



2022 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

# ANTICIPATE!

DR. DAVE SNYDER



2022 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

# ANTICIPATE!

DR. DAVE SNYDER

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PENSACOLA



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
OF PENSACOLA

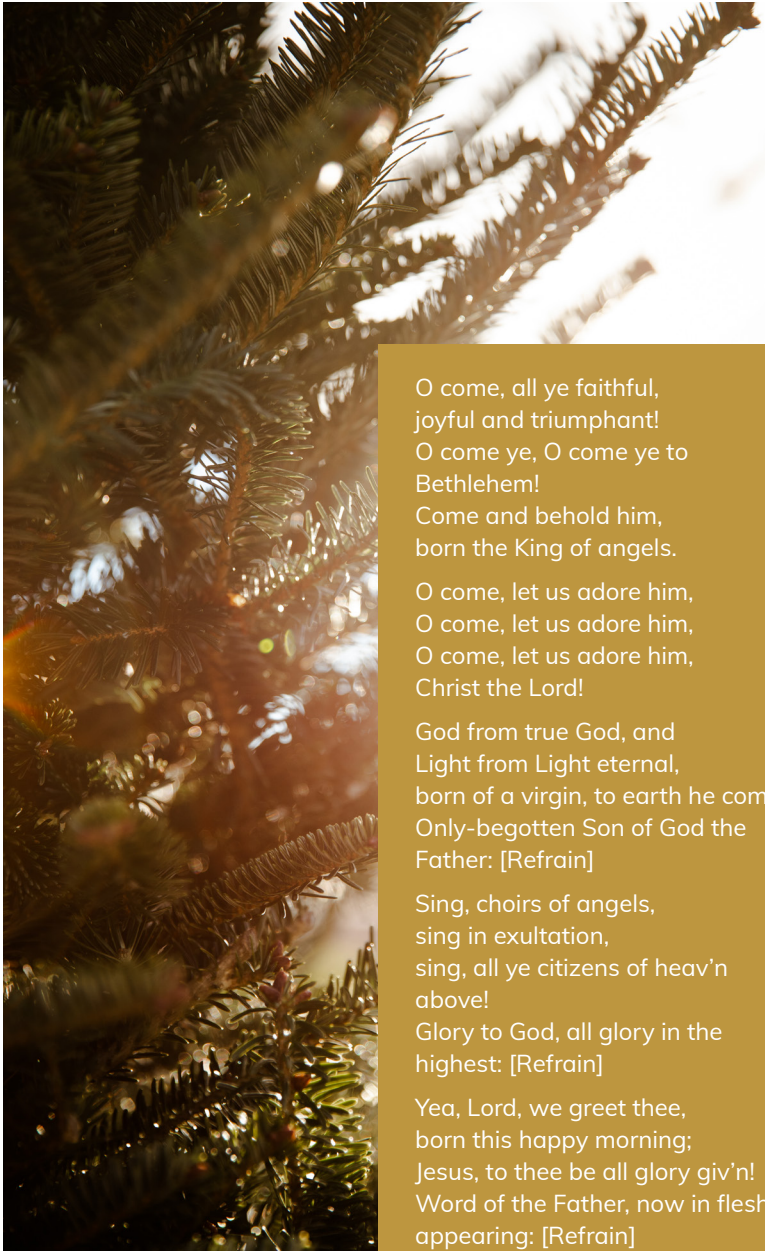
Senior Pastor, Dave Snyder  
500 North Palafox Street  
Pensacola, FL 32501

850-433-5631  
[www.fbc.org](http://www.fbc.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Anticipating is Waiting.....	3
Connecting the Dots.....	5
Advent is About Love.....	7
A Selfless Christmas.....	9
Christmas Generosity.....	11
The Eternal and Undiminishing Treasure.....	15
A Better Way to Spend the Holidays.....	17
The Best Family Ever.....	19
Moments of Grace.....	21
The Great Shepherd.....	23
Jesus Wins!.....	25
God With Us?.....	27
Wise People Continue Seeking.....	29
Prepare the Way.....	31
A Mispronounced Word.....	33
An Unprepared Father.....	35
Make Room!.....	37
The Abundant Life.....	39
The Greatest Light.....	41
Advent is About Missions?.....	43
The Heart of a Servant.....	45
Worth the Wait!.....	47
Sing With Anticipation.....	49
The Day We Have Been Anticipating.....	51





O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to  
Bethlehem!  
Come and behold him,  
born the King of angels.

O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord!

God from true God, and  
Light from Light eternal,  
born of a virgin, to earth he comes!  
Only-begotten Son of God the  
Father: [Refrain]

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n  
above!

Glory to God, all glory in the  
highest: [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh  
appearing: [Refrain]

# INTRODUCTION

---

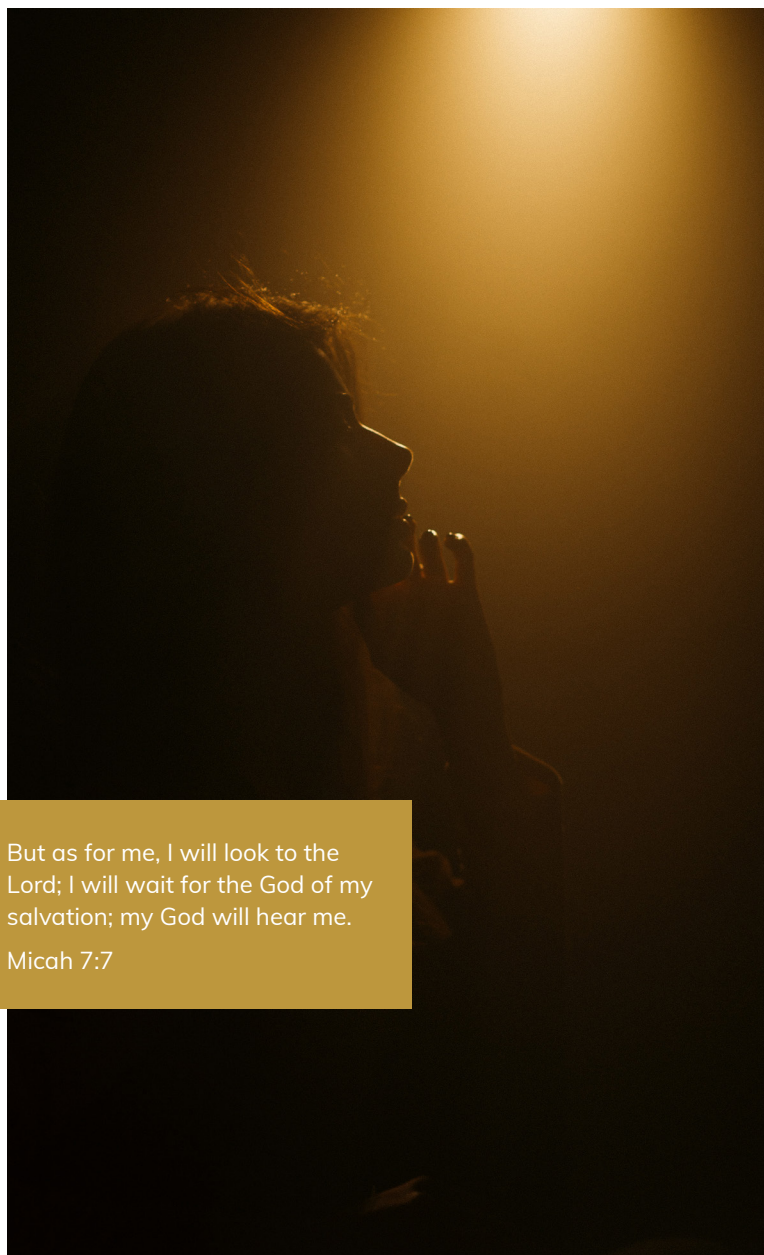
I absolutely love this time of year. I anticipate this season all year long. As I sit here in my study months before the arrival of Christmas, I am already in a mindset of anticipation. We get the term, "Advent" from the Latin word *adventus*, which means, "Coming." Of course, as you look at the Scriptures, you see Christ has already come. Advent simply is a season in the life of the church for the children of God to place themselves in joyful posture of anticipation. As we investigate the Scriptures, let's place ourselves back to a time in which we long for the Savior to be born. A trip down memory lane for the glory of Jesus allows us to celebrate Christmas morning later this month.

What will you anticipate this advent season? Is your heart set for traveling, gift exchanges, songs in the stores, or busy holiday activities? Is your mind racing toward the perfect decorated house or the best tasting cookies on the block? I have an idea...let's anticipate the Savior together. There is nothing inherently wrong with what the list mentioned...yet, we must not lose sight for the purpose of advent.

Come, let's anticipate Jesus. He came more than 2,000 years ago to set us free from the curse of sin. He came to purchase our salvation with His blood. He came to give us eternal victory with His resurrection. He came to give us a mission for this world. Advent is an opportunity to return to what matters most. Let's embrace the gift of the Gospel this Christmas season. For the next 25 days, I want you to soak in the blessing of God's Word. Each day will have selected passages for individual study and meditation. At the conclusion of each day, spend time in prayer. Trust me, the days will pass by and Christmas morning will be at your door step. Let's anticipate with faithfulness, as John Francis Wade wrote in 1743.

With Anticipation,

Dave Snyder



But as for me, I will look to the  
Lord; I will wait for the God of my  
salvation; my God will hear me.

Micah 7:7

DECEMBER 1

# Anticipating is Waiting

---

Would you consider yourself to be a patient person? I must confess, for those that know me best, I'm not known as one being patient. Just a few days ago, I was in line at the grocery store near my house. The person in front of me in line decided to have a conversation with the store employee. Their topics included gardening, recipes, weather, and other various subjects. In their world, they weren't in a hurry. In my world, I was ready to go home and eat the hot fried chicken from my cart. I didn't say anything, but in my mind...a battle brewed. As soon as I got into the car, I was convicted. Here were two delightful souls connecting with life observations while the pastor is impatient for chicken. That must be a sermon illustration somewhere!

Today, we begin the adventure of anticipating. I love what the Old Testament prophet shares in today's reading. Read Micah 7:7 and observe the simple proclamation. As for Micah, he is going to look and wait for the God of his salvation. He also knows he will be heard!

Are you in a hurry today? Are you already busy with holiday plans and activities? Are you barely keeping your head above water? This advent season is an opportunity for our hearts to return to the waiting room of God's promise delivered in Bethlehem.

You may be in a season of painful waiting. You may be fearfully anticipating the worst news of your life or the life of another. You may be waiting for a prayer to be answered or light to outshine a certain area of darkness. Friend, be reminded today of what Micah promises. Look to the God of your salvation. He hears you and He sent His Son to redeem you from the curse of sin and darkness. His Spirit is with you as you read this. You are not alone. He loves. He cares. Anticipate His goodness today!

