



Society of St. Andrew
GLEANNING AMERICA'S FIELDS
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

Advent 2025

SCRIPTURE READINGS • REFLECTIONS • PRAYERS

Embrace Joy



Society of St. Andrew

GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

The hymnal my congregations used for about 30 years had a section labeled: Suffering/Joy. I came to treasure singing the texts and tunes there because so often suffering and joy are intermingled. A faith community holds these two in the same moment. And one life holds both; sometimes in the same breath. While we cannot avoid suffering or tune it out, my colleague, Chesley Vohden, who chose the title *Embrace Joy* for our Advent devotional, is absolutely right. To embrace joy is to place our burdens, troubles, and suffering in the context of a world created and redeemed by the triune God. The Advent figure whose witness shimmers in this regard is Mary. The Angel Gabriel gave Mary a remarkable mission to bear the good news of Jesus Christ into the world through the suffering of an untimely pregnancy amidst her impoverished community. And still she sang: *My spirit rejoices in God my Savior*. So let us, opening our arms, our hands, and our lives, embrace joy this Advent.

Joy, of course, is no object, but a quality of soul. Perhaps you've known someone whose joy was evident, even remarkable—a person both certain of good news for the world and free to engage the differences among us. Our writers this season are those kinds of folks!

Whether you enter Advent with the fullness of joy or you've lost some of your joy in the past year, this devotional is for you. We at the Society of St. Andrew treasure our relationship with you and offer these reflections as a way to deepen our shared partnership—to *harvest and share healthy food, reduce food waste, and build caring communities by offering nourishment to hungry neighbors*. Bring an appetite for joy to your Advent devotional time and stay connected with the Society of St. Andrew.

Jennifer Davis Sensenig

Church Relations Director
Church@endhunger.org



This booklet may be freely copied and distributed, but its content may not be changed or altered in re-distribution. Each author retains copyright to his/her own written words.

Luke 1:46-48

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

Pickles to Popcorn

SUNDAY, NOV. 30

Scripture: John 2:1-11

John 2:1-11 is the story of Jesus's first miracle at the wedding in Cana. Jesus and his disciples were at a wedding with his mother when she found out the wedding party had depleted the supply of wine for the guests. This was a calamity in this period. Jesus changed the water in the wine casks into a fine-quality wine for the remainder of the wedding. It demonstrates how Jesus changed an ordinary problem into a blessing.

We had a similar problem while gleaning recently. Maria, our supervisor, notified us there would be a delivery of 10 pallets of pickles the next day in Gastonia, NC. As many as a dozen people came to pick them up for their agencies. The pickles were to be delivered between 11am and noon. We arrived with plenty of time but no pickles. None at 1:00, nor 2:00, nor 3:00. We learned at 3:30 p.m. the pickles would not be delivered that day.

The day wasn't a total bust since we made great contacts with other agencies and pantries. As the last of us left, we were offered a third of a pallet of Snickerdoodle-flavored popcorn. Imagine Jesus turning water into wine...we turned pickles into popcorn!

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, provider of surprises, keep us mindful of your blessings, even when expecting something different. Let us also be aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters in our community and be the hands of Jesus to them. Amen.

Bob Boynton - Gastonia, NC

Joyful Swimming

MONDAY, DEC. 1

Scripture: John 15: 7-11

After serving in our previous church for over thirty years, my wife and I retired and moved to a new state. We missed our friends but knew we wanted to find a new community of faith. We rejoice in having found our wonderful church here in Swansboro. One of our new joys is participating in our Sunday school class, the "Yellow Tangs." Tangs are fish that help clean up algae along coral reefs and eat algae and parasites off of Green Sea Turtle shells. After our pastor

preached about these fish, we adopted the name. We focus on studying God's Word and the previous week's sermons to discern ways to be in service to our church and community.

Like the yellow tang fish who help other creatures and their environment, we find joy in discovering ways to help our neighbors and friends in need. Jesus spoke of abiding in his love so that "My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." We pray for and support each other and give thanks. We are "schooling" together to grow as Christ's disciples.

In this Advent season, I hope you may have, or find, your own small group where you seek support and look for mission work alongside your fellow believers. May you embrace joy in celebrating God's Word, sharing fellowship, and finding ways to serve our Lord and his people!

Prayer: Father God, help us "swim with joy" to find ways to serve our neighbors in need. Amen.

Bob Brooks - Pine Knoll Shores, NC

Finding Peace to Feel the Joy

TUESDAY, DEC. 2

Scripture: Galatians 3:15-16

With daily lives overflowing with demands on our abilities, energy, thoughts, and emotions, how do we get to God's peaceful place that produces that deep-down joy Scripture talks about?

To me, the answer lies in reversing the order of the verses: Let Scripture dwell deeply within us, so the peace of God will rule in our hearts.

I'm fortunate that I grew up in a church with a robust Bible memorization program (with prizes!) How often I've blessed those Sunday School teachers for listening patiently as I recited, often tenuously, the required selections. More than half a century later, those verses are still with me; remembering them produces incredible joy.

Even when I can't recall all the words and/or the citation for a particular verse, there are search engines online to help me find just what I'm looking for (and in the translation I want, too.)

