



THE PROMISE SHE CARRIED

| ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



The Lakes Church

NOVEMBER 30

Genesis 3:14-15

**The Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all the cattle
and all the living creatures of the
field!**

**On your belly you will crawl
and dust you will eat all the days
of your life.**

**And I will put hostility between
you and the woman
and between your offspring and
her offspring;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”**

God's first response to human failure wasn't judgment, it was a promise.

Genesis 3:15 is the first whisper of God's promise to defeat sin, death and the devil - the promise is her future offspring - a son who would crush the head of the serpent. This is what Jesus would come and do. The kingdom of God would break in and set right all that went wrong in the Fall.

How does this idea of God giving hope and making a promise of future deliverance before he gave judgement fit with your usual understanding of God in the Garden of Eden?

DECEMBER 1

2 Samuel 7:8, 12–16 (NET)

So now, say this to my servant
David....

“When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and *I will make his dynasty permanent*. I will become his father and he will become my son. When he sins, I will correct him with the rod of men and with wounds inflicted by human beings.

But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. *Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently; your dynasty will be permanent.*’

God promised a king whose reign would never end.

After receiving this promise, Israel would fail, but God never did. But it would take many hundreds of years before this promise is fulfilled, but God kept his promise in Jesus.

How do you feel about waiting? What are you waiting on God for? How does the fulfillment of this ancient promise encourage you today?

DECEMBER 2

Psalm 89:1–4 (NET)

**I will sing continually about the
Lord's faithful deeds;
to future generations I will
proclaim your faithfulness.
For I say, "Loyal love is
permanently established;
in the skies you set up your
faithfulness."
The Lord said,
"I have made a covenant with my
chosen one;
I have made a promise on oath to
David, my servant:
'I will give you an eternal dynasty
and establish your throne
throughout future generations.' "**
(Selah)

God is faithful and powerful. He has what it takes to fulfill his promises!

At the time the Psalmist wrote this psalm, God had not yet sent the Messiah who would fulfill this promise. Yet, the Psalmist still rejoiced in God's faithfulness. And God would keep this promise!

God has demonstrated his faithfulness. Like the Psalmist, offer him the praise he deserves!

DECEMBER 3

Isaiah 9:7 (NET)

**His dominion will be vast
and he will bring immeasurable
prosperity.**

**He will rule on David's throne
and over David's kingdom,
establishing it and strengthening it
by promoting justice and fairness,
from this time forward and
forevermore.**

**The Lord's intense devotion to his
people will accomplish this.**

This is another place in scripture where God reiterates the promise of a messiah and tells his people what he will be like. Think about how we saw these things demonstrated by Jesus.

As you reflect on this verse in Isaiah, which words stand out to you? underline or highlight them.

What do you believe God wants you to know?

DECEMBER 4

Luke 1:5–25 (NET)

During the reign of Herod king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and he had a wife named Elizabeth, who was a descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous in the sight of God, following all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. But they did not have a child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both very old.

Now while Zechariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the holy place of the Lord and burn incense. Now the whole crowd of people were praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. An angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, appeared to him. And Zechariah, visibly shaken when he saw the angel, was seized with fear. 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; you will name him John. Joy and gladness will come to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go as forerunner before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.”

**Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure of this?
For I am an old man, and my wife is old as well.” The
angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the
presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to
bring you this good news.**

**And now, because you did not believe my words, which
will be fulfilled in their time, *you will be silent*, unable
to speak, until the day these things take place.”**

**Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they
began to wonder why he was delayed in the holy place.
When he came out, he was not able to speak to them.
They realized that he had seen a vision in the holy
place, because he was making signs to them and
remained unable to speak. When his time of service
was over, he went to his home.**

**After some time his wife Elizabeth became pregnant,
and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. She
said, “This is what the Lord has done for me at the time
when he has been gracious to me, to take away my
disgrace among people.”**

For 400 years, there had been no new prophet, no
new word from God. Zechariah’s story (he was
silenced until fulfillment of the promise) mirrors
Israel’s story – waiting for the Word - for God - to
speak again.