*Today, trust the Lord in the waiting room of your life. Remind your soul of His promises and faithfulness. Seek for this advent season for God to restore peace in your life.*





Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Hebrews 2:14-15

DECEMBER 2

# Connecting the Dots

---

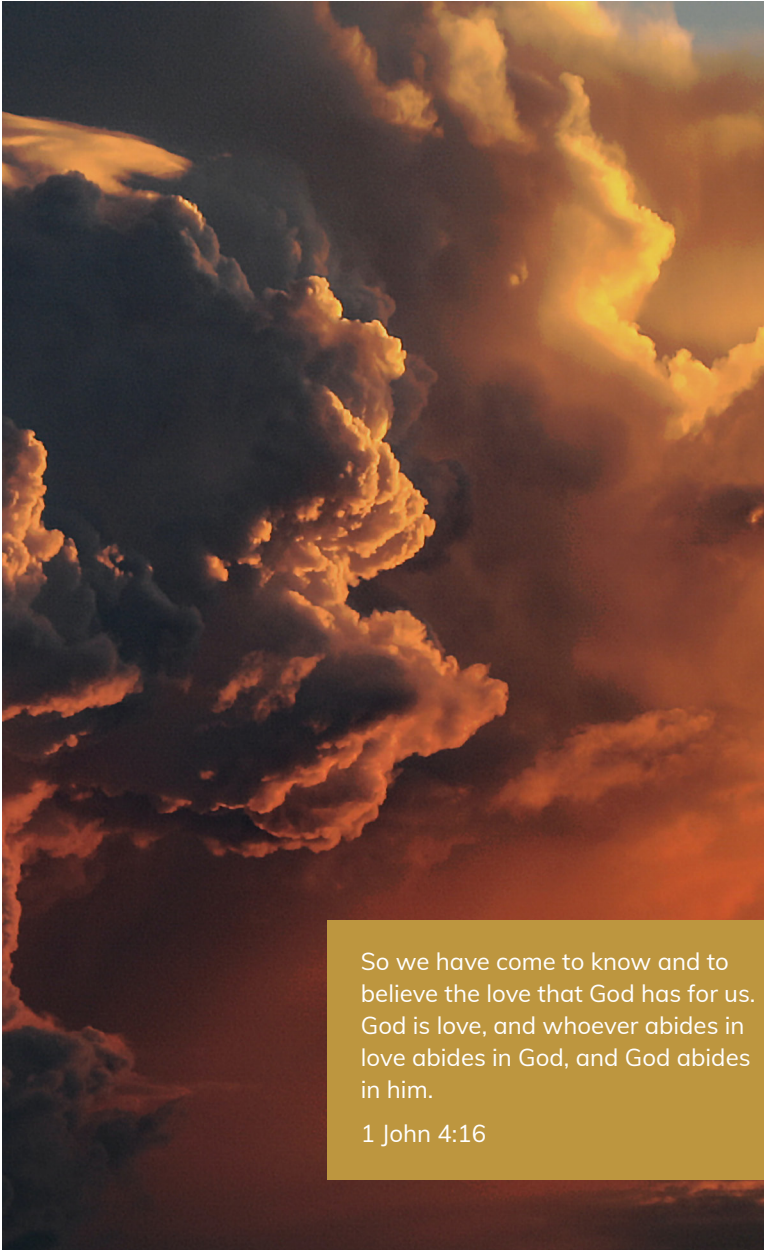
One of my favorite games as a kid was Connect the Dots. When I was younger and more restless in the church service, connecting the dots was my scapegoat. It didn't matter if the dots made an image or simply a game to make the most squares (a great game to play with a friend), the goal was making a connection with different points. As we anticipate Christmas morning this month, we must connect the dots of why Jesus had to come to the earth. Take a few moments and read today's passage.

In this rich passage, we see the powerful connection between the arrival and death of Jesus. Both the incarnation and the crucifixion are connected in the passage. Why did Jesus come? He came to die so that in Him, you may live. Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, came to the earth to defeat sin's curse on the cross. In His death, Jesus stripped the adversary of power. This is good news! We celebrate His arrival, because He is the promise of no more curse, no more condemnation, no more darkness.

This advent season, treat yourself to anticipate daily the promises fulfilled in Jesus. You don't have to fear death or succumb to evil, for Jesus, the Righteous One, defeated sin, death, and evil on the cross.

Today, try to connect the dots of the incarnation to the crucifixion. Go a step further and connect the dots from the resurrection to the ascension! And finally, connect the final dot...He will return. This is good news worth celebrating this advent season!

*Today, be reminded of the purpose for the incarnation. Jesus came on a rescue mission. He came to redeem and restore. He came, because of the Father's love for you. In prayer, praise Him for that amazing love today.*



So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

1 John 4:16

DECEMBER 3

# Advent is About Love

---

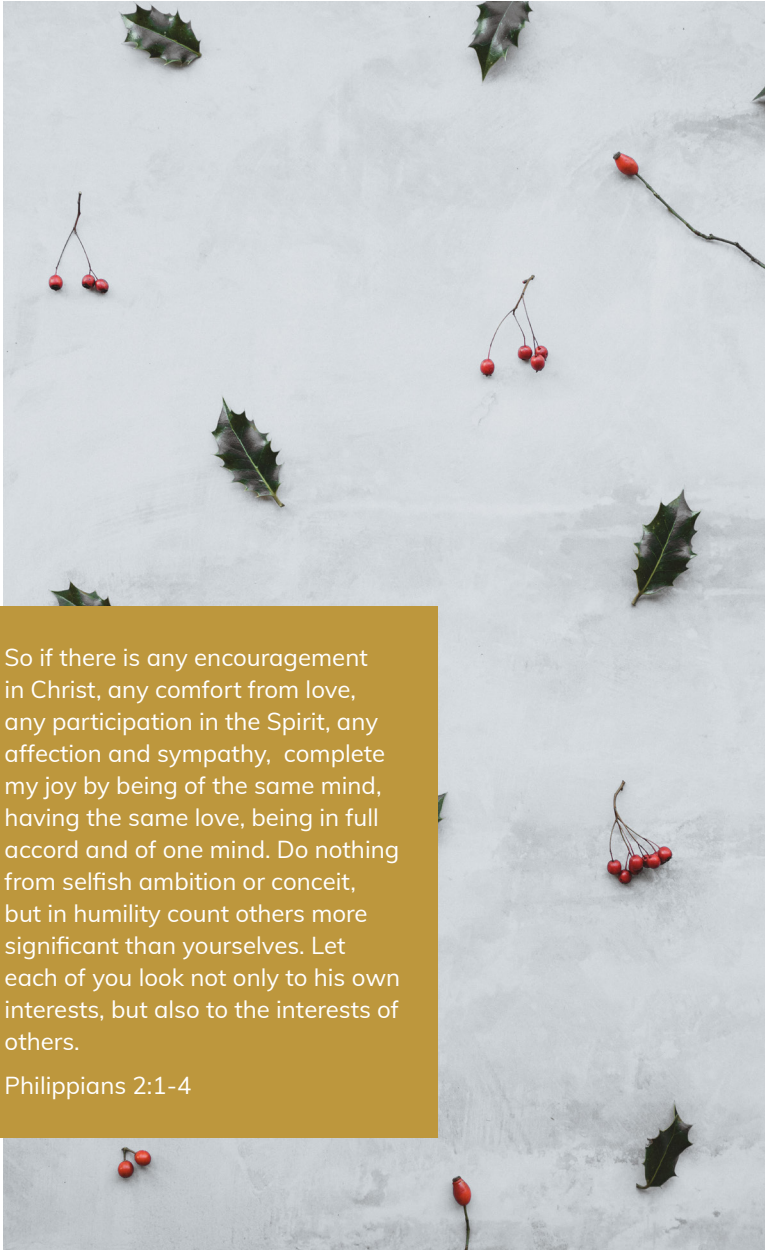
Our world today desperately needs to learn what it means to love one another. As we anticipate Christmas morning, we must ask ourselves the question, “Do people see God’s love in me?” How often do you intentionally show love to another? The advent season is a reminder of God’s love born in manger, to redeem sinners. C.S. Lewis once said, “He loved us not because we’re loveable, but because He is love.” The glorious attribute of God’s love must serve as the framework to how we treat others, especially during the holiday season.

The advent season is an opportunity to grow in love with the most difficult people in your life. I won’t ask you to give names, but I imagine there are folks you struggle to love. As you look at the Father’s love for you in the Son, let your soul be equipped to love others. For some, it is a family member. For some, it is someone at work or at school. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Do people know you are a disciple by the way you treat them?

In this season, make it your ambition to erase any feeling of hatred and replace it with the steadfast love of God. Billy Graham taught, “Jesus had a loving heart, if He dwells within us, hatred and bitterness will never rule us.” You will find a tremendous weight lifted from your heart when love flows all around. Forgiveness offered to someone may be necessary. Seeking forgiveness from another may be what it takes to bring about reconciliation and healing. Trust the Lord, for He is known by His love and mercy.

Today, spend time praying for that person you are struggling to love. Try to reach out to them today to resolve any conflict or concealed bitterness. Will people in your life know you belong to Jesus, because of your love?





So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:1-4

DECEMBER 4

# A Selfless Christmas

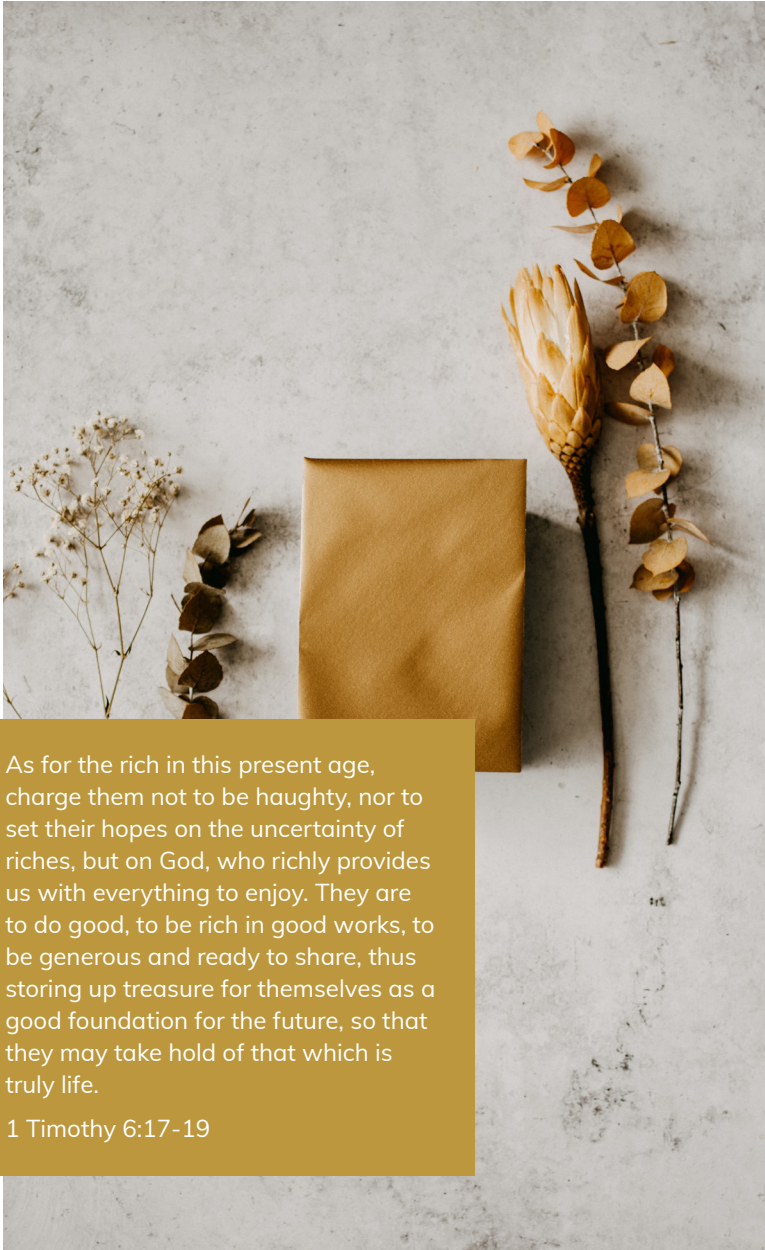
---

There is no room for selfishness in the advent season. As we anticipate Christmas morning, we do so with the adoration for the One that emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). Don't waste this Christmas season by making it all about...you. C.H. Spurgeon stated, "Selfishness is as far from Christianity as darkness is from light." Let's be known today as those that shine the light of Christ by choosing to have a selfless Christmas.