There's been more than one dark night when Google found just what Word I was looking for and needed to read.

It's more challenging to memorize things now, but I want to. When the Word of God becomes a part of us, it gives us a peace that rules our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions.

I love this quote from the French philosopher and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want, through Your Word, to hide it in my heart and receive your peace and joy. Amen.

Wendy Wilson - Salisbury, NC

God's Gifts of Joy

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 3

Scripture: James 1:17

Joy is a sense of well-being, bliss, delight, enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness. I experience all of these when I observe God's gifts of nature. The gifts include hiking the Appalachian Trail and seeing a bear, or crawling out of my tent, setting up my pocket rocket to heat water for my morning coffee, then hearing a rustling in the nearby trees only to find a doe and her fawn watching me. Walking across the bridge over Black's Run and seeing a blue heron standing in the water instead of the mallard ducks who usually swim there. Walking down a street in my city and seeing a deer and her fawn crossing the street, only to be joined by a second fawn waiting for them in the meadow.

Another gift that is a great source of joy for me is Christmas. The music, the cards with messages from friends I seldom see, the warm wishes of peace, love, hope, and goodwill. The bright colorful lights, especially the Nativity scenes, remind us of the real reason for Christmas: the birth of God's greatest gift, that of his Son and Eternal Life.

Prayer: Father God, my gifts of joy all come from you. I thank you for all of these gifts and ask for your help in sharing them with others so that they may be drawn to you. Amen.

Carolyn Lee Purdy - Harrisonburg, VA

Happy With Joy!

THURSDAY, DEC. 4

Scripture: Isaiah 51:11

“Daddy, I’m happy with joy!” my small son said to me. He was beaming! He had a joyous time in children’s church that Sunday. The lesson was on the Exodus and how the people sang and danced to celebrate their deliverance from bondage. The teacher let the children act it out.

Perhaps Isaiah was thinking about that first joyous deliverance when he wrote these words (see 51:10). Now, he was telling his people who were in Babylonian exile that there would be another Exodus. They would know the same joy their ancestors knew when delivered from bondage.



One of the distinguishing characteristics of Christians is that sense of being ‘happy with joy.’ Peter calls it ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory.’ (1 Peter 1:8). This joy is a result of another and even greater deliverance. It’s the

liberation from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus is the liberator. It continues to be cultivated in our lives by the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22). It is a ‘joy unspeakable.’ We experience it much better than we can explain it. But it’s expressed in everything we do. We just can’t hide it.

Someone has said, ‘Joy is the flag that flies from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there.’ That’s the real source of joy, knowing God loves us, saves us, and is with us for eternity. That makes me ‘happy with joy.’ How about you?

Prayer: Lord, help us to always be ‘happy with joy.’ Amen.

Bass Mitchell - Mars Hill, NC

Hidden in Plain Sight

FRIDAY, DEC. 5

Scripture: John 1:10-13

On January 12, 2007, Joshua Bell, a world-renowned violinist, took his \$3.5 million Stradivarius into the Metro station at L'Enfant Plaza, Washington D.C., and while wearing a cap and dressed in street clothes, played the violin. He opened at 7:51 AM with Bach's 14-minute Chaconne, generally considered to be the single greatest solo violin work and one of the greatest musical compositions ever created. He also played Schubert, Massenet, and Ponce for a total of 43 minutes. Sixty-three persons passed by before, at the three-minute mark, one took the time to slow down and listen, but only for a few seconds. At four minutes, he got his first donation—\$1.00. At six minutes, one person actually stopped and stood against the wall, listening.

Arranged by an editor at The Washington Post, with a camera in place, reportedly 1,070 people passed by and took no notice. Thirty-two persons took time to listen, and a total of \$32.00 was dropped, \$20.00 by one person who recognized Joshua Bell, having been to a concert the previous evening.

Jesus came to a politically and religiously troubled world, but his birth went largely unnoticed. He was revealed to the poor and the humble, celebrated by the curious Magi, loved by Joseph and Mary, and feared by the powerful. Nevertheless, he was and is the Lord of all.

What will it take for the bustling crowd to slow down long enough this Christmas season to notice Jesus? How can we help them? Will we pause, listen, and pay homage?

Prayer: [Lord, help us to pause this Advent and listen for you. Amen](#)

David A. Rash - Waynesboro, VA



**Show your love with
Society of St. Andrew**

Christmas Cards!

Send them to everyone on your list:

Co-workers • Neighbors • Pastors

Friends • Teachers • Relatives



sample of 2025 card

Give a gift from the heart. Your gift of \$15.00 or more, in your friend or loved one's honor, will put 500 servings of nourishing, healthy food on the tables of hungry people!

Your honorees will receive a beautiful Alternative Christmas Card, designed exclusively for Society of St. Andrew for 2025 by North Carolina artist, Beth Hopper.

The full color 5" X 7" card will feature original art for this Christmas season and an inspiring verse that conveys God's love and reminds your honoree that they hold a special place in your life.

This unique card announces your generous gift to feed people in need in your friend or loved one's name. We'll also send a card to you, with our thanks & confirmation of your gift order.

