired or appreciated. I remember one year receiving a 1985 VHS version of, "King David," featuring Richard Gere. It may be a favorite film for someone out there, but it didn't make my list. I'm sure you can look back and remember undesirable gifts under the tree. What if this Christmas, you received the gift of contentment? Would you say that is on your list?

The Christmas season shows the extreme nature of consumerism in our world. Every year, we want more and better gifts. After all the gifts have been opened and wrapping paper is scattered all around the living room, do you feel better? Mixed in with our discontentment, envy can break in, and the comparison game begins. Everyone wants the newest and shiniest toy. Discontentment is not focusing only on stuff. A single person may be discouraged after seeing a close friend get engaged. A married couple may be hurt when others are announcing pregnancy.

Someone announces retirement while another grudgingly sees more years of work ahead. The key for facing all these distractions and challenges is deep seeded contentment in Christ.

Remember, following Jesus produces a life of contentment and joy. In this world, we will face many trials. We will have difficult seasons and Christmas disappointments. Yet, Christ has given us joy that outlasts any circumstance or obstacle. Stuff on this earth does not last. The stuff that consumes us this holiday season will eventually fade away. What we have in Jesus will last for all eternity. Contentment is seeing how God provides what you really need. May your drive and ambitions for happiness be aimed at Christ this Advent season (Hebrews 13:5-6). In Him, you can be content. Even if you open an old VHS tape for Christmas.

Today, find your contentment in Christ. Let your identity be wrapped up in what He has delivered and promised. Avoid distractions that lead to discontentment. He is always better than what is under your tree.



The people who
walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land
of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

ISAIAH 9:2

The light shines in the
darkness, and the
darkness has not
overcome it.

JOHN 1:5

DECEMBER 18

TURN THE LIGHT ON!

I have a history of getting hurt in darkness. From stepping on a sharp toy to missing a step, dark rooms in my house have been my nemesis. One time, I did a complete flip over my suitcase in the middle of the night. That may have been one of many times I should've listened to Brooke and put the bags away after trips. Do you have any stories of times darkness has hurt you? Or perhaps embarrassed you? I will argue nothing is more terrifying than seeing a child looking over you in your bedroom in the middle of the night.

Christmas declares Jesus came as the Light (John 8:12) that conquered darkness. Isaiah 9:2 points to the Son in John 1:5. I love thinking of Christ as the Light of the world. In Him, we have the light that never burns out (Matthew 5:16). Randy Alcorn adds, "This present world is still cursed with sin and suffering, but these obstacles can't trump joy or diminish the light that dawned at Christ's incarnation. He has already come, and with Him came light, hope, and redemption—the down payment of this world's final transformation, when we'll experience His brightness firsthand." Walk in His light today.

In the Gospel, the marvelous light of Jesus took away our darkness (1 Peter 2:9). Clinging to His light will make darkness flee on your faith journey. How shall we look at darkness today? Look at this layout.

Darkness deceives...light leads.

Darkness steals...light rescues.

Darkness hurts...light heals.

In Jesus, darkness has no victory. In Jesus, light is triumphant. In Jesus, we must shine the light all around the world. This light we carry is worth sharing this Advent season! Tomorrow, we will spend more time with that challenge.

Today, exchange the darkness for His light. Stop trying to survive on your own. Darkness hurts, but light heals. Trust and receive the healing gift of the Light of the World (John 8:12).

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

MATTHEW 5:14-16



DECEMBER 19

FLASHLIGHT TAG

One of my favorite games growing up was flashlight tag. The rules are simple. One person has a flashlight and runs around in darkness, looking to shine on others. Once the last person is caught by the light, the game is over. The kid that brought the Streamlight stinger 2020 was usually picked last to be, “it.” Rules were often broken as some would lie and pretend the light did not hit them. I still know them by name and pray they have changed their ways.