Selfishness can be ugly during the holiday season. There is a video somewhere in my parents' home from a Christmas morning many years ago. In this video, my cousin opened his present to discover a Sega Genesis. I was next to open my present only to discover a tie. Yup, you read that correctly. An 8-year-old boy receiving a necktie for Christmas. In my frustration, I threw the tie to the ground and pouted...only to have the entire moment captured on film. It would not bother me if that video was somehow damaged and unable to play.

This advent season, take a posture of putting others first. Begin with your family or the people closest to your heart. From there, go outside that inner circle and do the same. Don't look at Christmas with an agenda of all your wants and expectations. Instead, look at Christmas with a joy-filled pursuit of giving and serving others.

*Today, do a heart inventory and check for areas of selfishness. Write down those observations and give them over to the Lord. Take time to place the interests and happiness of others above your own. This will be a great way to anticipate Christmas morning!*



As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

DECEMBER 5

# Christmas Generosity

---

Advent is a time for us to consider generosity. With the sounds of Christmas music and the decorated stores, this time of year provides more motivation in generosity than any other season. Holding onto Christmas wish lists while looking for the best deals in town can be a blessing in disguise. What if we held onto the needs of others in our minds throughout the year and sought to give for the goal of making Christ known?

Giving involves sacrifice and intentionality. As a child, I remember at times receiving money from dad in order to purchase a gift for mom. The gift was still a wonderful memory made, yet it came from my dad's wallet. There was no sacrifice on my end. When I grew older and could purchase gifts with my own income, the blessing was far greater, since I was willing to sacrifice for the happiness of those I love.

Those that walk in the light of Jesus should not hold back when it comes to generosity. Wisdom from Proverbs declares, "The righteous give and don't hold back" (Proverbs 21:26, HCSB). Giving is an act of worship, responding to the generosity of the Father in the gift of His Son. See the Father's great love when He gave us His only Son. Let's not become generous only during Christmas, but instead throughout the entire year.

It is important to place the picture of the Gospel inside your mind and heart. I like what Corrie ten Boom said, "Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life." Think of the glorious gift of Jesus. If you have the time, take a few minutes, and read passages of God's gift of salvation. Here are some to assist your joy.

**John 3:16**

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

**Romans 6:32**

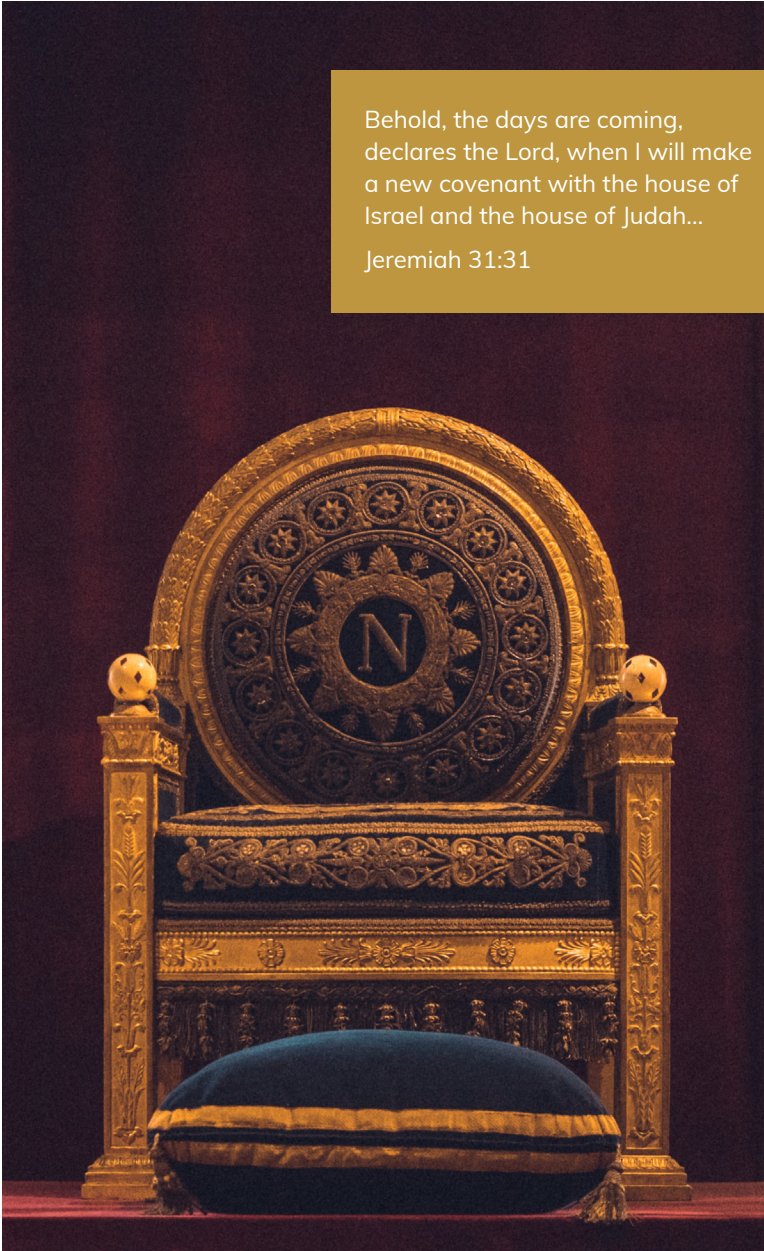
**1 John 3:1**

**Romans 8:32**

*Today, see the generosity of the Father in giving you Jesus, the light of the world. In this advent season, spread His marvelous light by generosity. The greatest gift the world has ever received was born in Bethlehem. May our giving show His infinite worth!*

Behold, the days are coming,  
declares the Lord, when I will make  
a new covenant with the house of  
Israel and the house of Judah...

Jeremiah 31:31



DECEMBER 6

# Anticipating Promises Fulfilled

---

Advent is the assurance of God's endless mercy, promised throughout the Old Testament. Around 500 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Jeremiah declared God would make a new covenant with His people. The darkness of sin and the frustrations with evil would soon be conquered by the light of the Son.

Jesus came, not by accident or coincidence, but by the Father's plan. During the advent season, we get to celebrate the promise in Jeremiah fulfilled in the manger. You can trust the Father today, because He is true to His promises!

Have you ever had holiday plans changed because of unforeseen circumstances? It could be bad weather causing a delay in travel or a sick kid, sometimes plans can be unpredictable. It can be frustrating having to make phone calls to communicate changes. Yet, it is part of life.

With the birth story and the promises made prior, the Father's plan was set and did not change. Throughout multiple Old Testament books, you will find multiple promises fulfilled in Jesus. A baby, in Mary's arms, was Jeremiah 31:31. Oswald Chambers once said, "Jesus Christ founded His kingdom on the weakest link of all: a Baby." Look at the manger scene and rejoice in our God as the promise maker and keeper.

Perhaps this year has been full of disappointments in your life. Perhaps you are dealing with someone betraying your trust or letting you down. I have good news...advent is about anticipating the One who is true in all His promises. Even when you and I are faithless, He is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). Trust in His faithfulness today.

Today, read of God's promises for you, in the Son. Try Isaiah 40:29-31, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 11:28, John 14:1-6, and Philippians 4:6-7. Of course, feel free to add more to this list! Pray today, trusting in God's promises.



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

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Colossians 1:15-23

DECEMBER 7

# The Eternal and Undiminishing Treasure

---

Jesus is eternal and His worth never decreases. He is the undiminishing treasure this world desperately needs. When He came as fully God and fully Man, His worth and honor remained intact. Peter, James, and John got a great glimpse of His eternal worth in the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). Even the soldiers witnessed His glory upon the arrest scene when they fell to the ground, before the King (John 18:4-6). Do you see Him as the eternal and undiminishing treasure this holiday season?

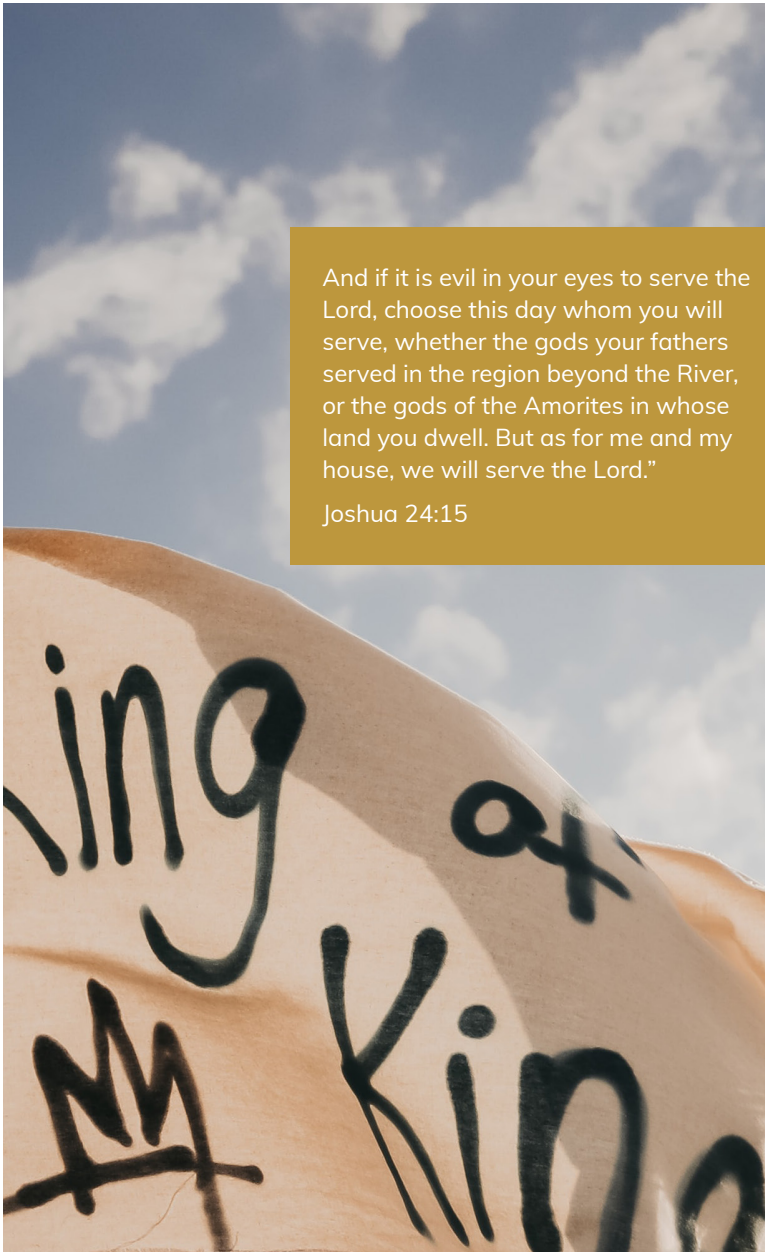
The value of Christmas gifts fade over time. This year's newest gadget will be in a garage sale in the future. I still remember my excitement one Christmas morning when I opened my Super Nintendo. I couldn't believe a 16 bit game system was in my living room. The excitement diminished years later when the Nintendo 64 was released. Can you guess how many bits was in that system? My world was once again shaken with such fresh game innovation. Today, technology is astonishing and will be even better years from now.