Point your phone's camera
onto this QR code to order
online now! →



Finish your holiday gift shopping in only a few minutes today!

Order today (form on next page) or

800-333-4597 • card@endhunger.org • Endhunger.org/card

Society of St. Andrew

Christmas Cards!

Minimum gift donation for each card is \$15.00.

Do not send cash through the mail. Your donation is tax deductible.

Charge my: VISA • Master Card • American Express

Make checks payable to: Society of St. Andrew

Account # _____ Exp _____ CVV _____

Signature _____

Total enclosed or to be charged to card: _____

Orders must be received by December 5th to ensure delivery before the Christmas holiday. We will make every effort to expedite late orders. Please PRINT all information. Mail to: Society of St. Andrew
3383 Sweet Hollow Road • Big Island, VA 24526

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone _____

Email _____

() Send _____ cards to me for personalizing and mailing.

() Personalize and mail the following cards on my behalf:

In the blocks below, please indicate how you want each individual card signed. Attach additional sheets, if needed, to complete your list.

You may also order online at EndHunger.org/card

In honor of _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Sign this card with these words:

In honor of _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Sign this card with these words:

In honor of _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Sign this card with these words:

In honor of _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Sign this card with these words:

Joy in Jesus

SATURDAY, DEC. 6

Scripture: Psalm 16:11

I like to surround myself with things that bring me joy. This is why I have 65 pets. The irony is that we can become like what we surround ourselves with. This means that the closer we are to the Lord, the more we will become like him.

That is why this verse is convicting to me. “In your presence, there is fullness of joy.” When I am not feeling joyful, it is always because I have taken my eyes off the Lord and put them on my circumstances. This verse is a powerful reminder that true joy is not found in circumstances, achievements, or material things but in an intimate relationship with God.

The world often offers fleeting happiness—success, recognition, wealth—but these are temporary. They rise and fall with life’s unpredictable tides. However, the joy that comes from the Lord is constant, unshaken by adversity.

Walking closely with God transforms our perspective. Prayer, worship, and time in his Word align our hearts with His, allowing us to experience not just joy but the fullness of joy. The closer we are to him, the more we realize that everything we truly need is found in his presence. He alone is the wellspring of lasting joy.

Prayer: Lord of all, I pray I will draw close to you and your presence every moment. In so doing, I know I will find the fullness of joy in you that the world cannot take away. Amen.

Laura Worosher - Richmond, VA

Joy Multiplied

SUNDAY, DEC. 7

Scripture: Luke 1:44

Our church is a very generous group of believers. At Christmas time, parents contact our church to receive help for their children for Christmas. This past year, 15 families expressed a need. The total number of children was 42. The parents gave suggestions for each child, but I was unsure if we could meet the desires of all these children.

However, I underestimated my church family! When I presented the list of children one Sunday morning, I was amazed all the names were taken. The



fellowship hall looked like Santa's workshop when the gifts were returned to the church. Each person who filled a need expressed how much 'joy' they had in selecting the gifts for their child. Then, I experienced 'great joy' when I looked at the collection of gifts. That was only the beginning!

When the parents came to receive Christmas gifts and food boxes, several church members assisted in the delivery. The 'great joy' on the parents' faces was worth all the work organizing this expression of God's love. The parents expressed their appreciation for the love from our church. Many 'exclamations of joy' occurred when the children opened their gifts! Joy multiplied many times! Only God could do that. Several families needed help after Christmas so the 'joy' continued with food donations in the new year.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us look for opportunities to share your love at Christmas and throughout the year to spread 'joy' in your Name. Amen.

Linda Mays - Appomattox, VA

JOY!

MONDAY, DEC. 8

Scripture: Psalm 23

Joy is what we feel when something happy occurs. A marriage is celebrated. Our football team wins the game. Our child passes their exam. We receive a favorable medical report. Such things bring joy.

In describing my own Christian experience, I seldom use the word joy. But when I speak of my love for God and my trust in God's grace, I am really expressing joy about my faith life. Some joyful Scripture texts do not use the word "joy." For example, Psalm 23 is among the most beloved passages. God is seen as a good shepherd who leads beside still waters and through dark valleys, who prepares a table of honor and an overflowing cup. This psalm does not use the word joy, but clearly, that's what the psalmist is feeling.

During Advent and Christmas, we sing "Joy to the World" and other carols that express the joy of Christ's birth. This is fitting because there's a sense of victory that Christ's coming brings, renewed hope for the future, and the assurance of God's caring love. These things bring great joy. "Silent Night" does not mention joy, but its lines recall the joyousness of that wondrous occasion. Mary felt it. The shepherds felt it, as did the Magi, who brought gifts from afar. We also feel it. It is the season of 'Joy!'

Prayer: At this glorious season, O God, may our joy be seen in a thankful life. Amen.

Hasbrouck Hughes - Williamsburg, VA

Filled With Joy

TUESDAY, DEC. 9

Scripture: Matthew 2:10

My mother really cherished the Christmas season. She was filled with joy as she prepared for the Savior's birth. Each year, she got out the nativity scene and put it in a place of honor. She baked cookies. She supervised the decorating of our Christmas tree with the beautiful ornaments from Germany handed down from her grandmother. She invited people who had no family to share Christmas dinner with us. Mom radiated love and joy doing these tasks.

