

ADVENT READINGS 2021

NORWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH RI

For God so loved the world.....

Merry Christmas from our family to yours.

Day 1 – November 28th

It is written...

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17

A reflection:

An image comes to my mind when I read John 3:16-17 of Jesus with outstretched arms ready to receive me and all who believe. I see a new world free of physical and mental pain.

This verse is very personal to me. Two years ago, I was in a serious situation after suffering a minor hemorrhagic stroke. Looking around the room with my one good eye, I could see the panic in my family's face, but I did not feel panic. I felt calm. I began to pray this verse, "For God so loved the world..." but I struggled to remember it, so I changed my prayer. I asked God, "If it is my time, please care for my family. I pray that they do not lose their faith." I remember praying, "I am not ready to go, but I know it is not my choice."

I closed my eyes and imagined Jesus's outstretched arms and his hand on my head.

Doctors discussed that I might need surgery to stop the bleeding, but the bleeding stopped on its own. I began to recover very quickly, and the only signs that remain today are some minor glitches that only I notice.

Some people believe my faith began on this fateful day, but I always had my faith.

What did start on that day was the overwhelming need to do more in this world for however long I have left.

Prayer

God, I pray that the world will see You through me. I pray that you continue to give me the strength to move forward and be a comfort to those who need encouragement. I pray that my eyes will be open to the needs of others and that I will not get caught up in the routines of this life and become "too busy" to see what is important. In Jesus's name, I pray. Amen.

-MarySue St. George

Day 2 - November 29th

Luke as a Witness

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:1-4

A reflection:

As I read this passage, the memory of the horrific events of 9/11 came to mind. Most of us remember with great detail what happened that day. Where we were. Many either knew or knew of someone lost that day.

Now more than 20 years later, the images are etched into our memories. We do not need to read about it or to see photos or videos to remember.

Just like we were eyewitnesses to that tragedy, our accounts could be written down in the history books; Luke spoke to the eyewitnesses to the life of our Savior and wrote them down as a record of what took place.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the gift of your servant Luke. Thank you for Luke's ability to tell the story of your son Jesus. As we enter into this season of waiting for the arrival of your gift, please help us to remember the joy of anticipation.

-Wendy Fobert

Day 3 - November 30th

Prophecy from the Old Testament

8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. 9 You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion, he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. 11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. 12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

Genesis 49:8-12

A reflection:

In Genesis 49, we find the record of Jacob giving his blessing(s) to his twelve sons. These blessings were not by any means generic or random. The blessings were specific for each one of his sons. In verses 8-12, we see the blessings that Jacob imparted to Judah. What was this prophetic blessing that Jacob gave to Judah? There is not enough money in this world to pay the price of redemption. For some, their graves are their everlasting homes. Endless generations will come and go, yet we press on toward the mark of His high calling.

God has done many wonderful and sometimes unexpected things in our lives in this past year in particular. It has taught me to be ever vigilant in watching for the revelation of His blessings in our lives. By speaking words of blessings unto another, one can and often bestow material and spiritual good as a direct or indirect result. It is this very selfless act that brings good things to pass. All Christians can bestow blessings on others due primarily to the truth that we speak on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, representing Father God.

"The Lord Bless And Keep You" was one of the famous blessings bestowed upon the Israelites in the Old Testament!

Prayer

Father, God, I come before You this day as I thank You for Your many blessings. Thank You for the outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your blessings on each of us this Christmas season. Let each of us experience Your peace daily. Prepare my heart, oh Lord, for this advent season. Let the grace of Your Son Jesus Christ and Your love and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all from this moment going forward. In His Name, until His coming again, I pray! Amen

-John Buerman

Day 4 - December 1st

The Branch from Jesse

11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

Isaiah 11:1-5

A reflection:

Jesus, being fully God and fully human, was a culmination of His human line and all that makes God who He is.

No other could encompass all of that in a human body. And it was all of these things - the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear, but especially the Spirit of the Lord - that made Him able to see and hear what we cannot, to be our Lord and therefore the one who knows when and best how to rebuke us.

Our human parents may know us, but God? Everything, He knows everything. There is a comfort to be found in knowing that He knows all and loves me regardless. He is faithful.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the gift of your Son. Right now, we sit in anticipation of celebrating Jesus' coming; we are blessed in knowing - every day - He is with us, He loves us, and He came already knowing us. Amen.

-Heather Anderson

Day 5 - December 2nd

A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem

2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” 3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Micah 5:2-4

A reflection:

God is faithful to his people Israel; He has promised to send the Messiah, who will shepherd and rule in the “strength and “majesty” of God the Father.

