



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



25 Daily Devotions / 8 Christmas Recipes

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Advent is a season of waiting with purpose. We look toward the birth of Jesus with open hearts. We slow down enough to see what God has done, and we lean forward with expectation because He will do again what He has promised! These pages are meant to help you feel that hope! Each devotion points you back to the truth of Christ. Each recipe invites you to gather, celebrate, and fill your home with the joy of the season! Every recipe in this book was shared by people in our church, and all the photos were captured by our creative team, so what you see and what you taste both come from within this church family!

Read at your pace. Share a meal. Sit with the Scriptures. Pray with family or alone before bed. Let these days pull your attention and affection toward Jesus. He came near. He is still near. He will come again. That changes everything! We are eager to see what God will stir in your heart as you walk through Advent! May these days lead you to worship, to wonder, and to thank God for His kindness.



NOVEMBER 30, 2025 — SET THE TABLE OF HOPE

“HE WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER.” ISAIAH 25:6-9

God promises a feast on His mountain—rich food, well-aged wine, and the end of disgrace. This is not mood management but covenant reality; the future Host has already planned the menu. Advent begins by confessing that our hope has a location, and it is set where the Lord reigns. In a world of scarcity talk, God answers with abundance that outlasts every grave.

Hope is not passive; it stirs faith to expect God to move in the present. The Spirit is the down payment of that coming feast, a foretaste tasted in worship and prayer. As we gather, we lift our eyes above headlines to the hill where God spreads His table. We declare that death is swallowed, shame is removed, and joy is poured out by the nearness of God.

Today, set a literal place at your table as a visible sign of expectation. Pray before the meal with thanksgiving for promises yet to be seen. Share a story of God’s faithfulness as “firstfruits” of what is still to come. Let your home become a small mountain of the Lord, where hope is served hot.

Prayer: Lord of the feast, lay our hearts like tables set with hope. Silence fear, lift our shame, and anchor us in Your promise until we taste the fullness. Amen.

DECEMBER 1, 2025 — HOUSE OF BREAD

“FROM YOU SHALL COME FORTH FOR ME ONE WHO IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL.” MICAH 5:2-5A

Bethlehem means “house of bread,” and God chooses a quiet oven for heaven’s recipe. The Ruler whose origins are from ancient days arrives in a place the world barely watches. Advent says smallness is not a liability when God is the baker. Hiddenness becomes the warmth where grace rises.

God delights to overshadow ordinary rooms with His presence. Kitchens, living rooms, and fellowship halls become places of multiplied grace. He takes what is offered—simple prayers, simple loaves—and makes more than enough. Where Christ is honored, lack becomes testimony space for provision.

Make your table a house of bread today. Break a loaf and name aloud the ways Jesus has fed your soul this year. Intercede for your city by name, asking the Prince of Peace to satisfy deeper hungers. Invite the Lord to make your home an oven of gospel warmth.

Prayer: Jesus, Bread of Heaven, nourish us beyond what we can bake or buy. Fill our lack with Your life and use our tables to feed the hungry in body and spirit. Amen.



Bacon Wrapped Dates

Recipe By: Jessica Burgbacher

Recipe Type: Appetizer

Ingredients

6 ounces creamy goat cheese
24 Medjool dates, pitted
12 slices thinly sliced bacon, cut in half
1/3 cup honey
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)
Kosher salt and black pepper
Candied or toasted walnuts (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Split the dates in half lengthwise, being careful not to cut all the way through.
3. Remove the pits and discard.
4. Stuff each date with goat cheese and gently squeeze to seal.
5. Wrap each date with bacon and place seam-side down on the prepared baking sheet.
6. Repeat with remaining dates.
7. In a small bowl, combine honey, rosemary, cayenne, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Drizzle half of the honey mixture evenly over the dates to coat the bacon, allowing it to caramelize during baking.
8. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until the bacon is crisp. Serve warm or at room temperature with any remaining honey and walnuts, if desired.

The Story Behind It

This recipe is from Half Baked Harvest and has become a family favorite. We usually serve them on Christmas Eve as part of a table full of appetizers. They're perfect for keeping snackers out of the kitchen while the Christmas meal is finishing up!

DECEMBER 2, 2025 – THE MANGER AS A TROUGH

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:1-7

“AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER.”