Yet, as temporary treasures on this earth diminish with the invention of new options, the endless worth of Jesus remains eternal. He will always be perfect in every way (Hebrews 4:15). He is our access to the Father (John 14:6). He speaks on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25). He is eternally glorious (Hebrews 1:3).

This advent season, I encourage you to look to Jesus as the eternal and undiminishing treasure of your life. Place your happiness and obsession not in treasures on this earth that diminish, but rather in Him (Matthew 6:19-21). Don't let another Christmas go by, obsessing over things that will one day take up space in your storage room.

*Today, examine your heart and determine what treasures really matter. Are you searching for contentment in the newest gadget, or in the Eternal Savior?*





And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:15

DECEMBER 8

## A Better Way to Spend the Holidays

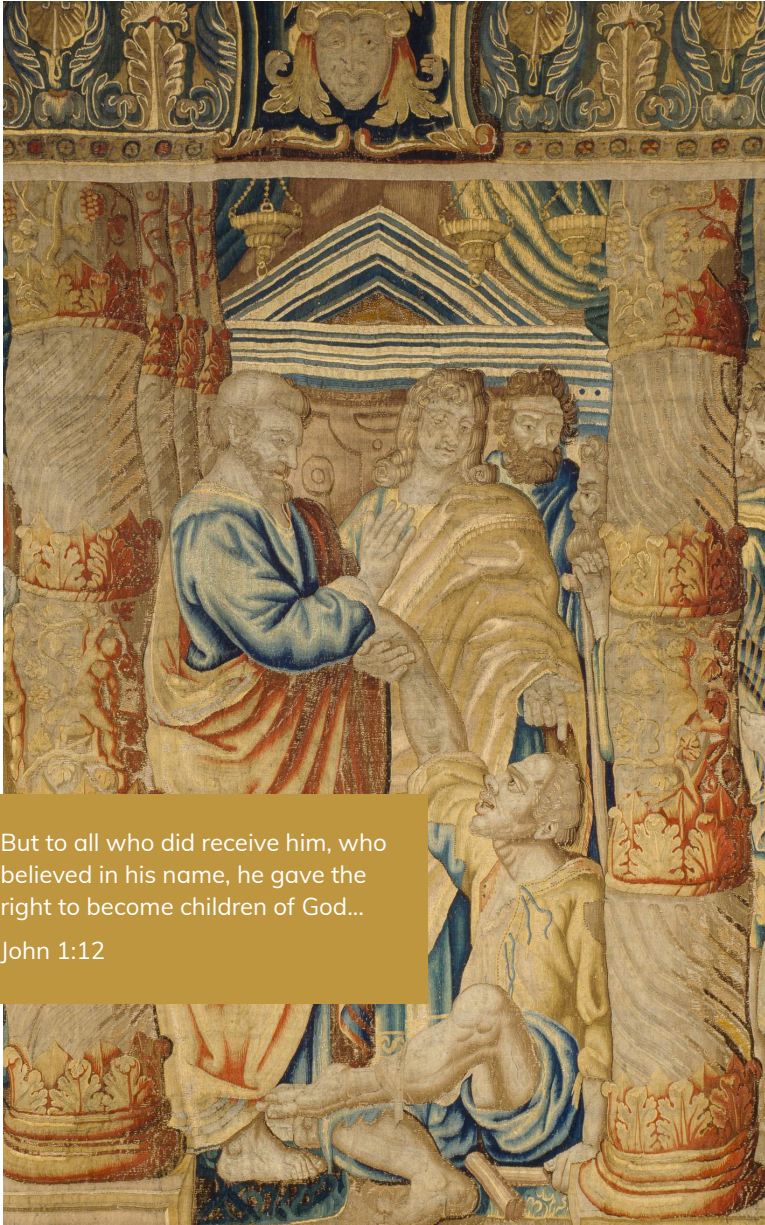
---

In just a few blinks of your eyes, the holiday season will be over. This time of year seems to fly by quickly. We go from eating turkey with family and friends in late November to putting away decorations at the end of December. It is a time in which your calendar will be tested with activities and commitments. In the busyness of advent, will you make sure your priority is on the Lord above all? Take a few moments and meditate on today's verse.

I love the scene of Joshua 24. Calling together the tribes of Israel to Shechem, the great leader recounted Old Testament stories. Remembering God's faithfulness in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and a focus on the conquest of Canaan; Joshua made sure the people knew the greatness of God. In this summons, Joshua commanded the people not to serve other gods, but instead to look to the Almighty. Regardless of the decision they will make, Joshua put his stake in the ground and declared his house will serve the Lord. I love this!

Today, in the bustle of holiday noise, will you serve the Lord? Today, will your priority be in exalting the name of Jesus as you anticipate the celebration of Christmas morning? Will you sing Christ-centered Christmas songs and serve others? Will you encourage a hurting friend or serve in your church? There are so many ways we can exalt our God. Choose today to serve Him. Trust me, this is a better way to spend the holidays.

Today, make an inventory of how you are spending your time and energy in the holiday season. Make changes, if necessary, to better serve and honor the Lord. Spend time today praising Him for what He has done in your life.



But to all who did receive him, who  
believed in his name, he gave the  
right to become children of God...

John 1:12

DECEMBER 9

# The Best Family Ever

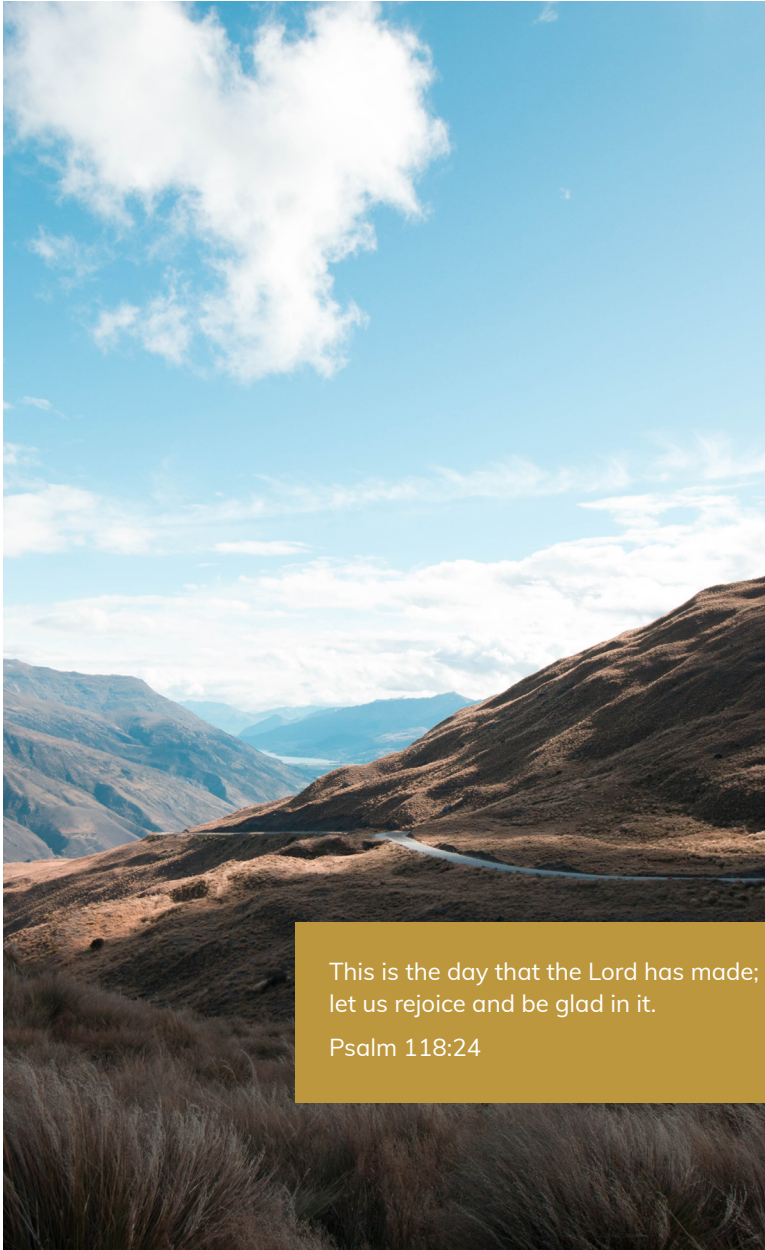
---

Advent is about the Father sending the Son, to save and adopt sinners into an eternal family. The baby we anticipate on Christmas morning is the invitation to join the best family ever. When you trust in Jesus to save you from your sins, you join the family of God. You no longer have to fear God as judge, but rather have Him as Father. J.I. Packer explained, "What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father." Rejoice today, for in Christ, you indeed have the best family ever.

Christmas is a time families come together. For some, this is a joyful time. For some, this is painful. I'm not sure what your family dynamic is, but I do know you need the reminder of your eternal placement. In Christ, you are forever loved by the Father. In Christ, you have a room reserved for you in glory. In Christ, you can anticipate joy during the holidays, because what is waiting for you on the other side of glory is far better than your circumstances today.

One tangible expression of the reward of God's family is involvement in a local church. It is so important for your soul to be connected in life with other believers. There are brothers and sisters in the faith that need you in their lives! This advent season, be encouraged to get involved with a body of believers. The church is God's gift to us to embrace our position today as sons and daughters before our time for heaven arrives.

*Today, remind your soul of the best family ever. Take what you have from the Father and love and serve your own family on this earth. Take the challenge to get more involved with a church family.*



This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24



DECEMBER 10

## Moments of Grace

---

As we anticipate Christmas morning, let's focus today on enjoying the moments of grace our God provides. As I was getting my kids ready for school this morning, I was reminded of how precious that time is. As a dad of four kids, the mornings can be stressful in making sure everyone gets to school on time. Brooke and I must tag team our efforts (let's be honest, she does more than me). This morning, one of our children was a bit slow in getting ready. Frustration began to build up as I was helping expedite the situation. After drop-off and then arriving to my office, I was haunted with this thought, "I will miss these days one day." I believe it is imperative for our souls to enjoy moments of grace each day. I believe it is important to avoid hurry and enjoy life as a gift. The Psalmist said it best today.

What are moments of grace? I believe they are those pockets of time and experiences that remind us of the beauty, love, and joy of God. It could be a cup of coffee while enjoying a sunrise or laughing with a good friend. It could be a meaningful time of prayer or singing along to your favorite Christmas carol in the car.

A good step toward enjoying moments of grace today is disciplining your time on your phone. I may be preaching to myself here, but I am often convicted of time wasted on my phone. I like what John Mark Comer said, "Parent your phone: put it to bed before you and make it sleep in." It could be a phone or the TV but find what is distracting you from those moments of grace and take control over them. This Christmas season will fly by. Don't approach January with regrets. Soak in the joy of life on this earth, on this side of heaven, today.

*Today, soak in those moments of grace. Treat your soul with memories created with people you love. Today is a gift, the day He has made. Rejoice and be glad in it!*

Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 40:9-11



DECEMBER 11

# The Great Shepherd

---

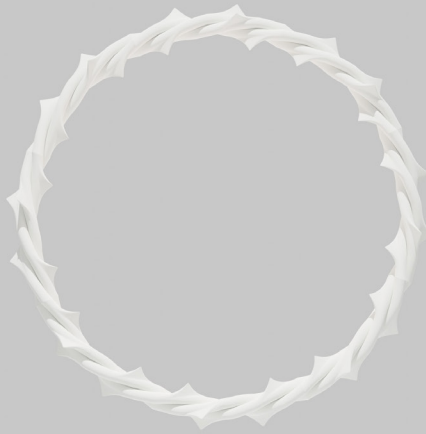
Shepherds were often my favorite people in the Christmas story, besides Jesus of course! Yet, as we see them in nativity sets, we must remember their anticipation; to see the Great Shepherd. The baby born in the manger was indeed the Great Shepherd, the conquering King. Just as the shepherds were told not to fear the good news of the Great Shepherd (Luke 2:8-16), so must we. Let's embrace this advent season, the celebration of our Savior...our Great Shepherd!