Likewise, the Wise Men were filled with joy. They rode their camels at night for many months following a star. How happy they were when they saw the star shining over Jesus' birthplace! Their hearts were filled with joy and love for the Christ Child. They worshiped him and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

During this Advent Season, we have many opportunities to show love and be filled with joy. It can be an act of kindness, such as caroling with friends at a nursing home or baking cookies with your children. You can help with the Christmas pageant at your church. Remember how happy the Wise Men felt

when the star led them to the baby Jesus. Share happiness and love with others as you prepare for Christmas.

Prayer: Lord, we pray we are filled with joy and awe during this season and throughout the year as we worship our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Barb Radebaugh - Lexington, VA

Missing the Joy

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10–12

One winter, when I was a teenager, my Methodist Youth Fellowship group decided to give Christmas gifts to a poor family in our community. We pooled our money, purchased some items, and collected a large box of nice used clothing for the children. A few days before Christmas, our minister drove us to see them. Once inside, we found the mother, father, and two children sitting on a sofa waiting for us. We presented the gifts, but it was awkward. They sat rigidly. We stood in a line across the room, two groups of people staring at each other. When we left, I felt disappointed and angry. Why, I wondered, hadn't they seemed more thankful? Looking back, I realize they were embarrassed. The delivery should never have happened that way.

¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." ¹¹ The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." ¹² Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength!" proclaims the prophet Nehemiah, encouraging the Israelites to celebrate and share their food with people who have nothing. As a young person, I was happy to give a gift, but my motivation was wrong. I wanted to be thanked. Of course, that's not the purpose of giving.

God wants us to remember and celebrate his great love for us. He wants us to share with others the lavish love that sent his own son to earth to die for us. The joy does not come from seeing gratitude. It comes from participating in God's great celebration of love.

Prayer: Father, teach us how to feel and share the joy that comes from you.

Regina K. Carson - Chesterfield, VA

Peppermint Joy

THURSDAY, DEC. 11

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-3a

The sounds of happy chaos in the choir room spilled down the hallway as gleeful children and their parents, released from the sacred quiet of the candlelight service, returned the short white robes and silky red bows to storage. Each child received a huge peppermint stick, a sweet confection with red spiraling stripes, to take home. As we headed to the parking lot, I sang by heart the words to a carol: “Oh, tidings of peppermint joy, peppermint joy, oh, tidings of peppermint joy.”

I was shocked and embarrassed the next year, as a young reader, singing God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen from the hymnal for the first time to see the words: “Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, oh tidings of comfort and joy.”

While “peppermint joy” made sense to young me, appreciation for the gift of “comfort and joy” has dawned slowly in glimpses and snatches: sharing coffee and pleading prayer in the intensive care waiting room; the grace a mission team experiences from the residents as together they rehab a beloved home; food ministries where pantry staples, fresh seasonal produce, and authentic welcome are offered and received; the hope that emerges when difficult realities are named and addressed.

Daily, in large and small, public and personal ways, we know the need for “tidings of comfort and joy.”

Prayer: Gracious, loving God, help us to share our hope, sustenance, comfort, and joy to all who need such glad tidings in their lives. In Christ's name. Amen.

Kathleen Overby Webster - McGaheysville, VA



The Society of St. Andrew is the Ultimate Green Ministry



Good Stewards of God's Creation

Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) was founded in Virginia in 1979 on Christian principles of caring for the environment; living a simple, sustainable lifestyle; and caring for the “least of these” by modeling a commonsense solution to the problems of food waste and hunger. SoSA uses the excess of God’s abundance to feed those who don’t get enough to eat, for less than 5¢ a serving.



Keeps Good Food from Going to Waste

SoSA saves tens of millions of pounds of perfectly good, fresh produce each year, food that would otherwise go to waste, and donates it to feed hungry people throughout the nation.

Using the proven biblical practice of gleaning farm fields and orchards after the harvest, each year SoSA engages tens of thousands of volunteers who pick, bag, and deliver leftover crops that, for a variety of reasons, would not be sold.



Benefits the Environment

SoSA keeps thousands of tons of food waste out of landfills, not only saving good food, but also reducing the production of methane gas, which damages the atmosphere.



Improves Health Outcomes

SoSA supplies fresh fruits and vegetables rather than high-caloric “filler food,” improving the health and well-being of our society’s most vulnerable.



Offers to Act on Faith

Harvest of Hope, SoSA’s mission retreat program, teaches youth and adults how to live responsibly in a hungry world and care about those who are hurting.

SoSA’s Gleaning Network and Potato & Produce Project put faith into action by following Jesus’ commands to care for our neighbors and “let nothing be wasted.”

Go Green with the Society of St. Andrew
EndHunger.org

Pondering Joy

FRIDAY, DEC. 12

Scripture: Luke 2:19

I'll be honest: when Christmas is over, I'm relieved. That is because I fail to resist the commercial trappings of Christmas. Those trappings are a sharp contrast to the almost unthinkable birth of Jesus in quiet and humble Bethlehem.