As a Christ-follower, we can look at life in some ways like flash-light tag. Each day, we carry the light of our salvation (Psalm 27:1). All around us there are people walking in darkness. Christmas time serves as an open field of mission opportunities. Many hearts are drawn to generosity this time of year. With such love and compassion warming our hearts on cold winter days, why not shine His light on others? A simple invitation to attend the upcoming Christmas Eve service or a kind gesture to someone in need can open the door for gospel conversations. You don’t have to go very far to see someone in darkness. For the glory of Jesus, we must shine the light all around the world...beginning in our neighborhood.

Light has a way of changing darkness into joy. In my neighborhood, there is a house that goes all out each year for Christmas decorating. Sometimes at night as I’m driving home with much on my mind, the holiday lights from this beloved house will transform my mindset. Such Christmas majestic illumination makes the nights so much better. Of course, I arrive home and feel challenged to put more lights up outside. After living in my house for over seven years, the lights are the same at our house.

I am so glad His light never fails. On difficult days, turning to John 8:12 fills my heart like light filling a dark sanctuary. Join me today in worshipping Jesus...the Light of the world.

Today, take the light and shine on others. Pray and ask God for opportunities to be used for kingdom growth. Call someone or write an encouraging note. Be kind to someone overworked in the stores. Help someone in need without any strings attached. Above all...share the Gospel today.



DECEMBER 20 HOLDING LOVE

When you place your eyes on the baby in the manger, remember the love of God. The baby would grow to be a sinless man, who would take the wages of sin for us. He exchanged His righteousness for our unrighteousness. In Jesus, we have the perfect definition of love (Romans 5:8). As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, we must hold fast to the love of God through Jesus Christ.

I still remember holding all four of our children when they were newborns. I still remember seeing them for the first time and feeling a love that wasn't in my heart prior to their arrival. As I think about the manger scene, I wonder what Mary and Joseph experienced as they held our Savior for the first time. As any earthly parents have experienced, I imagine they had deep love in their hearts. I've heard it said that children will never understand how much their parents can love them. In the Gospel story, the baby held by Mary and Joseph would give them love that no parent could ever imagine. The baby was the Savior of the world. He was God's gift of love for our broken and sinful world.

Back in December 2009, I was in Atlanta serving at the Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Processing Center. As we were inspecting boxes prior to their final packaging, a song came on the speakers. At this time, Brooke was seven months pregnant with Eden. Any song about babies caught my attention that year! I still had so many questions in my heart of what it was going to be like to hold my baby girl. This song, by Ben Glover, Jason Ingram, and Joy Williams, has become one of my favorites each Advent season.

*It's still a mystery to me
That the hands of God could be so small
How tiny fingers reaching in the night
Were the very hands that measured the sky*

*Hallelujah, hallelujah
Heaven's love reaching down to save the world
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Son of God, servant King
Here with us, You're here with us*

*It's still a mystery to me, oh
How His infant eyes have seen the dawn of time
How His ears have heard an angel's symphony
But still, Mary had to rock her Savior to sleep*

This Advent season, study and soak in the love of Jesus. Remind yourself of the treasure of His grace and mercy. Follow His story after His birth and see how His love changed the world. Perhaps the greatest gift you can receive this Christmas is the love of God? I have good news. You don't have to wait until Christmas morning to receive it. You can have it right now.

Today, pray for the love of Jesus to guide your affections. Look into the Bible and educate yourself on the love of God. Get out a sheet of paper or use this book to write out those verses. Keep them as treasures throughout every year.