How much does a Father love his children that he will give provision so that they can have a relationship with the Lord?

God loved us so much he provided for us--- He found a way to lead us out of sin and darkness into the light. He made way for us to have redemption. He gave us the ability to have eternal life. We were blind now, we see. We were lost; God made a way for us to find the light. He sent Jesus, born of a Virgin, in the form of a baby, to shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord. We celebrate this time of year with the Greatest Gift of All, “The Son of Our Lord.”

This reminds me of when parents receive the news of the upcoming birth of a child. They now need to prepare. They make plans and complete the details that are required to raise that child. They will do all they can to provide for their child.

As parents, we need to teach our children about the Lord and how he gave us his only Son so that we may have eternal life with Him.

At this time of year, we need to remember to share the news that, because the Lord was giving his Son for us, He was providing the “Greatest Gift, His Son”! Through the Love of Jesus, we are saved.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us your Son so that we could be provided with redemption. You sent us Jesus so he could shepherd us and strengthen us in your ways, Lord. You loved us so much that you gave us the “Greatest Gift, your Son”! Amen.

-Cyndee Lavigne

Day 6 - December 3rd

A Prophecy - Jesus the Messiah

*5 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.
Jeremiah 23:5-6*

A reflection:

When God spoke these words through the prophet, he was frustrated with the world at that time. Leaders (Kings) could not lead. God wanted spiritual guidance for his people. The current leaders were not doing what God needed to have done.

God needed to start fresh. Like a new seedling. God knew he couldn't count on the previous & current ways that Kings ruled. In making this prophecy, he promised everyone that a new way of living would be in everyone's future.

When I think about that and relate it to the world we live in today, I want people to understand and communicate better God's word and promises. The only way I can see that happening is to read his word; then, we need to act on it. If you are having a hard time understanding what God wants or has even promised us, find someone in your life who can guide and lead you spiritually.

Like God did with Jesus. The ultimate leader. The ultimate communicator.

Prayer

*Dear Lord our Savior,
As we celebrate your son's birth,
may this Advent season be filled with joy and happiness. Amen.*

-Ruthann Lombardi

Day 7 - December 4th

The Gift

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

A reflection:

In this mixed-up world, Jesus comes with a God-sized proclamation.

You could focus on the promise verse of the coming savior. You could look at the power of the immaculate conception. You could focus on the God who wants to be with us by giving anyone who seeks him a sign.

In this crazy, confusing world came Jesus, the name Immanuel which means “God is with Us.”

Here’s what I would settle my heart upon during advent; that Jesus is God, and he is the truth, and he is with us. He came upon this broken world, a world that deserved judgment and rebuke.

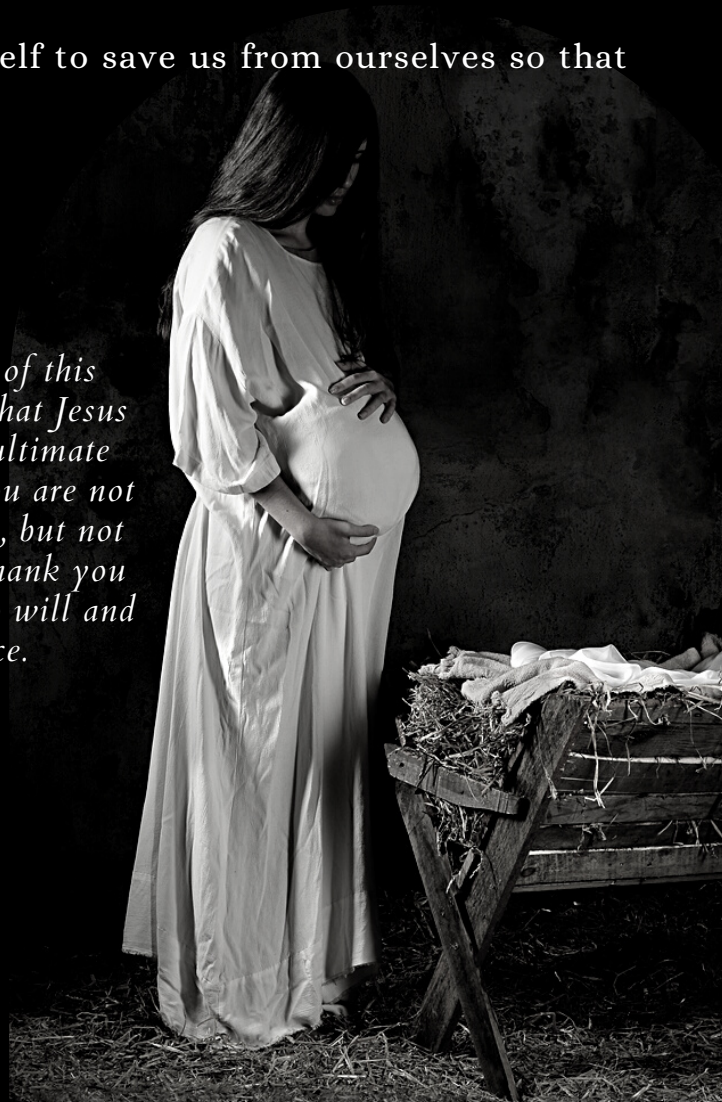
And what does God provide? He provides Himself to save us from ourselves so that we could be with him.