Jesus, as our Great Shepherd, laid down His life for us...His sheep (John 10:11). He provided salvation for us and has welcomed us into the perfect pasture...forever. He knows us and cares for us. This world offers us slop when His pasture offers endless joy. In His pasture, you will find peace. In His pasture, you will find that life is indeed worth living each day.

Too often, the holidays present us unnecessary stress. It is not the end of the world if the toy your child wanted is nowhere to be found online or in stores. Doom and destruction will not happen if your family pictures didn't go as planned. The pasture of the Good Shepherd puts the advent season in the right perspective. We breathe and live on this side of heaven, to represent what is waiting for us on the other side. Avoid wasting your time, money, and passion on things this holiday season that have no eternal significance. Today is a good to STOP, PAUSE, and ENJOY time with the Great Shepherd.

Today, look deeper at John 10:11-18. See Jesus as the Great Shepherd and represent Him as part of His flock. Cast your cares, your worries, and your strife to Him. As Isaiah 40:11 declares, "He will carry you."





I will put enmity between  
you and the woman, and  
between your offspring and her  
offspring; he shall bruise your  
head, and you shall bruise his  
heel.”

Genesis 3:15

DECEMBER 12

## Jesus Wins!

---

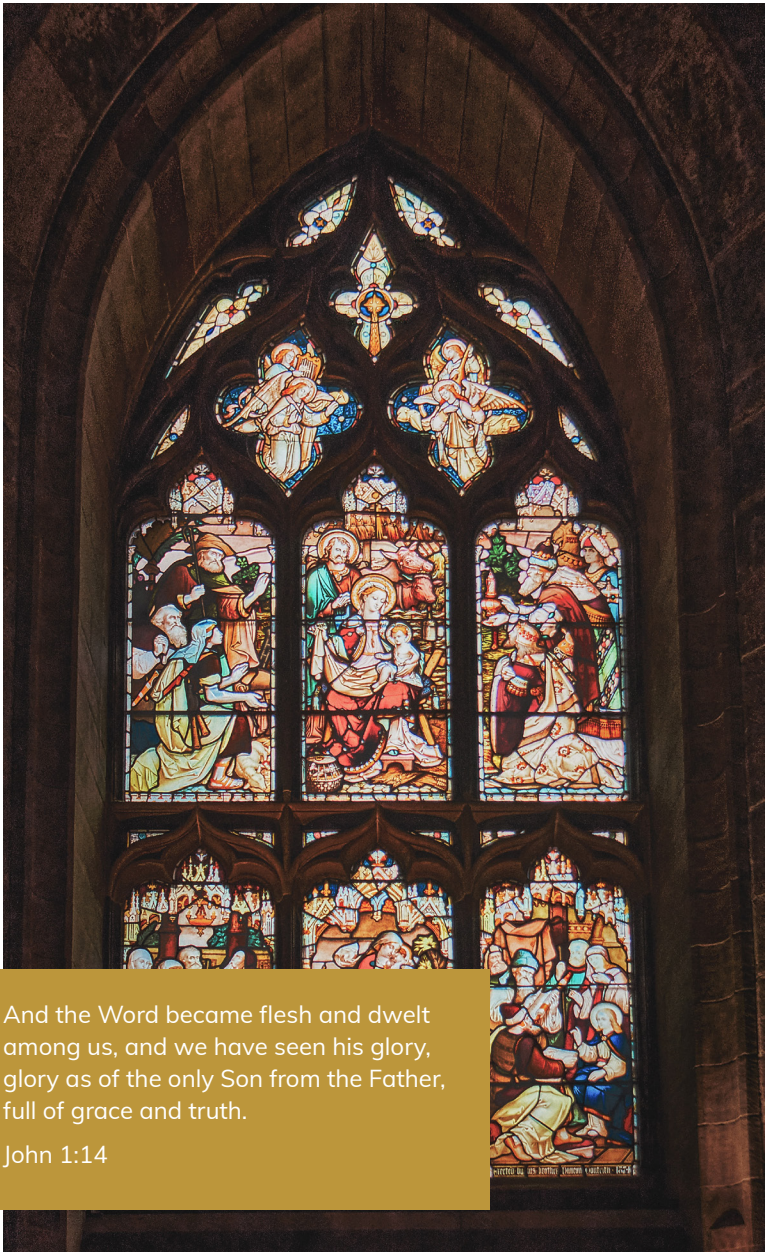
Not many may consider Genesis 3:15 as a verse related to Christmas. Tucked inside the curses brought because of sin, we find hope promised. The offspring of Eve promised in this verse is the Savior born to the virgin Mary in Bethlehem. We can anticipate with great joy over Jesus this advent season because He is the promise fulfilled from the beginning.

Sadly, in this world, we live daily with the snares of the adversary (1 Peter 5:8). Each day, sinful temptations come our way like gnats in southern Georgia. Christmas does not give any of us a pass from spiritual warfare. Yet, in the midst of sinful struggles...let's claim the victory of Jesus. He is the God of peace that will crush the adversary (Romans 16:20). When He came to the manger, darkness began to tremble.

Don't live today defeated and downcast. Trust in the power and glory of the Son, who came to rescue, redeem, and restore you. He came, as promised, to be victorious over all evil. In Him, you can live victoriously today (Romans 8:37). Be honest with your struggles and allow your soul to see the privilege of being on the winning side today.

Christmas is the Gospel promise of salvation for all who believe. Corrie ten Boom said, "Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life." This is worth celebrating today. Look at any darkness in your life and trust in the victorious light of Jesus.

Today, see the victory of Jesus, connecting from Genesis 3:15 to Romans 16:20. You may want to add Colossians 2:15 to your reading as well. Remember, you don't have to feel defeated today. This is good news...especially as we anticipate Christmas morning!



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

John 1:14

DECEMBER 13

## God With Us?

---

The advent season is a reminder of God, the Son, coming to dwell with sinful humanity. It is a reminder our God is not distant and removed from our lives. He is active. He is present. He cares and He provides. In today's verse, we see the power of the Incarnation. Jesus, the Son of God, was Emmanuel more than 2,000 years ago. As we are another day closer to Christmas morning, anticipate the power and blessing of Emmanuel.

I don't know about you, but it is very assuring for my soul to know I don't walk this earth alone. It's fun to imagine what it must have been like to see Jesus face to face. Held in Mary's arms was...God. The baby that would change the world was Emmanuel, full of grace and truth. Advent draws our minds and hearts to remember our God is indeed with us.

Christ follower, remember you are not alone. If Christmas will be difficult this year, because of the absence of a loved one...remember Emmanuel. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit will be with us (John 14:15-17). He indeed is here (Acts 1:8). He renews us (Titus 3:5). He helps us in this world (John 14:26). He guarantees our salvation (Ephesians 1:13). He assists us in our prayers (Jude 1:20). He gives us specific gifts to serve the church and change the world with the Gospel (1 Corinthians 12:4). Friend, in Christ, I can assure you...God is with you. When you place your faith in Jesus for salvation, the Holy Spirit takes up residency in your life (Romans 10:9-13). This is all good news!

I share all of this with you today, so you are reminded of Emmanuel. He is with you. He is for you. He will lead you. Give Him your brokenness, hurt, pain, and sadness this Christmas season. Enjoy time with God...for He is with you always.

Today, spend time getting to know more of the Holy Spirit's role and activity in your life. Our best glimpse of Emmanuel is daily walking in the Spirit. Be thankful, for in Christ Jesus...you have God forever!

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

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

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-11

DECEMBER 14

# Wise People Continue Seeking

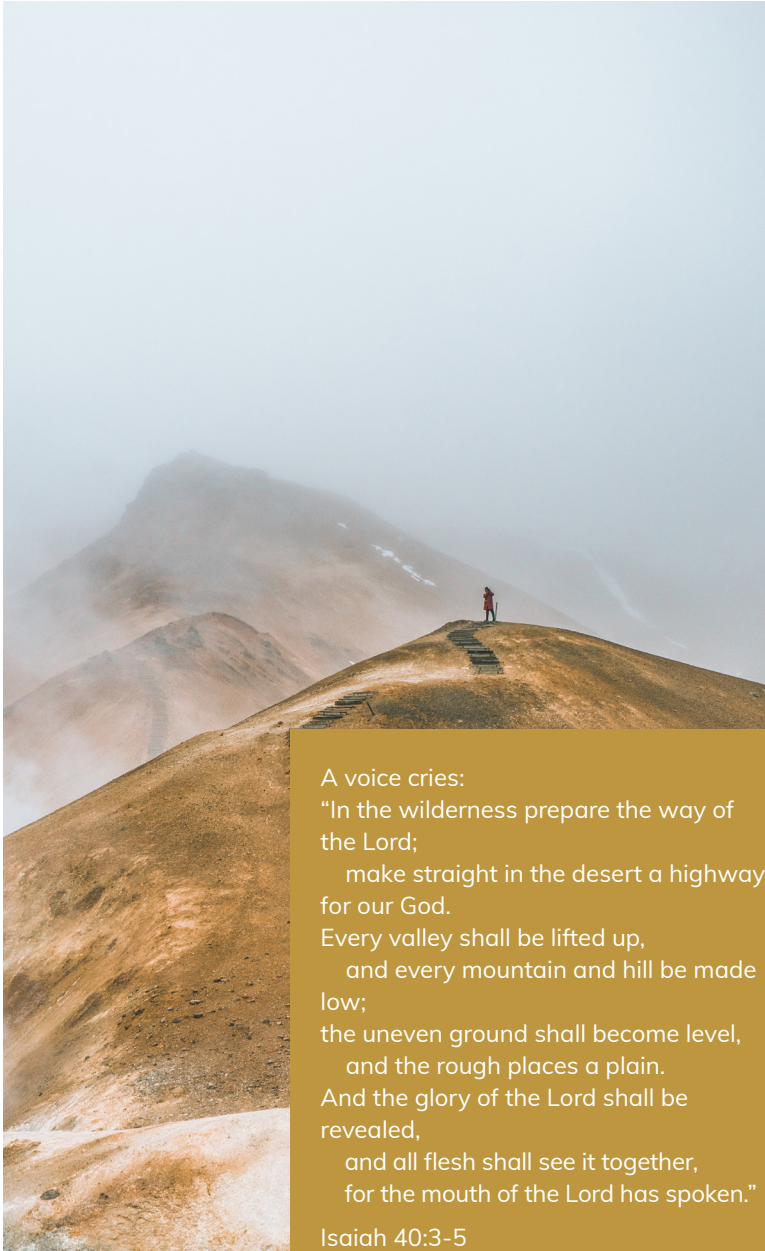
---

In most nativity scenes, you will find three wise men worshipping the Savior. Of course, there are some discrepancies with that portrayal. We have 3 known gifts given to Jesus, but not sure how many Maji made the delivery. We also know the Maji came to see Jesus in a home, not the stable. Nonetheless, we aren't going to look deeply into these mysteries, but rather the fact of Maji seeking the Lord. Take a few moments and read today's passage.