DECEMBER 21

THE TWELVE WORD GOSPEL

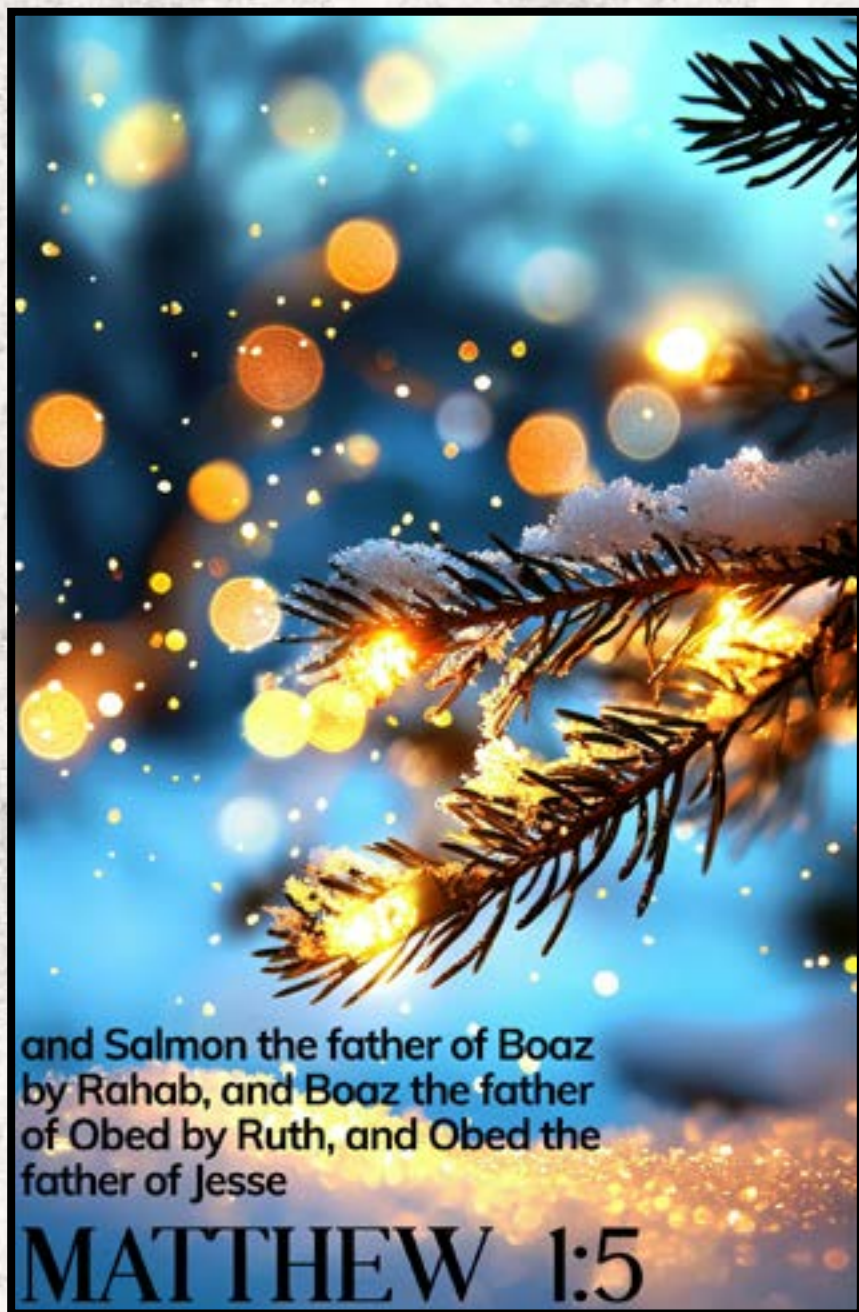
On December 9, 1965...A Charlie Brown Christmas first premiered on CBS. Charlie Brown, frustrated with everyone's lack of preparation for the Christmas play yelled, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?!" What happens next has changed lives for centuries. Linus answered Charlie's frustration by quoting Luke 2:8-14. One of my favorite parts of the Christmas season is watching this classic...and seeing Linus drop his security blanket as his heart is secure in the truth shared from Luke's Gospel.

I believe Charlie's question can also be answered in Titus 2:11. In just twelve words, Titus shares what Christmas is all about. The Greek word used for "appeared" is where our English word epiphany derives from. We celebrate this epiphany...God Himself came and graciously gave salvation. He came, not because of our worthiness, but because of our need. Alistair Begg said it well, "As baby Jesus was asleep in that manger, the shadow of the cross was already cast over the cradle." Christmas is all about the gospel of our Risen Savior.