Prayer

Dear God, my prayer for all of us during the chaos of this fractured world is that you could settle in our hearts that Jesus is God’s answer. I pray that our only response and ultimate response is to worship you, God, who is our truth. You are not afraid of our brokenness. We know that we are messy, but not so messy that you don’t want to commune with us. Thank you for sending your son, who comes to us as the God who will and can help us get back to be worthy of your presence.

All this I ask, Amen.

-Michael Cayer



Day 8 - December 5th

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-25

A reflection:

When I considered this passage, I was struck by the many levels of Joseph's love.

First, his love and compassion for Mary is displayed in his response to her pregnancy. Joseph cared so much for her that he was willing to continue his pledge to her, even though Joseph knew he was not the father of her child.

Second, his love for God is displayed in his response to the angel of the Lord. He trusted that God would fulfill the promise He made in Joseph's dream.

Third, his love for Jesus, even before He was born. He accepted Jesus as his son, knowing that he played no physical role in the pregnancy.

How many people today would, in those same situations, respond the way Joseph did?

Prayer

*Lord, help us all in our relationships to love the way Joseph loved.
To remain committed to our spouses, to our children, and above all, to God.*

-Sue D'Antuono

Day 9 - December 6th

The Magi Visit the Messiah

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12

A reflection:

As I read these verses, I think of how the Magi must have felt.

They were excited that they got to see the King of the Jews. And they knew how important it was for them to travel from their own country to see the Messiah.

They are excited because they knew the star was important, so they had to go.

And they were also scared that if they didn't report back, they would be killed by Herod. Just like Herod wanted to do to Jesus. They knew Herod lied to them.

The story reminds me of some of the difficulties I have as a 7th grader. A lot of kids have lied to me and haven't been nice to me. I can't trust them.

But I know that I can trust God. He will never lie to me. God will keep me safe just like he kept the Magi safe.

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you so much for how you keep me with you and how I can always trust you to guide me. Amen

- Kayden Marrocco - Age 12



random act of Kindness

Today Make Someone Smile

Please Pay it Forward

*Buy a cup of coffee

*Pay for someone's meal

*Offer to pay for someone's haircut

*"We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give."*

-Winston S. Churchill

Day 10 - December 7th

The Escape to Egypt

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Matthew 2:13-15



Day 10 - December 7th

A reflection:

Joseph was an normal person, and he was born into a normal family of carpenters. Even though this was the case, he was able to make a huge difference. We are normal people, just like Joseph. Even though he was a normal person and wasn't perfect, God used the potential he saw inside of him. God will do the same with us, and while it might not be keeping the savior alive, it will be just as important.

In the song "Broken Things," Matthew West writes, "It's never the perfect; it's always the ones with the scars that you use," Joseph wasn't perfect, and neither are we. The good part is, we don't have to be. God will use us, just like Joseph, to do his work, despite that.

In his song "Mended," "When you see nothing but damaged goods, I see something good in the making," There may have been times during his journey where Joseph felt doubtful. He may have questioned "Why him?" and "Could he really do it?" but he realized that God saw potential in him, whether he saw it or not, and he had enough faith to trust God. Even though we may doubt ourselves and wonder if we really can make a difference, we can, and God knows that. He will use the potential buried down inside each and every one of us to make something wonderful happen. We also need to listen and trust God like Joseph did. If Joseph hadn't listened, Jesus would have probably been killed and wouldn't have made the same impact. While if we don't listen to God, someone may not die, we lose that opportunity to make a difference in someone's life.