But the angel’s announcement is the beginning of
the fulfillment of God’s promise! His silence has
been broken and his promises are being kept.

What things are you still waiting on from God? How
does reflecting on Zechariah bring hope to your
story?

DECEMBER 5

Luke 1:57–80 (NET)

Now the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son.^{1:58} Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother replied, “No! He must be named John.” They said to her, “But none of your relatives bears this name.” So they made signs to the baby’s father, inquiring what he wanted to name his son. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. *Immediately Zechariah’s mouth was opened and his tongue released, and he spoke, blessing God. All their neighbors were filled with fear, and throughout the entire hill country of Judea all these things were talked about. All who heard these things kept them in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the Lord’s hand was indeed with him.*

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has come to help and has redeemed his people. *For he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from long ago*, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us. *He has done this to show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant—* the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham.

This oath grants that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him for as long as we live.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High.

For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

Because of our God's tender mercy the dawn will break upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he was revealed to Israel.

Zechariah's name means "Yahweh remembers." God remembered his promise to his people and showed his faithfulness.

When his mouth opens, Zechariah doesn't talk about his son first – instead, he praises the God who kept His promises.

What praise do you have to offer God today? In what ways do you marvel at his faithfulness?

DECEMBER 6

Luke 1:26;35

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. So the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! Listen: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end." Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.

The long-awaited promised one is finally coming! God is about to take on flesh and become a human baby in Mary's womb.

How do you think Mary is feeling here knowing she is going to be the one to bear the messiah her people have been waiting for?

DECEMBER 7

Luke 1:37 (NET)

**For nothing will be impossible with
God.**

Luke 1:37 (NIV)

For no word from God will ever fail.

God never fails to keep His promises. He does what
he says He is going to do. Always. Without fail.

Do you know what God has promised you?
Here are some promises to encourage you today.

John 14:2-3

Hebrews 13:5-6
(These promises are originally found in
Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 and Psalm 118:6)

John 14:6-7

Matthew 11:28-30

DECEMBER 8

Luke 1:38 (NET)

So Mary said, “Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Mary’s response bridges God’s promises and humanity’s participation.

Mary trusted in God’s plan and His faithfulness. She said “yes” even though she knew it would be costly and she would be walking into the unknown. She would have certainly been afraid, but she gave God her “yes” anyway.

What would it look like to give God more “yes” in your life?

DECEMBER 9

John 1:14–15 (NET)

**Now the Word became flesh and
took up residence among us. We
saw his glory—the glory of the one
and only, full of grace and truth,
who came from the Father.**

God's promise - so long waited for - became real!
A real baby, with a real flesh-and-blood body. God
became a human and "took up residence among us."
He did this because he loved us.

Sit in the awesomeness of that reality for a moment.

Respond to God. Thank Him. Praise Him.

DECEMBER 10

Isaiah 9:2 & 6 (NET)

**The people walking in darkness
see a bright light;
light shines
on those who live in a land of deep
darkness.**

**For a child has been born to us,
a son has been given to us.
He shoulders responsibility
and is called:
Extraordinary Strategist,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.**

Darkness - it can feel like so many different things. Sometimes darkness is heavy and oppressive; Other times it is grief, hopelessness or despair.

The people this prophecy was given to had already waited hundreds of years for the promised king and messiah and they were experiencing their own kind of darkness.

And yet, Jesus did come. And when he did, his light broke through the darkness!

Think about the areas of your life that God has touched. Thank him for the ways that his presence has dispelled your darkness.

Luke 2:8–20 (NET)

Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us.”



So they hurried off and located Mary and Joseph, and found the baby lying in a manger. When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said. But Mary treasured up all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean.

So the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told.

God reveals his glory - and it is bright!

His light breaks through the darkness of a night sky and baffles and terrifies a group of ordinary shepherds. God didn't announce the arrival of his promise to the high and mighty; Rather, he went to the ordinary and the outsiders. God's kingdom is for all who will receive it!