Sometimes we can overcomplicate this time of year. As we are just days away from Christmas, calm your schedule some with Gospel reminders. Earlier this month, we examined the necessity of rest during the Christmas season. The twelve word Christmas message in Titus 2:11 can give clarity, guidance, and peace as last-minute shopping and planning wreaks havoc on anxious souls.

Luke 2:10 gave a message our world needs to hear today. Christmas is the arrival of good news that will bring great joy to all people. All need to hear this message. All need to be transformed by this message. All need to see such power and deliverance in Paul's twelve words to Titus. Like Linus, find security in God's promises. And it is quite alright to hold a blanket while you read.

Today, read the twelve words from Titus 2:11 more than a few times. This is what Christmas is all about.



DECEMBER 22 REDEEMED BY LOVE

Matthew 1:5 includes Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus. Her life and connection to the Savior has fascinated my soul for years. Today, I included the entire story of Ruth in the scripture reading. It is well worth the time to read the entire text as the story of Ruth pushes us forward in anticipation for Christmas.

In Ruth's story, you will discover God directing Ruth, providing for her needs, giving fellowship, and purchasing redemption. As I read the story, I'm drawn to so many glorious conclusions. God included a Moabite in His eternal family. The invitation for mercy is for all. There is room for you in His family.

In this Christmas season, do not lose hope. Do not give up. Instead, turn to Jesus and rejoice in His promises. In Ruth's story, God transformed an entire family in Bethlehem when a baby was born. In the Gospel story, the world was transformed when the Son was born in the same city of David! In Ruth's story, the greatest king of the Old Testament would later come. In the gospel story, the King of Kings would come and redeem.

Isaiah 7:14 and Ruth go so well together. God with us. I love the power and comfort of those words. C.H. Spurgeon once preached, "God with us" is the laborer's strength. How could he preach the gospel, how could he bend his knees in prayer, how could the missionary go into foreign lands, how could the martyr stand at the stake, how could the confessor own his Master, how could men labor if that one word were taken away?... "God with us" is eternity's sonnet, heaven's hallelujah, the shout of the glorified, the song of the redeemed, the chorus of the angels, the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky." God's faithfulness was found in the baby born in Bethlehem.

Today, rejoice, a child is born! Rejoice, a Son is given! Rejoice, redemption is yours.

DECEMBER 23 LESSONS FROM SHEPHERDS

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

LUKE 2:8-18



I've always been a fan of the shepherds in the Christmas story. I can't get these guys out of my mind when this time of year arrives. God, in His matchless grace, gave the Gospel announcement to the lowest of society while they were at work...watching sheep in a field. The Gospel announcement was given to the least of these. In one scene, the majesty of God was displayed in the sky with a host of angels...to shepherds with a host of... sheep. As you look at this part of the story this Advent season, let it serve as a reminder that in this world, there are no elite. True, our culture may have political leaders and celebrities that draw much attention. Yet, in comparison to the power and majesty of Jesus, all of us are in the same category, broken people in need of redemption.

The shepherds took a great risk in their journey to see Jesus. It was a major financial risk, as they were willing to radically follow the will of God by leaving their field. Their reward in the journey was a front row seat to exalt the Savior. Can you imagine what transpired in their minds when they arrived to the manger scene?

What lesson can be learned from the shepherds? When God calls, will you follow? It may be a stirring in your heart for the mission field or a desire to leave the comforts of your routine to serve others. This Advent season, learn what it means to have faith-centered obedience from the shepherds. They trusted in the message and followed the path to the Savior. In return, they received the treasure of Jesus and a transformed life. I believe they became messengers after leaving Bethlehem.

On your journey, are you trusting the Lord with where He is leading? It may involve sacrifice, but the reward could be a front row seat to watch the Lord use you for kingdom impact.