We don't have to be considered important people like kings and queens to make a difference. Even if we just make a difference in one person's life, it's just as important as anything else. In his song "Dream Small," Josh Wilson says, "Don't buy the lie you've got to do it all, just let Jesus use you where you are," We all have different skillsets and abilities, and Joseph was no different. God used Joseph's skills and abilities to keep Jesus alive. Even though our skills and abilities may not allow us to do that, even doing something smaller, like Josh Wilson's example of "dancing on a Friday with your friend with special needs," has just as much importance.

Joseph was normal like us, but he was able to make a huge difference, and so are we. Even if we doubt ourselves, we need to trust and listen to God because he will use our potential, skills, and abilities to make a difference. If we don't listen to him, we may stop ourselves from making an important difference to someone else. Therefore, we need to remember that by listening and trusting God to use us, anybody can make a difference.

Prayer



*God, thank you for giving us your Son to save us
and for showing us that anyone can make a
difference.*

-Kaylee Gault - Age 13

Day 11- December 8th

Herod's Orders

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 “A voice is heard in Ramah weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more.”

Matthew 2:16-18

A reflection:

When I read this scripture, I thought about the time I got very frustrated.

I overreacted and slammed my door. I don't really get mad very much, and I definitely wouldn't kill anyone, but when people get angry, they do things they wouldn't usually do.

When I got mad, I wished I had handled it better.

I wonder if Herod thought about that after he killed all those babies.

Prayer:

Dear God, everyone gets frustrated and angry sometimes. Help us not to overreact. Help us to handle things better. If we do make mistakes, help us to look back and try better next time. Amen.

Owen Parker - Age 11

Day 12 - December 9th

The Return to Nazareth

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt
20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for
those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." 21 So he got up, took the
child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that
Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go
there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,
23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was
said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 2:19-23

A reflection:

Our first thoughts when we read this verse is wondering how Joseph is dealing with having another angel of the Lord appearing to him in a dream. Did he think, "Oh my goodness, what did I get myself into?" This is probably more than he bargained for.

He is now being told by God to return to Israel because it is safe. We see how God protects because he protected Mary, Joseph, and Jesus while Herod was alive.

But when Joseph's human weakness kicked in, and he doubted God's protection, God was faithful and reassured him by sending them to Nazareth, which also fulfilled the prophecy that He would be called a Nazarene.

We are weak in our flesh, and that makes us doubt and fear at times. But we know, if we are faithful, God will always protect us and guide us. Joseph chose to listen to God and follow him, and we too can make that choice to listen and follow.

Prayer:

*Dear Father, Thank you for your unending grace, provision, and protection.
Thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to always listen to your
guidance and keep us on the path that leads us in the direction of your
ultimate plan. Amen*

Ken & Traci Marrocco

Day 13 - December 10th

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." 19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. 23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home.

24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Luke 1:5-25

Day 13 - December 10th

A reflection:

Hope Abounds because, "...With God All things Are Possible"! (Matthew 19:26)

Hope, one of the most profound themes in the bible.

We could assume from this story that Zechariah and Elizabeth might have lost all hope of ever becoming parents. When the scene opens, we see that they were both considered "upright in the sight of God" but saddened and ashamed because they were unable to have children - "Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years." Can you feel the heaviness in their hearts? Were they thinking their prayers had gone unanswered for some inexplicable reason? Did they mistakenly think God was punishing them? Were they asking, "God, why are You allowing this to happen?" After all, they thought they had been obedient. Can you relate to this scenario?

The answer is that our gracious God had a plan to give Zechariah and Elizabeth hope and a future (from Jeremiah 29:11). He would bless them in their elder years with a son, and not just any son, but the one we would come to know as John the Baptist who would prepare God's people for the coming of their Lord and Savior, Jesus. After a lifetime of uncertainty, their prayers had been answered. Praise God!

Not every story has a happy ending, however. And, studies prove that when we lose hope, there's a good chance it will detriment our well-being. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, God wants us to keep looking to Him for hope and not to mortal man.

Let no man's counsel cause you to lose hope, ever. Only God knows how your story will end, period.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I pray for anyone reading this devotion that You would open their heart and mind to receive Your word that tells us, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." When we go through trials, and the outcome is not in our favor, please give us the supernatural strength we need to sustain ourselves - strength that only comes from You.

-Deb Russo

Day 14 - December 11th

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38

Day 14 - December 11th

A reflection:

We have a baby in our family whom we hadn't really expected.

He is our daughter and son-in-law's foster child.

They received Connor at seven days old, directly from the hospital. He was in the hospital for that length of time because he was born addicted. He's a sweet little thing and brings a lot of joy to our family.

He's three months old, and he's trying to talk, and he has a great laugh. He has some problems because of the addiction, but they're minimal.