A manger is a feeding trough, and the Bread of Life is placed where creatures come to eat. The King is born into a room that smells like work and weather. God is not allergic to the ordinary; He inhabits it. If He used a stable for His sanctuary, He can use your table for His presence.

God meets us where we make room. He fills barns and sanctuaries, dens and prayer closets, with the same glory. Rough wood becomes an altar and simple songs become a throne for the King. We honor Him not by perfection but by welcome.

Set your table with intention tonight. Wipe it as an act of consecration and invite Jesus to be the honored guest. Read the birth story aloud and listen for the Spirit's whisper. Expect the Lord who came in straw to come again in power.

Prayer: Father, thank You for stooping to our level and feeding us with Your Son. Consecrate our ordinary spaces and let Your presence make our tables holy ground. Amen.

DECEMBER 3, 2025 – PREPARE HIM ROOM

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:6-7

“THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR THEM IN THE INN.”

“No room” is a line in the narrative and a mirror for the soul. Advent is the annual inventory of our inner house, where we make space for the One who saves us. Hospitality begins as attention before it becomes menus and music. We choose to move clutter so Christ is not squeezed into the corners.

Preparation is not dry duty; it is expectancy. We fast to create hunger for the true feast that never spoils. We pray to clear static and receive fresh guidance for our days. We reorder calendars so presence is not an afterthought but the center.

Choose one concrete way to make room today. Block ten minutes of quiet to adore Jesus, or silence a device at dinner to attend to His nearness. Put an extra chair at the table as a sign of welcome to the King. Let the Lord arrange the furniture of your heart.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, teach us to prefer Jesus. Rearrange our desires and routines until there is true room for His lordship and love. Amen.

DECEMBER 4, 2025 – COME, ALL WHO ARE THIRSTY

SCRIPTURE (ESV): ISAIAH 55:1-3

“COME, EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATERS.”

The invitation is scandalously open: no price but need, no ticket but thirst. We spend on what does not satisfy while God offers what our souls crave. Advent confronts our pride that wants to buy what can only be received. Grace is free, but it costs our self-reliance.

This call is a summons to living water that renews weary hearts. We open our mouths in prayer and our hands in worship to receive what we cannot produce. Mercy refreshes, convicts, and restores us to holy love. The table becomes a fountain, not a desert.

Name your thirsts before God today: exhaustion, fear, longing, or numbness. Read the chapter aloud and “incline your ear” to His covenant mercy. Share testimonies at the table of ways God has quenched you in dry seasons. Ask Him to make your home a place of true refreshment.

Prayer: Generous God, meet us in our lack and soak us in Your mercy. Give us ears to hear and hearts to drink until we live. Amen.

DECEMBER 5, 2025 – WISDOM’S TABLE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): PROVERBS 9:1-6

“COME, EAT OF MY BREAD AND DRINK OF THE WINE I HAVE MIXED.”

Wisdom builds, sets, and calls; foolishness distracts, promises shortcuts, and starves. The Advent way is not complicated, but it is committed. We show up where Wisdom invites and keep coming back. Formation happens over time around a consistent table.

We welcome both power and pattern in our discipleship. We receive God’s gifts and we practice the habits of grace. Scripture, prayer, testimony, and song are the steady courses that nourish us. These simple meals stoke holy fire that lasts.

Plan one Wisdom-table moment this week. Light a candle and let a child read the verse; ask each person what stood out. Sing a chorus and bless one another before clearing the dishes. Expect God to build a house out of these small obediences.

Prayer: Lord, seat us at Wisdom’s table and make us eager learners. Turn simple rhythms into deep transformation by Your presence. Amen.



Peasant Salad

Recipe By: Lena Gilley

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Ingredients

4 cups chopped romaine lettuce
1 cup chopped green peppers
1 cup shredded carrots
1 cup chopped red onion
1 cup sliced grape tomatoes
1 cup thawed frozen peas
1 cup chopped bacon
1 cup chopped hard-boiled eggs
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 tsp cracked black pepper
2 cups mayonnaise
1 Tbsp white vinegar
1 Tbsp sugar
1/2 tsp salt

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, mix together mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, and salt to make the dressing. - Set aside.
2. In a casserole dish, layer the salad ingredients in the following order:
Romaine lettuce
Green peppers
Carrots
Tomatoes
Red onions
Peas
Bacon
3. Sprinkle with black pepper
4. Spread the prepared dressing evenly over the top.
5. Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese and chopped eggs over the dressing.
6. Cover and refrigerate overnight to allow flavors to blend.
7. Serve chilled on cold plates.