Today, look at your current journey. Are you living with faith-centered obedience? Take a few minutes and ask God what lesson you need to learn from the shepherds today.

DECEMBER 24

READ THE STORY

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

LUKE 2:1-20

Christmas Eve has become my favorite day of the entire Advent season. The excitement, wonder, and anticipation intensify in my heart and home. I enjoy our family time and seeing the church gathered. Christmas music blasts in our home along with the aroma of Christmas candles invading rooms. I love the sound of laughter and anticipation in my children as the day turns to night. Friend, we have a reason to rejoice today. Tomorrow, we get to celebrate the birth of our Savior and Redeemer. As you prepare for tomorrow, let today serve as a reminder of the true story of Christmas. With family and friends, read Luke 2:1-20. Of course, read it on your own as well. The details of the story fuels worship and radiates joy.

I enjoy hearing Christmas Eve traditions in other homes. One family always orders pizza and drives around looking at lights while another family serves enchiladas. One family may serve the needy while another family goes caroling to those home-bound. If you don't mind, I'd like to know your Christmas Eve tradition. Please send an email or note my way. It blesses my soul to think of how others celebrate this glorious day.

Corrie ten Boom once wrote, "When I think of Christmas Eves, Christmas feasts, Christmas songs, and Christmas stories, I know it was not a short and transient gladness. It was and is a joy unspeakable and full of glory." Choose today to rejoice in the story. Don't think of your current circumstance or difficult situation. Give those thoughts and concerns a much-needed break and focus on the story. Our God was faithful to His promises when the Savior was born. He is faithful today to His promises as well. Christmas Eve is a reminder of God's faithfulness. Christmas Eve is a reminder of God's redeeming love for broken people. Do your soul a favor and rejoice in the story today.

Today, pray for your focus and excitement to center on Jesus above anything or anyone else. Soak in the truth of Luke 2. Sing Christmas hymns and prepare for the celebration tomorrow. Also...find a local church this evening and worship. You are always welcome to come to First Baptist Church of Pensacola, Florida! I will have a candle for you.

DECEMBER 25 HE CAME!

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20



Merry Christmas! Today, we celebrate our Savior's birth. Today is the gift of the Gospel. Today is the celebration of God's faithfulness to this world. Today is also a good day to drink a lot of coffee, since you probably didn't sleep well last night.

Paul's words to the church at Colossae portray the power of the Incarnation. Jesus came, because in Him, all things hold together. Your eternal life is secured by His perfect blood and righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your identity is in the gift of His grace (Ephesians 2:8-10). Your purpose in life is to share His story, as representatives of His Kingdom (1 Peter 2:9). Celebrate today and tomorrow...and for all eternity. You are loved by God!

Soon, the decorations will be stored away for the next Christmas. Gifts will be returned, and Christmas trees will be placed on the curb. A new year will begin, and the recent Advent will be a memory, shared in pictures and journal entries. Yet, the beauty of the Advent is not just a seasonal blessing. Every day, we can anticipate Jesus. We can get up and embrace His joy as if it is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). We can celebrate His arrival every day, while looking forward to His return. We can embrace the Gospel mission by sharing the story of Jesus to everyone we see. We can experience His kingdom grow on this earth. Look at Jesus this Christmas Day and be thankful.

Phillips Brooks, 19th Century Episcopal rector to Trinity Church in Boston wrote, "Then let every heart keep Christmas within. Christ's pity for sorrow, Christ's hatred for sin, Christ's care for the weakest, Christ's courage for right, everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!" Yes, let the celebration in you impact the world for Jesus. He has come. Immanuel. God with us. Amen.

*Hark! The Herald Angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise.
Join the triumph of the skies.
With th’ Angelic Hosts proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King.”*

-Charles Wesley, 1739.

Today, celebrate Christmas. Soak in the gift and grace of Jesus. Treasure the memories about to be made with family and friends. Continue in the spirit of Advent each day and live with a great anticipation...to one day see Jesus in glory. He came more than 2000 years ago. He will return.



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