And yet, despite my annual failure, Christmas drags me back. My return is grounded in Luke 2:19: "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." I can't imagine Mary's reflection about her son's birth. Clearly, she had lots to ponder. Watching him grow, I sense Mary had days of joy, wonder, and despair.

That's not much different from pondering our lives today. Joy, wonder, and despair aren't absent. With despair, we ponder in our hearts, will this weary world ever solve its challenges and find an enduring peace? Our hearts wonder how Mary's unyielding belief can counter our despair by nudging our hearts to become contributors to that lasting peace.

For treasuring the joys of life, I find it in sighting the brilliant red of the cardinal on a bleak December morning, the harmony of children's voices on Christmas Eve, and unexpected acts of kindness that lighten burdened hearts throughout the year.

Who knows, maybe this is the Christmas where Mary's joyful heart leads me past my seasonal shortcomings.

Prayer: Father of us all, help our hearts to always treasure Mary's joyful light. Amen.

Bill Pike - Richmond, VA

Redirecting to Joy

SATURDAY, DEC. 13

Scripture: Philippians 4:8

I remember the conversation thirty years later. Several months into my first year of college, I called home to complain. I complained that I hated school and how much I wanted to come home. After listening to my rant, my mom asked me, "What have you done lately to help someone else?"

My mom knew that in high school, I had been heavily involved in projects and groups that served other people. She knew those activities kept me connected to other people and in the spirit of understanding why I existed. In college, I had become busy and distracted, and I wasn't participating in the activities and patterns of service that really gave me joy and showed me the impact I could have while serving others as Jesus did. My mom wisely didn't say much, but her question cut right to the heart of the matter.

After that conversation, I spent the next three and a half years 'majoring in community service and minoring in going to class.' Thanks to that redirection from my mom, I rediscovered my joy and was reminded that life wasn't just about what I was getting out of it but what I could do in my community. Joy wasn't isolated or singular for me but interconnected with Jesus AND with other people. Now, when I find myself beginning to see things negatively, I'm reminded of the conversation and look for ways to give back again. To redirect myself toward joy.

Prayer: Jesus, help us stay connected to you and others who will encourage us. Show us the way to experience real and lasting joy. In your name we pray, Amen.

Jacob Sahms - Chesterfield VA

Seeking God, Finding Joy

SUNDAY, DEC. 14

Scripture: 2 John 1:12

A friend sent me a gift card in the mail with instructions for me to use it for something that gives me joy. Not happiness. Not fulfillment. Specifically, joy. I had to think.

Possibilities paraded through my mind, but when the lens of joy was applied, I realized those possibilities were better suited to march down "Delight Drive," "Contentment Cove," and Peaceful Place." This exercise was going to be a greater challenge than I imagined!

Going deeper, I focused on my desire to know and serve God who (as the song reminds us) "came down that we might have Love/Peace/Joy." The Holy Spirit affirmed that I experience great joy when I visit homebound parishioners and elderly friends and—when face-to-face visits are not possible—when I send letters to encourage them in their faith and faithfulness. Often, it's the simple things that are joy-filled.

So, I bought a pack of really special note cards. Even the process of selecting beautiful images on quality card stock was a pleasure! Then, with joy, I spent hours handwriting letters – sharing encouraging words, and relating stories of God’s goodness and grace. My spirit leaps (and I smile) just remembering. I have one note card left, but I know where to get more...

Prayer: God—with—us, Emmanuel—Our joy is in you. Who might we bless today by being bearers of your good news? And just as John leaped in his mother’s womb when they were in the presence of the Christ child, may we leap in your presence. Amen.

Katy Yates Brungraber - Chambersburg, PA

The Joy in Finding!

MONDAY, DEC. 15

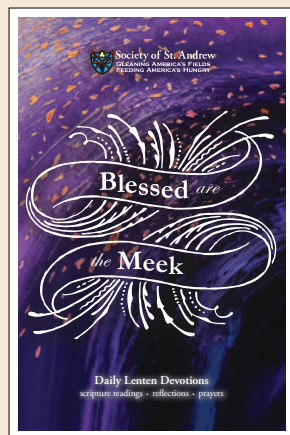
Scripture: Luke 15:3–6

My beloved cat, Gracie, likes to go out exploring the countryside when the weather is pleasant. I hope to have her safely inside before dark, away from the danger of owls and coyotes. On occasion, she has stayed out past curfew, and her absence has caused me to become alarmed enough that I grab a flashlight and go into the night calling her name. What a relief to finally hear her special meow and glimpse those bright eyes shining through the darkness as she comes bounding toward me. With great relief and joy, I scoop her up into my arms and bask in the music of her purring.

Daily Lenten Devotions

Blessed are the Meek

All New Lenten Devotions for 2026
PRE-ORDER online: EndHunger.org/lent



My joy, when Gracie returns to me, reminds me of the story Jesus told about the lost sheep, and the rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost! Amen.

Joanne Singrey-Johnson - Watertown, SD

The Joy of a Birth

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

Scripture: Matthew 1:21

After 46 years of marriage, my wife and I welcomed our first grandchild in May 2024. As you might expect, we had anxiously anticipated the arrival of our granddaughter.