As you read this passage, what surprises you? What could the Holy Spirit be illuminating for you? What do you want to say to God today?

DECEMBER 12

John 1:1–5 (NET)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.

What the prophets saw dimly, Mary holds in her arms. The promise isn't symbolic anymore – it has a name, a face, and a heartbeat. John tells us plainly: “The Word - God - became flesh and dwelt among us.”

This is what we call the “incarnation” - God taking on human flesh, becoming a man and living among us.

How does it make you feel, that God cared for humanity enough to humble himself, become one of us and live among us, all in order to rescue us and share his kingdom with us?

DECEMBER 13

Isaiah 35:4–6 (NET)

**Tell those who panic,
“Be strong! Do not fear!
Look, your God comes to avenge!
With divine retribution he comes to
deliver you.”**

**Then blind eyes will open,
deaf ears will hear.
Then the lame will leap like a deer,
the mute tongue will shout for joy;
for water will flow in the desert,
streams in the wilderness.**

The prophet Isaiah pointed people forward - to a time where God would come and set things right. And what would that look like? The eyes of the blind would be opened, the deaf would hear and the mute would speak!

Even now, that is not what we expect God’s deliverance to look like. But when God showed up in the flesh, He brought healing, deliverance and restoration!

Jesus continues to fulfill this promise, even today.

How has God brought “water in the desert” in your life? Where has he brought life where there was none? Where has he brought restoration in your life?

Luke 7:18–22 (NET)

John's [the baptist] disciples informed him about all these things. So John called two of his disciples and sent them to Jesus to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?' "

At that very time Jesus cured many people of diseases, sicknesses, and evil spirits, and granted sight to many who were blind. So he answered them, "Go tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news proclaimed to them.

Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God was breaking in and He verified that with miracles.

These miracles were proof that God was keeping His promises. The Messiah had come in power.

Imagine you are John the Baptist. How would you feel about Jesus' response? Do you think it would serve as a reminder of all that was promised? Or do you feel like it falls short to address the question? Explain.

DECEMBER 15

John 10:10 (NET)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

The thief is the enemy Jesus came to defeat! Jesus came to restore the abundant life that God created us to live in.

What does abundant life look like in your opinion? How do you think God defines abundant life?

Check out these verses as you think about how God views abundant life:

Galatians 5:22; John 16:33; Philippians 4:7; John 15:12

DECEMBER 16

John 11:25-26 (NET)

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

God himself IS life. He has power over death itself because He is life and He is the greatest thing in existence. Death has been defeated and holds no threat for those who are in Christ!

Since God is life and the source of all life, He has the power to give life - eternal life - to anyone he chooses - to those who believe in Jesus.

As Jesus asked, do you believe this?

DECEMBER 17

Luke 7:11–17 (NET)

Soon afterward Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the town gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow), and a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not weep.”

Then he came up and touched the bier, and those who carried it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” So the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Fear seized them all, and they began to glorify God, saying, “A great prophet has appeared among us!” and “God has come to help his people!” This report about Jesus circulated throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

Jesus promises life - He says that He is life and that He gives life to others. But he doesn't stop at just words - Jesus *demonstrates* that He has the power of life by raising the dead!

As you read this account, does anything surprise you? If you were part of the crowd that day, how do you think you would respond to Jesus?

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NET)

The spirit of the sovereign Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has chosen me.
He has commissioned me to encourage the poor,
to help the brokenhearted,
to decree the release of captives,
and the freeing of prisoners,
to announce the year when the Lord will show his
favor, the day when our God will seek vengeance,
to console all who mourn, to strengthen those who
mourn in Zion,
by giving them a turban, instead of ashes,
oil symbolizing joy, instead of mourning,
a garment symbolizing praise, instead of
discouragement.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
trees planted by the Lord to reveal his splendor.

This prophesy about the coming messiah reveals
God's heart for people. He was coming himself to set
things right - to heal, release, to free, to encourage
and to break bonds!