Wisdom is found in the person seeking after the Lord daily. You and I were given the blessing of God's Word and presence, as we seek together to glorify Him on this side of glory. Are you seeking after Him daily? Are you seeking His wisdom over life situations? Rick Warren wrote, "There's not better time than Christmas to become the kind of seeker the wise men embodied. Wise people still seek Christ." We must never stop our pursuit of seeking and receiving wisdom that comes from above (James 3:17).

Sadly, we live in a world that daily attempts to lure us away and tempt us to seek sinful pleasures. Every day, you must make the decision to seek the Lord above all the world offers (1 Chronicles 16:11). The advent season may serve your soul today with the halt of sinful pursuits. Stop seeking after things that have no eternal significance. Instead, seek the Lord and take a page from the Maji's book. They found the Savior and worshipped. Their lives were never the same. You too can experience that daily transformation when you seek the Lord with all of your life. Watch and enjoy what He does in and through you.

*Today, learn a lesson from the Wise Men. Seek the Lord with the time He's provided. Grow in wisdom and Christ-like character. This world needs more wise people.*



A voice cries:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of  
the Lord;  
    make straight in the desert a highway  
for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
    and every mountain and hill be made  
low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
    and the rough places a plain.  
And the glory of the Lord shall be  
revealed,  
    and all flesh shall see it together,  
    for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."  
Isaiah 40:3-5



DECEMBER 15

## Prepare the Way

---

Christmas is about making and accomplishing plans. Brooke and I begin the discussion of our holiday season planning around late September to early October. Our planning involves when we will visit family, what gifts the kids seem to want, the church calendar full of activities, and intentional nights planned for our family traditions. We have our choice of movies to enjoy and decorations to set up. I can't say this enough...I love this time of year.

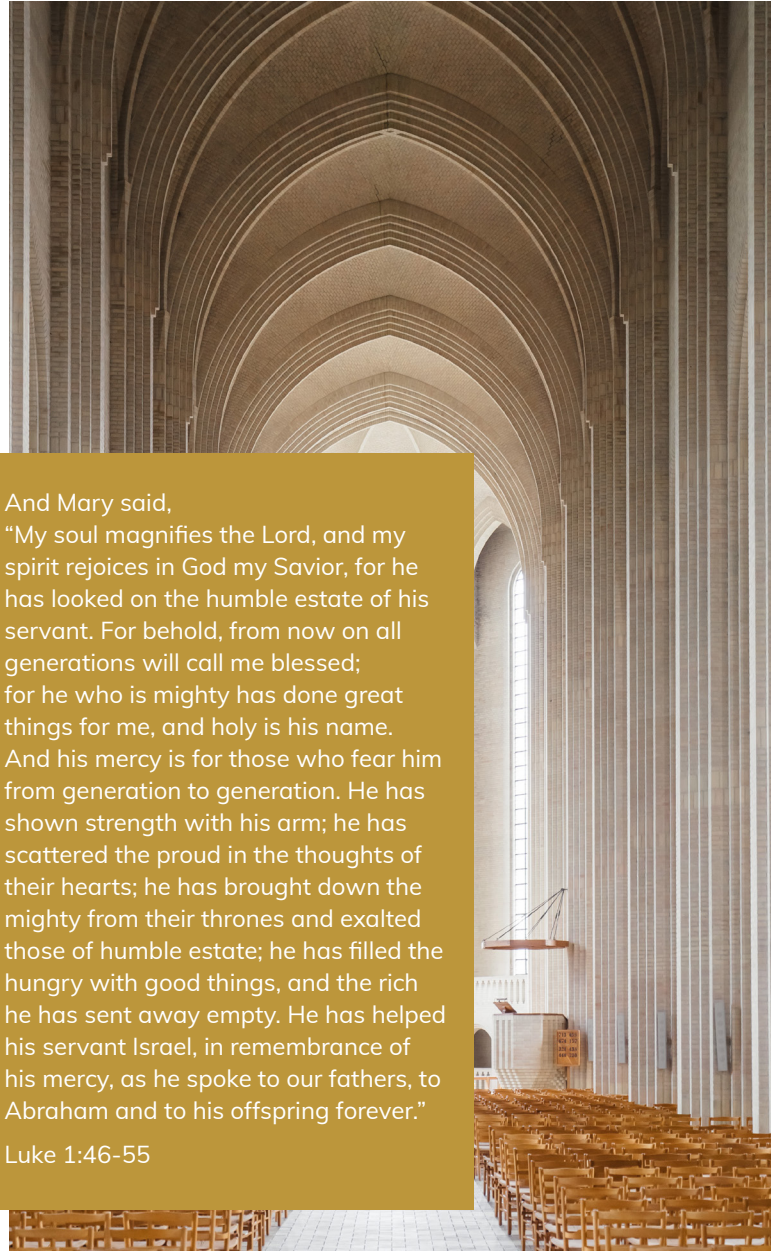
In today's advent reading, we see the planning of John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Savior. Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 1:76, and John 1:23 fulfill the plans from Isaiah's words. In the wilderness, Jesus was proclaimed. John the Baptist, born around six months before Jesus, prepared the way for salvation to spread. We should be grateful for the messenger in the wilderness.

How prepared are you to celebrate Christmas morning? I'm not asking with gifts and traditions, but in worship. Advent is a reminder of need. You and I need Jesus. You and I need Him for salvation, hope, and victory in this fallen world. Advent is an opportunity for us to have a reflection on our own lives and see what really motivates us in the journey. Let's anticipate the birth and make sure our excitement is on Him above all.

Psalm 139:23-24 is important to read today. Are you preparing your heart by ridding yourself of sin? Preparing to celebrate the Savior this advent involves making more room for His light to shine in and through you. Don't waste the heart space for darkness. His light is better. I'm glad it started to shine in the wilderness.

*Today, make plans to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Be intentional with your time. Above the holiday plans you make with family and friends, make sure you treasure Jesus above all. These are plans worth making each day.*





And Mary said,  
“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Luke 1:46-55

DECEMBER 16

# A Mispronounced Word

---

As a pastor, I speak a lot. With so many sermons preached each year, I'm prone to mispronounce words. Last advent season, I was preaching a sermon from Luke 1:46-55. In the excitement of my words, I said "MagnifiCAT." Notice the emphasis on CAT. Looking at the word, it should be pronounced in the church, "MagnifiKAAT." Some of my music staff friends have not forgotten my blunder. It still makes me smile as I write these words today.

You can't experience the advent season without reading Mary's words of worship. Following Gabriel's visit to her (Luke 1:26-38), we see her response to God's plans with a heart of worship and adoration. Mary and her cousin Elizabeth are heroines in the Gospel account given by Luke. I love reading Mary's words to her God. She gladly glorified Him, for she saw Him as magnificent above all.

I wonder, do you see Him as magnificent above all? God using Mary to deliver the Savior, is quite remarkable. Daniel Darling explained, "Mary, a daughter of Eve, would bear in her womb the second Adam, who would come to reverse the curse ushered on the human race and the cosmos by the disobedience of the first Adam." The baby Mary delivered would be the One that would deliver her and countless others. Mary's heart was full of exaltation, as she processed and responded to the good news.

This advent let us respond to the Gospel with glory and honor to God. Let's take a page from Mary's heart and maintain a heart of worship. In our lowly state like Mary (Luke 1:48) we can rejoice our God came to us.

*Today, look at the glory, power, and majesty of God. See Him as truly magnificent above all. Use Mary's words to help you write your own words of adoration to the One that delivered you from sin.*

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:18-21



DECEMBER 17

## An Unprepared Father

---

Nothing could have really prepared me to be a father. I read books and blogs in preparation for Eden's birth back in 2010. I consulted with friends I respected. I took mental notes from dads I appreciated, including my own. Yet, when Eden was born on February 10, my world changed...for the good. Since then, my world has gotten even better with Jude, Elias, and Lucy's arrival. Yet, I will be the first to say I was and am unprepared in this parenting adventure.

The story of Joseph has always fascinated me. We won't know much about Joseph's life and story, other than what is recorded in the scriptures. Here, we find a young man engaged to a young lady with news that would change the world. Joseph was a man of righteousness. He appeared to be a man devoted to God. He seemed to be a man of honor, as he did not want Mary harmed in the surprising news of pregnancy before marriage (Matthew 1:19). Yet, he like all of us was unprepared for the future.

Joseph trusted God and took on the mission to raise the Son of God. This mission did not come because Joseph was super qualified or trained for the responsibility. He was unprepared but trusted in the Lord. I imagine his life was full of obstacles as his own reputation was damaged with the scandalous news of Mary's pregnancy. Even in the challenges, Joseph obeyed and took Mary as his wife.

As I look at my own life today, I find myself unprepared in many circumstances. As I see Joseph's dependency on God, I'm reminded of my own need to trust Him more. Sometimes the path He lays before us involves difficulty and uncertainty, yet He is always faithful. It's ok to feel unprepared today. Trust Him with whatever is going on and enjoy what He will do today.

*Today, cast your concerns and anxieties with the future to the Lord. Trust Him in all the areas you feel unprepared. He led Joseph and I assure you... He will lead you.*



And she gave birth to her firstborn son  
and wrapped him in swaddling cloths  
and laid him in a manger, because  
there was no place for them in the inn.  
Luke 2:7

DECEMBER 18

# Make Room!

---

When someone important in your life needs a place to stay, you will make room. When families come together for the holidays, rooms are changed to accommodate more sleepers than usual. I remember sleeping on the floor in various family homes as a child. Some of my fondest Christmas memories involve trips to Chicago, and Zanesville, Ohio. In each trip, family made room for us to stay. On a cold Christmas in Chicago, my cousins and I filled a single room with sleeping bags...and even rode them down the stairs. I would not recommend that! Sometimes I was blessed to have an actual bed, but mostly the floor was my mattress. I still treasure those memories made with people I love.

As you continue to anticipate Christmas morning, look at the accommodations offered for the Savior. We don't know much about the Innkeeper, other than the facts in Luke's Gospel account. Rejecting a very pregnant woman's need for a room must have been colder than the night air. In First Century Jewish culture, there would've been a room prepared, along with midwife assistance. The Innkeeper did not make room and instead, missed the blessing of Christmas.

I think busyness was the issue with the Innkeeper. Many were in Bethlehem because of the required census (Luke 2:1-4). With so many in a small town, space was limited. I'm not so sure the Innkeeper was mean- spirited or heartless. He was guilty of being busy.

Could it be true we get too busy this season and not make room for what really matters? Don't miss the blessing advent provides. Make room today for what really matters. Daniel Darling explained, "The One who had no home is making a home for us." Born and placed in a feeding trough, Jesus came to give us a room in glory (John 14:3). Let's clear our minds and schedules today and make room for Him.