We prayed for an uncomplicated delivery for our daughter and for a healthy baby girl. The joy that came with the baby's birth was indescribable, and the peace we experienced when both mother and child were healthy was a blessing. Our love as a family was magnified.

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[a] because he will save his people from their sins."

We dealt with apprehension as we waited for the delivery of our granddaughter. That night, a severe thunderstorm and tornado warning warranted moving of our daughter to the hospital's hallway outside of her room. Yet, in reflecting on that night, our concerns and fears waned compared to those felt by Mary and Joseph leading up to the birth of Jesus.

I would like to believe that Mary and Joseph had intense feelings of hope, peace, and love as they approached the birth of the holy child. What joy they must have felt at the birth of Jesus!

Prayer: Oh God, we praise your holy name. Thank you for the Advent season which allows us to anticipate the coming of the baby Jesus. We appreciate the mercy you have bestowed on us and request your continued protection. Amen.

Dwain Baldrige - Arnold, MO

The Joy of Dance

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17

Scripture: Psalm 149:3

I have been an instructor for a dance fitness program called Dance Trance since 1995. While this program is not affiliated with any religion, I believe it is a true ministry, and it brings so much joy to my life. I explain to new clients that the class is good for them because it aligns mind, body, and soul through fitness.

When I am on the dance floor, I am my best self. I am completely engaged in the moment, I pay attention to the safety of those dancing with me, and I enjoy the synergy we experience together. My friend says she prays the whole time she is dancing, and so do I.

In that room, with the music blaring and everyone dancing, we are truly praising God. We are saving people each time we are together. We have carried each other through marriages, births, divorces, addiction recovery, sickness, aging, relocation, job changes, and bereavement.

We keep showing up and rejoicing in the gift of dance and our love for each other. I surrender to the joy of this experience because God's spirit takes over. I am fully aware that, like Mary, I am only a conduit for God's grace and love, and for that, I am truly grateful.

Prayer: Dear Lord, in this season of Advent, help us to humbly embrace our place as your servants. Help us align our minds, bodies, and souls to your service with unabashed joy. In your name we pray, Amen.

Melissa Dameron-Vines- Hoover, AL

Jump for Joy

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Scripture: Psalm 122:8-9

Joy is becoming a grandparent. I quickly learned that grandparents worry just as much as parents do. If we are wise, we don't say much to the parents about how they raise their children. Still, I realize grandparents can very much influence them. For example, my grandmother's house became a place of peace and refuge for me. To this day, I try to make our house like hers.

Mary sought her older kinswoman, Elizabeth, because she was expecting a child. As she entered Elizabeth's house, she found she was also expecting a child! Both women shared joy along with a surprise; neither thought they would bear a child.

It is said that God works in mysterious ways. Joy often accompanies peace. And God's Holy Spirit in Christ makes the impossible possible. In this season of Advent, this is crucially important to remember. As we look forward to both Christ Jesus's birth and Second Coming, let us recall these holy events with joy!

Prayer: Gracious God, help us to remember with joy that you alone with the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus, make the impossible possible. In Christ's name, Amen.

Chris Suerdieck - Emmitsburg, MD

Unexpected Joy

FRIDAY, DEC. 19

Scripture: Galatians 5:22

One day, while walking down an aisle in the grocery store, I met a man, and we talked about all the many blessings God continually pours out on us. Blessings as simple as being able to breathe in and breathe out through our nose without thinking about doing it (which is pretty phenomenal when you consider it).

The more we talked, the more we were filled with the joy of knowing our Creator and all He does for us, much like a loving Father would. We also felt the blessing of fellowship between two new friends in Christ who were not denominationally hindered as so many folks are in today's world. We were blessed to focus on the Christian principles we agreed on and not be distracted or divided by trite issues that cause many not to get along. I realized as we parted company that a tiny bit of unexpected joy at the grocery store could set the tone for a truly joy-filled day.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the many joy-filled opportunities to share your love in the small experiences that you make available in our sometimes too busy lives. In your precious name, we pray. Amen.

Denny Engle - Gautier, MS

Clap Your Hands, Sing Along

SATURDAY, DEC. 20

Scripture: Colossians 3:13-17

What brings me joy? In one word: MUSIC! I'm one of those people bobbing their heads and tapping on the steering wheel, sitting at a red light. Singing in choral groups and church choirs most of my life, there's something special about Christmas music. Traditional carols and well-known recordings of Bing, Nat, and Mariah are like old friends coming back for a visit. The jazzy sound of Vince Guaraldi instantly transports us to childhood and Charlie Brown. More than listening to music, I love preparing for concerts. Months of rehearsal, late nights, and going over the same tough spot 20 times is exhausting. Yet when it's time to perform, everything comes together. The piano is our foundation. Instrumentalists set the mood. Each vocal part blends well. Percussionists add more rhythm. Keeping my eye on the director, I glance at faces in the audience. A few people sit with their eyes closed. Others smile and nod their heads. Then there are those who share their love of music with everyone else. Hands clapping, feet tapping, singing along. Seeing an attendee with that much spirit feeds my own. A connection develops. Joy is absorbed, grows a little, then released. By the end of the program, everyone is filled with joy!