Serves: 6-8 people

The Story Behind It

When living in Kettering, Ohio, I would always order this salad during lunch breaks at The Peasant Restaurant. Now, my family requests it every holiday—it's become a tradition.

DECEMBER 6, 2025 – A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): PSALM 23:5-6

“YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES.”

God sets His table not after conflict ends but in the middle of it. The anointing flows where opposition still breathes. Cups overflow beside the shadow, and goodness and mercy chase us there. Safety is not the absence of trouble but the presence of the Shepherd.

We recognize spiritual resistance without becoming fearful. We pray, we bless, and we eat the meal of peace while enemies watch. The banner over us is love that disarms anxiety. The Shepherd's hospitality becomes our courage and our song.

Tonight, put the anointing into practice. Read Psalm 23 and pray peace over each person by name. Speak aloud that goodness and mercy are following you this week. Let your table become a battleground where Jesus wins again.

Prayer: Shepherd King, feed us in the valley and overflow our cups. Anoint our heads, steady our hearts, and surround our home with Your mercy. Amen.

DECEMBER 7, 2025 – THE PRINCE OF PEACE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): ISAIAH 9:2-7

“FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN, TO US A SON IS GIVEN.”

Peace is not a vibe; peace has a government and a King. The zeal of the Lord establishes a reign that mends what sin has torn. Under His rule, our homes become embassies of reconciliation. At our tables, swords become plowshares as apologies and forgiveness flow.

This peace is tangible, not theoretical. It heals memories, calms storms, and knits hearts that were frayed. We bless our enemies and watch God break the yoke we could not. We resist cynicism because a Child sits on David's throne.

Host a peace moment today. Name the tension in the room and invite Jesus to rule there. Pray for a broken relationship and ask for a humble, practical step toward repair. Let your table demonstrate the Kingdom the Prince has brought near.

Prayer: Jesus, rule our hearts and homes with Your unending peace. Turn hostility into honor and worry into worship. Amen.

DECEMBER 8, 2025 – ZECHARIAH'S SONG

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 1:68-79

“BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, FOR HE HAS VISITED AND RE-DEEMED HIS PEOPLE.”

After long silence, Zechariah's mouth opens and blessing pours out. God's visitation turns doubt into doxology and fear into faith. Advent reminds us that delay is not denial when God has spoken. When mercy dawns, tongues loosen and rooms brighten.

We welcome God to fill our speech with life. Words that edify strengthen weary hearts, and testimony multiplies faith. Our houses change atmosphere when we speak blessing over one another. We become guides into the way of peace by what we say and how we say it.

Around your table, invite each person to speak a short blessing. Thank God for specific mercies and name fresh hope for the week. Pray for those “who sit in darkness” and ask for light to rise on them. Expect the Lord to make your words a pathway.

Prayer: God of mercy, visit us again and loosen our tongues to bless. Guide our feet into peace and shine on every shadowed place. Amen.

DECEMBER 9, 2025 – MARY'S YES

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 1:26-38

“BEHOLD, I AM THE SERVANT OF THE LORD; LET IT BE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.”

Mary's yes is the hinge of history, and her surrender is full of trust. The angel's word meets a willing heart, and the Word becomes flesh. Yielded faith is not passive; it is the womb of miracles. Advent discipleship sounds like consent to God's plan.

Surrender invites overshadowing help from God. When we say yes, He births what we could never produce by effort. Our obedience shelters God's purposes for others, just as Joseph and Mary sheltered Jesus. Heaven loves to partner with human agreement.

Practice a yes today. Name one area where God is inviting obedience and respond with Mary's words. At dinner, share one “yes” from this year and one you are offering now. Trust God to supply everything your yes will require.

Prayer: Lord, we echo Mary's yes. Overshadow us and bring forth Christ in and through us for the life of the world. Amen.