I have to imagine that, like Mary, our daughter Julia and her husband Jimmy were also chosen by God for this purpose. Chosen because they have faith and a servant's heart.

They are doing a wonderful job caring for Connor. He is thriving.

Like Mary, at some point, they will have to give him up. Like Mary, their sacrifice will be glorified. Like Mary, there will be the grief of loss. Connor will not remember them and know how loved he was.

That's not important. What is important is that Julia and Jimmy trusted that this was what they were called to do, and they did it on faith, like Mary.

Prayer:

Dear God, help us all have the faith and strength to do and know whatever you have in your plans for us. Amen.

-Robert (Hector) and Joyce Heathcote

Day 15 - December 12th

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Luke 1:39-45

A reflection:

It must've been a very incredible feeling when Elizabeth felt her baby leap in her womb when she heard Mary's voice. It reminded me of when I felt butterflies in my stomach when God told me that He had my Mom in His arms. After the awful time I went through when my Mom passed away in St Maarten and our funeral home in NJ did not receive her body; I refused to believe that she was gone because we had no "proof" that she was gone.

But as soon as I heard God's voice telling me, "I've got her." I was filled with such warmth, peacefulness, and excitement. And it was then; I accepted the fact that she was now with our Lord.

I can only imagine the butterflies Elizabeth must have felt. A sense of peace.

A clearer understanding that God is in control.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I am so grateful for you being with me during all the rough roads I've been down all my life. You have always been by my side, and you never left me. Just like Elizabeth. Please keep filling me with butterflies, as they are so beautiful and intense, let them remind me of your unconditional love for me.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord, and Savior.

-Lisa Kondvar

Day 16 - December 13th

Mary's Song

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.
50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.
51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
52 He has brought down rulers from their throne but has lifted up the humble.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful
55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."
56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.
Luke 1:46-56

A reflection:

Mary's response is in praise and thanks to the loving action of God. God has time and time again taken the broken, the burden, the sin-riddled people of earth and used them for his glory.

Mary recognizes through the song that she is but a servant who has now found favor with God, her Savior. Soon to be the mother of THE Savior.

Through Mary's words and expression, she exudes awe of the God of blessings, the God of reversals, the God who raises the lowly and brings down the powerful from their thrones. This song is Mary's mission statement as a servant of God.

Let Mary's song inspire us. Let Mary's song continue to tell the story of all that God can do for those that remain faithful.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to remember that through our circumstances, no matter what, we are to keep our eyes fixed on you. Help us to remain faithful, even when times are tough, and that doubt creeps in. God, you are the God of favor. Help us keep our hearts, minds, and eyes fixed on you and you alone.

*"And through it all, through it all, My eyes are on You
And through it all, through it all, It is well
And through it all, through it all, My eyes are on You
And it is well, with me"*

- Anonymous

Day 17 - December 14th

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." 62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone, who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

Luke 1:57-66

A reflection:

When reading through this story, I was struck by how God chose to prepare the way for Jesus's birth. He chose two people Elizabeth and Zechariah, "a righteous couple" who desperately wanted a child but were very old and unable to conceive.

An angel (Gabriel) appeared to Zechariah and told him his wife would bear a son, and they would name him John. Calling him John (which means The Lord is gracious) was not what was expected. Usually, a son would be named after the father or at least have some ancestor's name.

God's plan was to set John apart so he could prepare everyone for what was to come, JESUS!

God has a plan for each of us. We may not see it clearly, but our job is to remain righteous. A person is righteous *Coram Deo*; that is, he has a right relationship with God.

Tall order huh? But that's what we all signed up for.

Prayer

God, as we prepare to welcome your Son at CHRISTMAS, help us to remain righteous in your eyes. We have had so many examples to help us... from teachers, to church leaders, to fellow Christians in our midst. The most important example is your WORD. We know what traits to look for and model. Help us to see those traits and take them to heart.

-Michael Kelley



random act of Kindness

Today Make Someone Smile

Random Acts

Surprise someone with
cookies/goodies or a meal.

Stay for a visit.

*Only by giving are you able to receive
more than you already have.*

-Jim Rohn

Day 18 - December 15th

Zechariah's Song

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—

72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God,

by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace."

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit,

and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Luke 1:67-80

Day 18 - December 15th

A reflection:

Zechariah was so happy to announce the birth of his son John.

He couldn't talk for the whole pregnancy because of his unbelief, so finally, when God blessed him with this new life, he couldn't contain his joy and wanted to tell everyone of the miracle baby.