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for the wonderful gift of music. Be with us this Advent season. Fill us with joy, so we can share Your love with others. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Kelly Desclos-Estes - Glen Allen, VA



Scripture: Psalm 100

Last Sunday at the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, our pastor proclaimed, “It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”

At the close of the prayer, before receiving communion, as the gathered People of God, we affirmed the thanksgiving with AMEN! This is true!

Singing our praises of God with thanksgiving is a good and joyful thing. As we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we joyfully hear the Good News and trust the wonderful promises of God in Christ Jesus. With our brothers and sisters here and all the company of heaven, we experience the peace, joy, and love of God that surpasses all understanding.

Christian writer C. S. Lewis’s book, *Surprised by Joy*, has strongly influenced my Christian journey. Joy often comes as an unexpected surprise, a gift, not something I can earn or buy or grasp by my own endeavors or at my command. Joy is a treasure given by God. Music and worship are joyful things for me and hopefully for you, but God showers joy upon us in myriad ways, through art or dance or the beauty of His creation, sunsets and flowers. What joyful things has God surprised you with in your life? Can you count his many blessings?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in so many ways, you surprise us with joy through your creation, but best and most of all, you surprise us in Jesus, your Son. Amen.

William Nash Wade - Strasburg, VA

Mary Magnifies God

MONDAY, DEC. 22

Scripture: Luke 1: 46–48a

Called the “Magnificat” in ancient Latin, Mary’s joy bursts into praise! “My soul exalts the Lord,” she exclaims. She is overjoyed with an inner sense of gladness, in her inward being celebrating “In God my Savior”. How about you? After centuries of seeming indifference, God has not forgotten but remembers his mercy to Israel. He announces to Mary she will bear the son who will save his people and rule forever.



Society of St. Andrew

GLEANNING AMERICA'S FIELDS
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

How Can I Help?

GIVE AND SHARE HEALTHY FOOD

EndHunger.org/donate

- When you give, you offer health—and hope for a better tomorrow.
- Every gift matters!



GET OUT AND VOLUNTEER

EndHunger.org/register

- Contact SoSA to find out more about gleaning opportunities.
- Glean a variety of crops throughout the year!
- Great for individuals, church groups, civic organizations, and school groups!



LEARN MORE AND TELL OTHERS

EndHunger.org/signup

- Join an email list.
- Get the quarterly newsletter.
- Request Bible study, devotional, or VBS materials.





Society of St. Andrew
GLEANNING AMERICA'S FIELDS
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

The Best Food to Those Who Need it Most

Society of St. Andrew began in 1979 in the hills of Virginia and has grown into the largest field gleaning organization in the country. Each year as thousands of farmers donate their crops, tens of thousands of volunteers are deployed to glean and distribute farm-fresh food to thousands of feeding programs in all 48 contiguous states, at no cost to the recipients.

You make it possible to bring this nutritious, but excess, bounty from the field to the people in greatest need. SoSA relies on farmers to share their abundance and volunteers to handle the hands-on aspects of picking and delivering food.

Your donations cover critical costs, like proper packaging, commercial transportation when needed, and behind-the-scene logistics.

2024 STATISTICS

Pounds Distributed:

22 Million

Events Held: 6,822

Volunteers: 22,668

**4.04 billion servings
shared historically**

Cost less than 5¢ a serving





The reformer who stood up to church corruption, Martin Luther, was having a grumpy day. To dramatize his pessimistic mood, his wife, Katie, wore black. Martin asked her why she wore black. To get his goat, she said, “God is dead!” Luther replied, “No, God is NOT dead. He’s very much alive.” Katie retorted, “Then why don’t you act like it, Martin?”

The object of Mary’s joy is the God she knows lives and, through her, is giving His people a Savior. Why else is her inmost being celebrating? “Because He has looked upon the humble state of His servant...the Mighty One has done great things for me”. Mary is a humble woman boasting neither of noble birth nor worldly position and recognizing her undeserved and insufficiency. Are you like her? She, along with enslaved Israel in Egypt, destitute Ruth, and powerless Daniel, fulfills God’s Word, which says, “He sets on high those who are lowly.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, though lowly, I exalt you and rejoice in knowing you are my Savior! Amen.

Tom Thomas - Forest, VA

Joy is the Community of Christ

TUESDAY, DEC. 23

Scripture: Psalm 47:1-2

In 2024, there was much to be concerned about in the world: war, civil war, violent destruction by natural disasters, bitterness, hatred, divisiveness among brothers and sisters, loneliness, disconnectedness, homelessness, and hunger, to name just a few. That doesn’t include the concerns of a diagnosis of advanced lung cancer and retirement on a personal level.

Yet, 2024 was a year of joy for me in a community in Christ with the people of the faith community I serve. I revel in the joy of being on mission together through worship and love shared in and around the community for the past five years. We are people who really enjoyed being together, witnessing the love of God for us and all his creation, and pouring that light into the darkness of the world.