*Today, make room for Him. Spend time with Him without rush or hurry. Refuse to be busy all the time. It's ok and needed to slow down, to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10).*



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

Isaiah 9:2



DECEMBER 19

# The Abundant Life

---

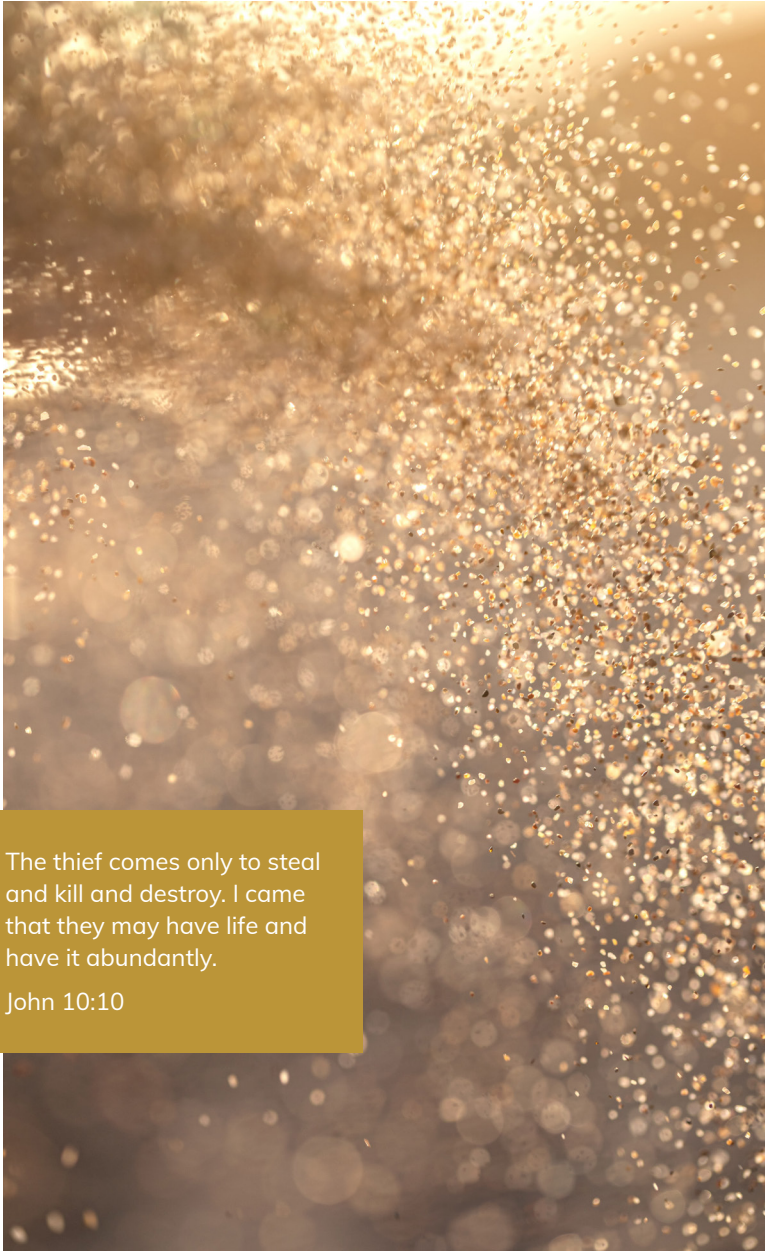
Jesus is the light that outshines all darkness. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled when the Great Light was born (John 1:9, 8:12). The light of the star leading the Maji (Matthew 2:1-2) was nothing in comparison to the Light of the world, born in Bethlehem. As we continue in our anticipation for Christmas morning, let's remember and hang onto the light of our Savior.

I'm a big fan of Christmas lights. I'm not a fan of hanging them, but I'm a fan of seeing them all around. At night I love driving through festive lights; illuminating homes as darkness covers unlit streets. As a kid, I remember my parents driving us through Christmas light parks. With the sounds of Christmas music, we would see millions of holiday lights. My favorite was the light of the star at the end of the journey. It served as a reminder of the reason for the season. Even with those amazing lights, the light of Jesus was brighter. His light is always brighter.

So many face darkness during the advent season. So many feel trapped with sorrow, confusion, stress, or pain. If that is you, please look to Jesus as the light that outshines all. In Him, you have redemption (Ephesians 1:7). In Him, you have eternal peace (Romans 5:1). In Him, you will overcome (John 16:33). Isaiah's prophecy is our reward today.

Charles Wesley famously wrote, "Light and life to all He brings, ris'n with healing in His wings. Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth." We celebrate songs like *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, because of the reminder of God's marvelous light in Christ Jesus. In the Son, there is light to shine over whatever you are facing today. Hold onto His light and stop substituting with temporary flashlights.

*Today, take the light of Jesus and shine it to those in need (Matthew 5:16). There may be someone you know walking in darkness. You may be walking in darkness. Look to the greatest light today.*



The thief comes only to steal  
and kill and destroy. I came  
that they may have life and  
have it abundantly.

John 10:10

DECEMBER 20

# The Greatest Light

---

The gift of the Savior in Bethlehem was for you and I to have eternal life in Him. Are you feeling tired, worn, or restless this month? Are you struggling to work out a smile? As we continue to anticipate Christmas morning together, let's reflect today on the abundant life we have in the Savior. Slowly read today's passage and allow the words to sit in your mind and heart.

The Greek adverb used for abundant in this text translates as, "a life beyond measure." This is the life that lives by faith in the eternal victory promised by Jesus (Romans 8:37). This is the life that under difficult circumstances and trying seasons, lives with hope and certainty in the better home awaiting on the other side. The celebrated baby in Mary's arms is the giver of eternal and abundant life. Reflect on that promise today.

Nobody wants a thief in their home. When someone experiences a break-in, levels of trust and security are shattered. I believe one of the many tactics of the adversary is to break our level of trust and security in perilous times. Perhaps you are experiencing a break-in and you are searching today for answers and hope? I believe Jesus gives us the perfect answer to the onslaught. He came to give us life and that life is beyond measure. That life is far better and stronger than what the adversary can throw at us. There is no need to feel or live defeated today. Friend, look to the promises of John 10:10 and rejoice. That promise is for you.

Today is a good day for a reminder of the abundant life found in Jesus. You and I have that life today and forever. Trust Him with the pain. Trust Him with the sorrow. Trust Him with the doubts and confusion. Trust Him with the low points and discouragement. Trust Him with the thief's attack. Nothing can take away the life beyond measure He has delivered.

*Today, spend time in prayer, seeking the Lord with the weight and pains of your life. Add Romans 15:13 to your reading today. May He fill you with all joy and peace.*



As you sent me into the world, so I  
have sent them into the world.

John 17:18

DECEMBER 21

# Advent is About Missions?

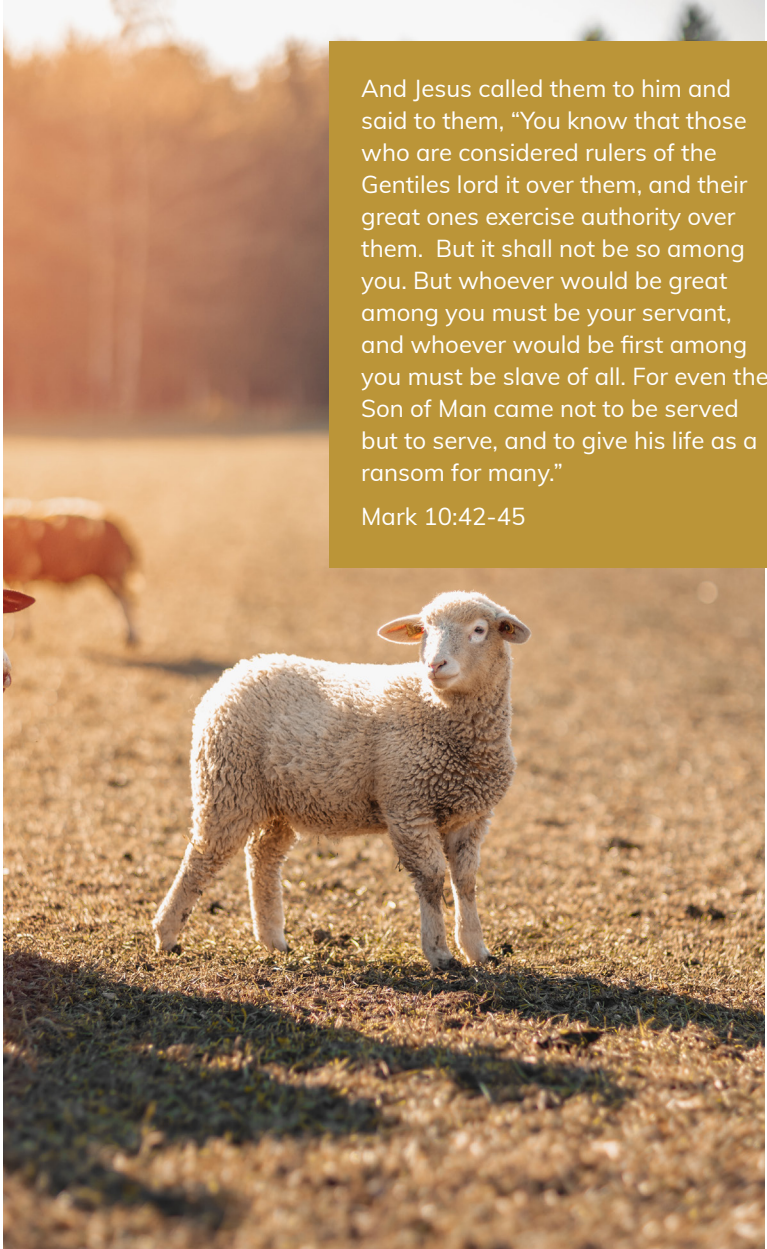
---

Do you think about missions during the Christmas season? Jesus was sent by the Father into this world to redeem humanity from sin's curse by His atoning blood shed on the cross. His resurrection three days later guaranteed to all who believe, eternal life. As Christ followers, we know Jesus was sent to redeem. Do we think we are sent to share that message? As you continue in both the excitement and busyness of the holiday season, live as a missionary.

We have the greatest gift, the brightest light, the living hope, and the perfect love of the Savior to proclaim in this world. This is the only time of year when our culture celebrates songs about Jesus as Lord. Walking into stores and hearing *O Holy Night*, serves as an open door for Gospel conversations. What if we started asking questions about the songs people were singing? (I'm not referring to *Grandma got run over by a reindeer*). People are singing, decorating, and celebrating the hope of the Gospel without fully realizing the salvation they desperately need. Let's help people understand the saving truth found in singing songs such as:

*Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the new-born king  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With angelic host proclaim  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the new-born king"  
(Charles Wesley, 1739)*

This world needs the hope of Jesus. Your family and friends need the hope of Jesus. Your neighbor and child's teacher needs the hope of Jesus. This Christmas, remember Jesus came, died, rose again, ascended, and now has sent us out today to share the good news. Will you be faithful to His call?

A photograph of a young, fluffy lamb standing in a field of dry grass. The lamb is facing slightly to the right but looking back over its shoulder towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a warm, golden light from a low sun, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. A semi-transparent olive-green box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:42-45

DECEMBER 22

## The Heart of a Servant

---

Today's reading takes place just after Jesus had to deal with the prideful request of James and John. These two were on quite the power trip, wanting to be seated next to Jesus in full honor. As Jesus explained why He could not make that a guarantee, the disciples all became irritated. The words you will read today come from Jesus teaching the essence of greatness; service.