As you read this passage, underline where you see
yourself in it. Are you the poor? Or the brokenhearted?
Do you need joy? Or to be strengthened?

Ask the Lord to show you how he is working in your life.

DECEMBER 19

Luke 4:16–21 (NET)

Now Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to proclaim good
news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives and the regaining of sight
to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Then he began to tell them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read.”

Jesus stands up and announces that he is the fulfillment of this promise! He is the Messiah - the one they have been looking for.

How cool is that?!?!

What do you think it would have been like to be witnessing the promise being fulfilled first hand? Might you have felt excited, doubtful or cautious?

DECEMBER 20

John 8:31–36 (NET)

Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, “If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“We are descendants of Abraham,” they replied, “and have never been anyone’s slaves! How can you say, ‘You will become free’?”

Jesus answered them, “I tell you the solemn truth, everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the family forever, but the son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be really free.

Jesus came to set us free! When we participated in sin, we become captive to the enemy. Jesus defeated the enemy and death to make us sons and daughters of the King.

How do we access the freedom Jesus brings? Underline the words “follow”, “know” and “truth” then write your answer in your own words.

DECEMBER 21

Isaiah 53:1–6 (NET)

Who would have believed what we just heard?
When was the Lord's power revealed through him?
He sprouted up like a twig before God, like a root out of parched soil; he had no stately form or majesty that might catch our attention, no special appearance that we should want to follow him.
He was despised and rejected by people, one who experienced pain and was acquainted with illness; people hid their faces from him; he was despised, and we considered him insignificant.

But he lifted up our illnesses,
he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed.

All of us had wandered off like sheep;
each of us had strayed off on his own path,
but the Lord caused the sin of all of us to attack him.

Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises and yet... he was rejected and despised. However, even this was a part of God's plan of redemption. Jesus bore our sin and paid for our healing.

Take a moment to consider the rejection Jesus experienced and thank him for his sacrifice.

DECEMBER 22

John 19:28–30 (NET)

After this Jesus, realizing that by this time everything was completed, said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty!” A jar full of sour wine was there, so they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a branch of hyssop and lifted it to his mouth. When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, “It is completed!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Even though Jesus had been involved in the redemption plan from the very beginning, while He was on earth, He did only what His Father told him.

By this point on the cross, He had completed everything his Father asked and fulfilled every single prophecy and promise regarding the messiah.

“He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” Picture that moment without rushing past it. How do you respond to a Savior who chooses surrender instead of force? What does that stir in your own stance toward God today?

DECEMBER 23

Matthew 28:5-6 (NET)

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying.

The promise wasn't just that Jesus would die, but that He would defeat death! He did this through the cross AND the resurrection.

Every miracle and every promise fulfilled was pointing to this - complete victory over sin, death and the devil.

God became a man and laid His life down in love for us. He defeated death by walking out of that tomb. Now He offers that life to us!

Use your own words to express how Jesus' resurrection is connected to your life personally.

DECEMBER 24

Matthew 1:22-24 (NET)

This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: “Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel,” which means “God with us.”

One of the greatest gifts of Christmas is the reality of Jesus' nearness. It's not just that he was with those first followers as he lived out his human life. He continues to be with us now. He still is Emmanuel - God with us.

Take a moment and light a candle.
As you look at the flame recognize the reality that Jesus is right here with you.

Where are you aware of Jesus' presence? Where are you less aware of his presence?

Take time to thank Jesus for his presence and invite him into those places where he is less obvious.

DECEMBER 25

John 14:16–19 (NET)

Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you.

“I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you. In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too.”

God came - He defeated death and the devil - and offers us light, life and freedom!

On top of all of that, He now offers to dwell within us! (You can't get any nearer than that!)

What stands out to you as you read today's passage?

Take time to thank God today.

REFLECTION

As this Christmas season comes to a close, what stands out to you?

In what ways did you experience God?

Is there anything you learned about yourself?

What might you want to carry forward with you into the new year?



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Advent

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