He prophesied to all that John would be used to prepare the way for the coming of salvation through the forgiveness of sin through the Lord.

We are also called to joyfully share with others the salvation we have received because of His tender mercy toward us.

Sometimes we can let fear get in the way of opening our mouths and declaring to others the gift of salvation, but Zechariah says in verse 74 that He will enable us to serve Him without fear.

It is by His power that we can speak and share the gospel message with others. We can also go out and fulfill the great commission knowing the Spirit will enable us to speak.

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for the gift of salvation and eternal life given to those who believe. Empower us to share the message with others to all who will listen. We ask this in Jesus' Holy name. Amen

-Maureen Couture

Day 19 - December 16th

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 2:1-7

A reflection:

Bethlehem...a city with a tumultuous past and present. From its earliest days, its population has shifted as invasions and wars have created times of great unrest.

At the time of Jesus' birth, the Jews were under Roman rule and had to obey the decree that everyone must go to their place of origin to be counted in the census that had been ordered.

As we know, places for travelers to stay were in short supply in Bethlehem, and Joseph and Mary were forced to take shelter in a cave for the impending birth of our Savior.

In my recent reading of the history of Bethlehem, I noted that there are currently about 200 hotels in that city. It made me wonder why God did not make sure that one of the few "hotels" in Bethlehem at that time would have room for the weary couple.

Then it occurred to me how differently things would have gone...would the scruffy, lowly shepherds have been allowed in to humbly visit the holy family? I think not. And would a star hanging over a rooming house be as wonderous as one hovering over a manger bed? Again, I think not. God had it all planned, and it all went according to that plan.

In our own times of tumult, we need to remind ourselves that God is still in charge. Things will work out in His time and according to His plans.

Prayer

May God bless us all as we once again ponder that miraculous birth.

-June Hall

Day 20 - December 17th

The Shepherds Story

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. 21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Luke 2:8-21

A reflection:

What a momentous and blessed event for the Lord to be born on earth for all to receive his amazing and unconditional love.

There has never been another event that could ever compare with the birth of Jesus. My heart is filled. Like the shepherds, I am consumed with joy and with thankfulness, for God and for all he has given us.

My Prayer

*Dear Lord, thank you for your presence here
on earth with us through Jesus Christ.
Thank you for giving us your unconditional
love every day of our lives.
Your faithfulness and grace knows no bounds.*

-Sharon O'Brien

Day 21 - December 18th

Jesus Presented in the Temple

22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:



:29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” 33 The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” 36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Luke 2:22-40

Day 21 - December 18th



A reflection:

The presentation of Jesus in the Temple reminds us of the many Infant/child dedications we have witnessed and been a part of, as church family members, in agreeing to assist in the raising of the dedicated child's spiritual development to know and love Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Some of us may also have served as God-parents and been diligent in observing the rearing of god-children in spiritual values.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may we call on you to love and protect the development of children so that they will learn to know you as their Father and your Son as the Savior of the world who loved enough to die on the Cross for our sins.

Father, may we as Believers be aides to spiritual teachers as they strive to point our little ones to You and the beliefs that will enable them to achieve eternal life.

*Father, send us Your Holy Spirit, who will give us the strength and commitment to persevere in the quest for salvation of the world's people.
We ask in your Son's precious name. Amen.*

-Phillip and Dorothy Brindamour

Day 22 - December 19th

The Word Became Flesh

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

John 1:1-5

A reflection:

One of our favorite places in the world is standing in the dark outside our home in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, frozen, literally, by the cold temperatures and being struck still at times in amazement for brightness surrounding us sourced by a multitude of stars millions of miles away. As we walk along, able to see the road ahead without the use of a flashlight, I am always amazed at how clear our vision is in the dark.

God. Light. Life. Love. Just like the light shining down on Sue & me on those cold and brief walks around our northern neighborhood, God's light shines brightly into the darkness of our world through the life of His son, Jesus. His light becomes life to us and through us into the lives of others when our daily walk is guided by the hope we have found in His promises.

The light that shone brightly two thousand years ago on the night that Jesus was born is the same light that illuminates our world still. It is good. It is holy. It is God's love for us. Just as a small lamp can give light to a large room, may your hearts and lives be a beacon of light in your homes, at work, and in your neighborhood this Advent season.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Prince of Peace, Light of the world, we praise your name, for you alone are worthy of all praise, honor, and glory. In you, there is no darkness--only light, peace, and joy. Thank you, Father, for being the light that overcame (and continues to overcome) the darkness in this world and in each of our lives. We count amongst our greatest blessings the knowledge that no matter how dark life may seem at times, you are the light that can break through that darkness and illuminate our path.