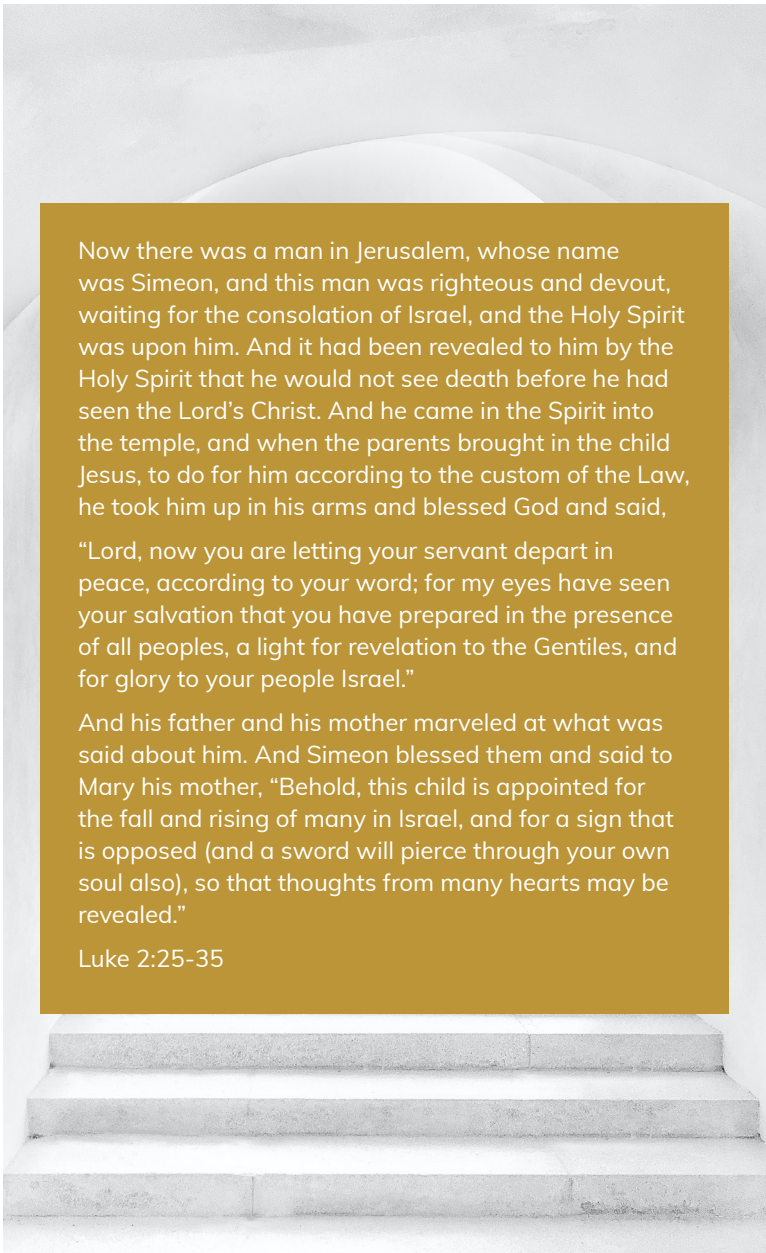
We all define greatness in different ways. When I turned six years old, my parents took me to a St. Louis Cardinals game. Mom and dad surprised me, "Happy Birthday David" on the large electronic board in the centerfield. In the same inning, back up catcher Steve Lake hit a homerun. At that moment, I thought he was the greatest. I told everyone I saw the greatest player of all time hit a homerun. Many years later, my friend Brian gifted me with a Steve Lake game-used bat as a wedding present. He only hit 18 home runs in his career, yet I think he is still great.

What is greatness? I believe Jesus wants us to understand today the answer to that question. Greatness is found in how we serve others; pointing them to Jesus. Serving strips us of unhealthy pride and sharpens our steps to walk in humility. The goal for our lives is to strive for the joy of Jesus while emptying ourselves of any unnecessary desire of self-centeredness. Pride is an ugly monster, especially during the holiday season when we tragically become more me-centered. C.S. Lewis wrote about pride, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride is gone." – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. If you want greatness, serve someone today.

We serve because we have been served the greatest gift; King Jesus (Mark 10:45). A hot meal, a blanket, clothes, or a phone call of encouragement can go a long way on the path of greatness today. Live with the heart of a servant.

Today, find ways to serve someone. Look for opportunities for kingdom work by serving or meeting a need. Remember, the goal of serving others is to point them to Jesus!





Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Luke 2:25-35

DECEMBER 23

## Worth the Wait!

---

Do you believe good food is worth the wait? Sadly, one of my many flaws is impatience. Some don't mind waiting a long time for good food. As I'm getting older, fast food is just about as appealing as a nice restaurant when the wait exceeds fifteen minutes. Some don't mind waiting because they know the reward ahead. Every advent season, I like to read the story of Simeon waiting to meet the Savior. Today, join me in reading this beautiful story of the reward found in waiting.

We don't know much about Simeon, other than what is in the text. He was righteous and devout. He was an excited old man waiting to meet the Messiah. Can you picture the scene in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus inside? It was like Christmas morning for this man as the waiting time was now fulfilled for his heart to hold the Savior. I like what Daniel Darling wrote, "Simeon carries the frail, newborn baby whose arms would one day carry Simeon from sin to salvation." For Simeon, Jesus was worth the wait.

Perhaps you are in a waiting season right now. Perhaps you are waiting for what will happen next in your future. Perhaps you are waiting for answers or clarity. Perhaps you are waiting to visit a loved one or move into a new chapter of your life. In the waiting, look to Jesus.

I imagine many kids are waiting for Christmas, which is just a few days away. Excitement is growing in homes around the world. As we wait to celebrate the birth of our Savior, let's take a note from Simeon's life book. Let's be devoted and intentional in our daily pursuit of the King. Good food, in my opinion, is not worth a long wait. Yet, Jesus is well worth the wait. Be excited...Christmas is almost here!

*Today, continue trusting Jesus in the waiting room of life. Remind yourself of His many promises. Live devoted to Him, for He is always worthy of attention and adoration.*

Oh sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth!  
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples!  
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
he is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,  
but the Lord made the heavens.  
Splendor and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts!  
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;  
tremble before him, all the earth!  
Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity."  
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
before the Lord, for he comes,  
for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Psalms 96

DECEMBER 24

# Sing With Anticipation

---

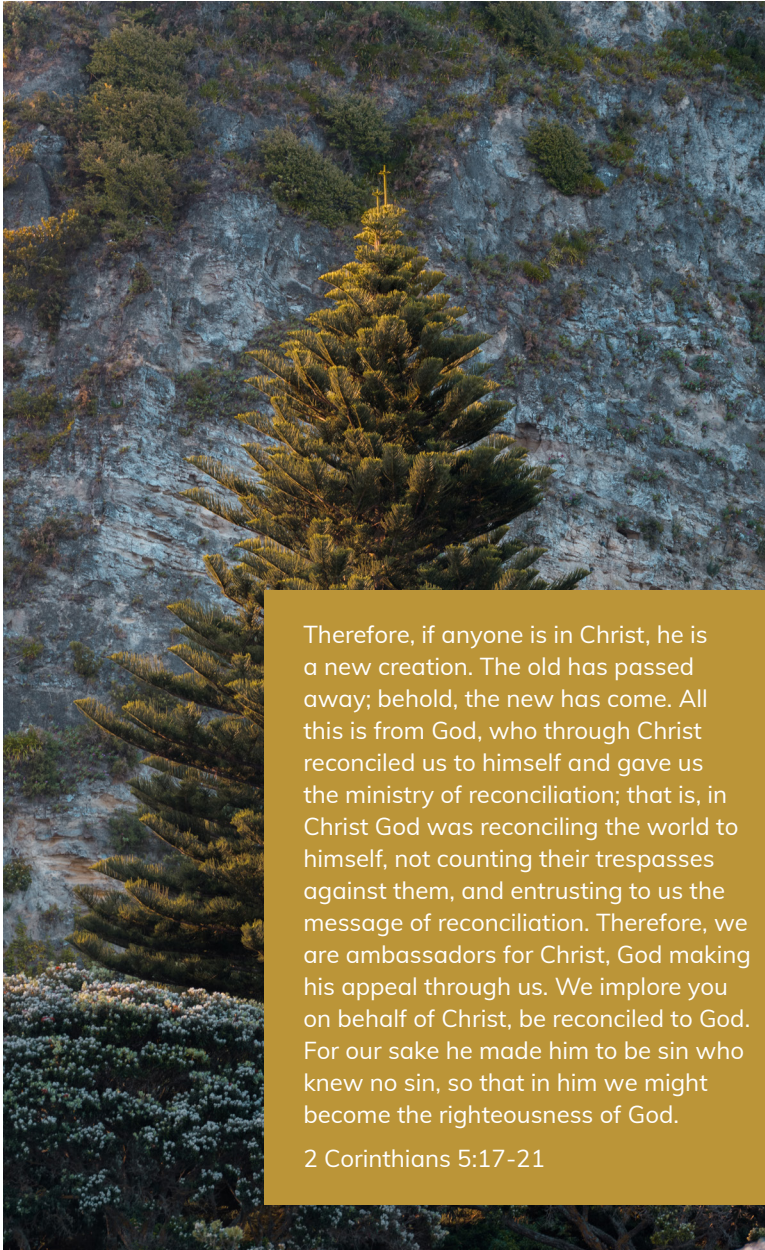
Christmas Eve is now upon us. I love this day. My favorite part of today is joining my church family in worship. We will sing carols, light the Christ candle, and celebrate in advance together. Even if you can't sing well, let me encourage you to sing today. Read Psalm 96 as a guide to sing with anticipation.

We sing because the baby born in the manger is the Victor over sin and death. Paul David Tripp stated, "The Christmas story is the first chapter in a war story; this war was fought on our turf and for our sake by the hero of the story, the God-man, Jesus." We sing as those that have tasted the victory. The birth of Jesus was the Father's gift of salvation for all who believe. The birth is a reminder you are not forgotten. The birth is a reminder God is faithful. The birth is a reminder you can have living hope and perfect peace. Sing today in response to that good news.

Find time today to sit down and read Luke 2 with family and friends. This is the Christmas story. This is the story above all other holiday stories portrayed on TV (not trying to put down the Hallmark channel). Read the words of the birth and sing with anticipation.

I'm curious, what are your favorite carols? My favorite to sing tonight is *Silent Night*. I love having a dark sanctuary, illuminated by a thousand candles across the pews. Each Christmas Eve service, my heart swells with joy as I get to sing with anticipation. During Holy Week, we often say, "Sunday is coming." Today, I submit this to you...Christmas is coming.

*Today, pray for attention and excitement to center on Jesus above anything or anyone else. Enjoy the truth of Luke 2. Sing like Psalm 96. Sing Christmas hymns and prepare for the celebration tomorrow. Also... find a local church this evening and worship.*



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

DECEMBER 25

# The Day We Have Been Anticipating

---

Merry Christmas! This is the day we have been anticipating all month. This is the day we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. As you get busy today with gift exchanges, family meals, traveling, and throwing away bags of wrapping paper...take time to reflect on why we celebrate. *For our sake He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).* Christmas is about this statement of truth and grace.

In Jesus, you are a new creation! Unlike the gifts you have today that will be tomorrow's yard sale trinkets; your newness does not fade away. Look at Ezekiel 11:19-20 and see the fulfillment in 2 Peter 1:3-4. This is the day we have been anticipating because Jesus came. Phillips Brooks shouted, "Everywhere, everywhere Christmas tonight! For the Christ child who comes is the master of all; no palace too great, no cottage too small." He came for all. He came to save.

In just a few days, many will put away the decorations and prepare for a new year. Some unwanted gifts will be returned, and dead trees will fill the streets. All the anticipation will be memories stored up with photos. The beauty of advent can serve as your daily catalyst for you to walk in daily fellowship with the King. Take the truth of Colossians 3:15 with you each day, as the peace of Jesus can rule in your heart. Not just on Christmas morning, but every day of your life!

J.I. Packer once said, "The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity – hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory – because at the Father's will Jesus became poor, and was born in a stable so that thirty years later He might hang on a cross." Today, there is hope. Today, there is peace. Today, there is excitement...because you are a new creation. He was born to rescue sinners like you and me. This is worth celebrating!

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