Despite the outlook for an even darker world in 2025, I am confident that joy in Christ will be present and will shed light around the globe. I am confident because salvation came through the life, death, and resurrection of our living Lord, Christ Jesus. I am confident because Jesus continues to reign and will so into eternity.

Prayer: Lord, in you is all the joy that we need. Bring us together to enter into that joy and unite us in your love. Amen.

Andy Brock - Winchester, VA

Choose Joy

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24

Scripture: Luke 1:46–48

My niece Megan lives in a part of the country that gets snow for at least 5 months a year. After a few weeks many of her friends begin to complain about the snow. Several years ago, she posted on her social media account, “If you can’t find joy in the snow, you have less joy, but the same amount of snow.”

When asked to bear Christ into the world, Mary could have found many things to complain about. She was not married. She was from a poor family. The time was not right. There would be embarrassment and hard times. Instead, she chose to find joy in the situation.

When unexpected things happen, when difficult times come, be like Mary. Or Megan. Choose joy.

Prayer: Dear God, in a world filled with all kinds of choices, help me always to choose joy. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Michael Henderson - Florence, SC

⁴⁶ And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

The Joy Puzzle

CHRISTMAS DAY, DEC. 25

Scripture: Luke 1:47

“Build the frame first,” my dad always said when we worked a puzzle with him every Christmas. We learned to construct the outside edges at the start and trust that the inside pieces would then fall into place. I like to imagine each of our lives as a marvelous puzzle the Lord is building daily. The Word of God stands as the border that supports and defines our existence. But the inside pieces must be infused with the gift of faith before they reflect the fruits of the Spirit.

Jesus alone authors our joy—the abiding joy that carries us through hardship, sorrow, illness, and ultimately death. When we frame and fill our lives with the person and work of Jesus and His promises, we partake in His joy, the same joy that carried Him to the cross to die for us. And as it did for His mother, Mary, everything fades to inconsequence compared to the gift of knowing our Savior and the significance of His birth and His sacrifice. A beautiful old carol puts it plainly:

*Good Christian men, rejoice with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy! Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven's door and man is blessed forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!*



If we believe Jesus's journey from creche to cross leads us to heaven and eternal life with Him, could that could bring us more joy?

Prayer: Thank you, merciful Lord, for opening sinners' hearts and heaven's door. Amen.

Andi Lehman - Hernando, MS

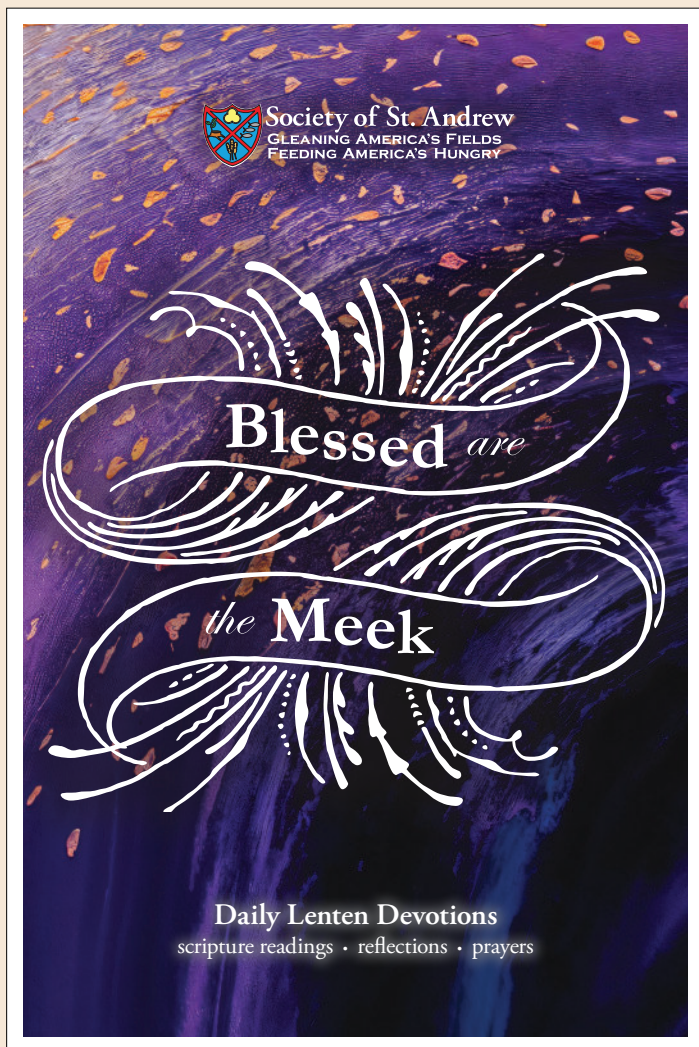


By Bernardo Daddi - The Yorck Project (2002) 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei (DVD-ROM), distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH. ISBN: 3936122202., Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=149914>

Pre-Order Today! Daily Lenten Devotions

from the Society of St. Andrew

ALL NEW FOR 2026



Request your Preview Packet and Begin Planning Now

Lent Begins February 18, 2026

EndHunger.org/lent • 800-333-4597 • church@endhunger.org