Help us this Christmas season to share your light with everyone in our lives – those who know you and those who don't know you – that we may bring to others a beacon of hope and a reminder that you came, in the form of a baby, to dwell among us, to be an example of how we should strive to live our lives and to be the one true and perfect Savior of this dark world.

We love you, and we pray these things in your heavenly name, Amen.

-Craig & Sue Carpenter

Day 23 - December 20th

John - Sent as a Witness for Jesus

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John 1:6-8

A reflection:

We've been talking a lot about Light these days at our church and in our home.

Every day I strive to "be the light," even if it's just a glimmer, to show people that I'm different because I believe in Jesus. That there is hope in His Light.

This is such a wonderful verse showing us that "shining our lights for Jesus" isn't just a catchphrase!

John was sent from God to tell of God's Light, and we were, too! John wasn't the light, and neither are we, but we have the Light of Jesus within us that can shine so bright for others to see!

What a joyful responsibility!

Think about this: there can be no complete darkness even with the smallest bit of light, but darkness cannot snuff out any light, no matter how small.

Even if you feel like you're in a dark place, your dimmest light will always shine.

As you grow stronger, your light will shine brighter! Just imagine how many will see you shining and how many will want to know why!!

Prayer

To the Light of the World, thank you for never leaving us in the darkness. Thank you for your presence within us. May we all strive to shine Your Light into our dark world so others may see You in us. Help us light up this whole place until it glows with Your Love. Bless us and keep us and warm our faces with your Light until we see you face to face. Amen

-Kristin Parker

Day 24 - December 21st

John's Accounting of Jesus

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:9-14

A reflection:

Johns' gospel begins in eternity and before the beginning of time. He brings us back to the origins of the world and all life in the word of God we are in that. We are people of eternity, born at the beginning of God's plan and made for life with God forever.

The big truth is a light for us all, for the life of God always guides us in darkness and enlightens our minds with truth. Silent prayer immerses us in that eternal world of God; the word of God born the child of a human mother; the word of God brings eternity to earth.

Jesus, the light of the world, broke into human history at its darkest moment. For 400 years, there was no prophetic word from God through a prophet. Yet when Jesus spoke, the crowds were amazed at these teachings because He taught as one with authority and not as a teacher of the law.

These 400 years of darkness prepared the way for the world's true light to present himself and his message to a lost world. The contrast between the darkness of the world and the light of Christ was intentional. In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son. Jesus' true spiritual light would be contrasted with political and religious philosophies of the world.

The stage was set. The conflict begins, and God's divine plan unfolds before an unbelieving world.

Jesus is the true light. His teaching, His presence, and His authority illumines (illuminates) and pushes back the darkness and invite all people to believe in him so they may be set free and experience the life that God has created us to live. Eternal Life.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you that you have placed Your Holy Spirit of light into our hearts to lead, direct, govern and train us. Help us to walk in your light of your love and truth, and may the beauty of Christ shine through us to others so that they too may come to a saving knowledge of our Savior, who is the true and only light, and in whom is life external.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

-Roy Gustafson

Day 25 - December 22nd

The Gift of Grace

16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:16-17

A reflection:

Jesus' coming to earth is certainly a time to celebrate the great gift of grace and truth that He was in His ministry on earth.

His greatest gift, however, was His death on the cross for our sins and our healings.

We can't earn God's grace. Grace comes from God's Unconditional love through Jesus Christ. We need to keep moving forward in God's Word and His loving grace.

Don't give up regardless of life's struggles. We have the victory through Christ Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:57). We are instructed in 1 Peter 5:7 "to cast all our concerns unto the Lord for He cares for you."

We can't do anything big or small without God's Grace. The gift of our Lord Jesus has never really left. It lives on in us through the Holy Spirit. So we can celebrate Christmas every day!

Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for your unconditional love and for sending your only begotten son so we could live in your grace and truth.

Help us always to turn to you through your Word and Spirit with all of our weaknesses, sickness, and challenges in life.

Jesus, thank you for bringing us to victory. Amen

Gary & Lucy Harlowe



random act of Kindness

Today Make Someone Smile

Random Acts

Send someone a note of encouragement.
Write someone a note and let them know
how they have impacted your life.

Forgive someone.

Don't give to get.

Give to inspire others to give.

-Simon Sinek

Day 26 - December 23rd

The Lord's Return

Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I." 7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" 8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. 9 Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Isaiah 52:6-10

A reflection:

As we prepare for Advent, we would like to share with you that in Isaiah's day, they didn't know that the LORD had spoken through His Word.

God promises there will come a day when "they shall know in that day that I am He who speaks."

These verses speak of those who bring good news with beautiful feet; they partner with God for salvation. The feet speak of activity, motion, and progress, and those who are active and moving in the work of preaching the gospel have beautiful feet.

Let's all have beautiful feet and spread the good news, news of peace, glad tidings, and salvation.

Where God reigns, peace reigns. Where God reigns, glad tidings reign. Where God reigns, salvation reigns.

What a marvelous declaration – Our God reigns, and one day All will know!

Prayer

And this is our prayer for you. Father, prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. We look beyond the birth of Jesus and look forward to Jesus' second coming. In the meantime, put a burning desire in our hearts to tell of the Good News to anyone who needs to be saved. Touch hearts and save souls as only You can, and send us into your harvest with beautiful feet. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Micahel & Bernadette Bessett

Day 27 - December 24th

Prince of Peace

*6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- Isaiah 9:6-7*



*12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:12*

Day 27 - December 24th

A reflection:

The author of this book is considered by many to be the greatest of all the prophets! Isaiah uses four names to describe the coming Messiah: "Wonderful Counselor"-meaning He will be exceptional; distinguished; the one who gives divine advice and direction. "Mighty God"-meaning He will be God Himself! "Everlasting Father"-meaning He is timeless and our Father God! "Prince of Peace"-His government will be one of justice and peace!

His message is clear-the Savior is coming and come He did in the person of Jesus Christ-and He will come again!! So, return to Father God and trust in His offer of redemption through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son and rejoice!! This is a message of hope-hope that was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. He came to deliver all people from sin. He suffered for all of us-and took our sin upon Himself so that through belief in Jesus, we would be acceptable to God.

This message Jim and I took seriously many years ago as we both gave our lives to Christ through different circumstances and at different times. It has helped us tremendously to remain true to each other, raise our children, and help our Grandchildren with our eyes focused on Jesus! We've had our struggles and differences in life, but one thing we have always agreed upon is our total commitment to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!!

We thank God for His precious gift of Eternal Life! Through belief in Jesus, we will find comfort, peace, and eternal fellowship with Him!!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of scripture-our window into your plan of redemption! Over 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah presents a clear and certain picture of what is to come.

How incredible-and how loving of you-to give we frail humans something to lean on. How can anyone read the words of Isaiah-fast forward to the Gospels and be blind to the truth?

We pray for eyes to be opened and hearts to turn to you as we, your people, work to bring your word to a broken world! Please give us the strength, conviction, and courage to do so without fear!!

-Jim and Joanne Roberts



Day 28- December 25th

A New Heaven and a New Earth

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,
“for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look!
God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They
will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning
or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”
Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

6 He said to me: “It is done.
I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.
To the thirsty, I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this,
and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Revelation 21:1-7



Day 28- December 25'

A reflection:

Well, today is Christmas Day. We hope you are having a blessed day.

Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We know that God's plan started long before this as He prepared His people for the coming of the Messiah. And we know that the story doesn't end with Jesus being born.

He grew, he taught, and ultimately, he died on a cross for the forgiveness of sins.

Three days later, he rose from the dead. Forty days after that, he ascended to heaven.

The first Sunday of Advent is usually a communion Sunday. I will typically remind us that what we celebrate and commemorate during communion is "the rest of the story" as we begin to prepare ourselves for Christmas. But actually, it's not the rest of the story; it's the next major part of the story.

In today's passage from Revelation 21, we see what is truly the "Rest of the Story" or the final fulfillment of God's story. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, was crucified, so our sins are forgiven, rose from the dead to show that we too will be resurrected, ascended, and what we read here is the ultimate conclusion to God's plan. We get to spend eternity with Him in a new heaven and a new earth.

I can't help but see some of the same language. Vs. 3 "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

What was Jesus called when he was born? "Immanuel, which means God with us."

It will be an amazing eternity! No more death or mourning or crying or pain. I can't wait!.

So, celebrate Christmas well today. Celebrate the birth of Jesus and take a moment to thank God for what today ultimately means - we will get to spend eternity with our Heavenly Father being his children.

Prayer

Father in heaven, help us to be your people. Lord, thank you for the gift of love you gave us when you came down and dwelt among us. You became a baby, so you could grow and teach us about God's love and then die for me. The greatest of all gifts. You are my God, and I know you are with me. Holy Spirit, teach me, guide me each day to practice being more aware of your presents in every moment of my life. In Jesus' name.

-Pastor George & Kathy Barclay