Holiday Sautéed Brussel Sprouts

Recipe By: Katie Gill

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Ingredients

2-3 pieces of bacon
1 lb Brussels sprouts
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
1/3 cup maple syrup
1/4 cup pecans

Instructions

1. Cook the bacon until crisp and chop into small pieces.
2. Sauté the Brussels sprouts in the bacon grease until tender.
3. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Drizzle with maple syrup and toss to coat evenly.
5. Top with crushed pecans before serving.

The Story Behind It

Our family has enjoyed this dish for several Christmases. It pairs beautifully with beef tenderloin.

DECEMBER 10, 2025 – ELIZABETH'S BLESSING

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 1:39-45

"BLESSED IS SHE WHO BELIEVED THAT THERE WOULD BE A FULFILLMENT..."

Mary walks into Elizabeth's house, and the room changes. Joy leaps where promise is present, and blessing flows where faith has said yes. This is how God loves to work—through gathered people who recognize His work in each other. The right word at the right time steadies a calling that feels too heavy.

Notice that Elizabeth doesn't flatter; she names what God is doing. Houses and tables become holy when we do that. Callings grow strong when a friend dares to say, "I see the Lord at work in you." Blessing is the family language of those who live by promise.

Make space today to speak life over someone's assignment. Ask the Lord to bring a name to mind, then reach out in courage. Give them a sentence that confirms God's hand and points them to hope. Your words may be the doorway to their next step.

Prayer: Lord, train our tongues to bless. Let our homes be places where faith is confirmed, joy leaps, and Your promises are strengthened. Amen.

DECEMBER 11, 2025 – THE SONG OF THE LOWLY

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 1:46-55

"HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS, AND THE RICH HE HAS SENT AWAY EMPTY."

Mary sings in a minor key that ends in glory. Her song flips the seating chart and invites the humble to the head of the table. God sees the overlooked and fills the hungry with good things. Advent reminds us that the King chooses the low seat and meets us there.

This changes how we host and how we plan. We look for the missing chair and the quiet person at the edge of the room. We pass the bowl first where the world would pass last. We expect God to honor humility with surprising strength.

Choose someone today who usually waits for leftovers and move them nearer. Give them a voice, not just a plate. Ask what they need and how you can pray. Watch how honor opens hearts wider to the Lord's presence.

Prayer: Mighty One, teach us Your upside-down way. Fill the hungry among us, lift the lowly at our tables, and make our homes echo with Your song. Amen.

DECEMBER 12, 2025 — JOSEPH'S QUIET OBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): MATTHEW 1:18-25

"DO NOT FEAR TO TAKE MARY AS YOUR WIFE..."

Joseph does not preach a sermon; he makes a decision in the dark. He trades reputation for obedience and lets God write the story. Sometimes faith looks like steady work no one notices. Advent honors the quiet guardians who protect what God begins.

Obedience often feels costly before it feels clear. Yet guidance lands where hearts are yielded. God speaks, we adjust, and His purposes find safe shelter in our homes. This is how a family becomes a sanctuary for the Messiah's work.

Name one obedient step you already know to take. Do it today, even if only God will see. Ask Him to make your house a refuge for His assignments. Offer your integrity like carpentry—strong, square, and ready to bear weight.

Prayer: Father, strengthen our unseen yes. Give us courage to protect what You entrust, and let simple obedience secure tomorrow's blessing. Amen.

DECEMBER 13, 2025 — GOOD NEWS FOR NIGHT-SHIFT SHEPHERDS

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:8-12

"FEAR NOT, FOR BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY..."

The announcement arrives to workers on the clock, outside the spotlight. Heaven does not wait for ideal conditions or polished rooms. The message lands in the field where people are awake and willing. Advent meets us at work and turns ordinary watchfulness into encounter.

Notice the sign: a baby, swaddled, in a manger. No stage lights, no velvet rope, no fuss. God's glory shows up where humility opens the door. Those who listen well in the night often hear first.

Invite the good news into your shift today. Take a break to pray, even if it is brief. Share one reason for hope with a coworker who looks tired. Expect the Lord to make your workplace a place of joy.

Prayer: Lord, find us on our watch. Turn fear into praise, routine into wonder, and our work into worship that points to Your Son. Amen.





Yummy Creamy Corn

Recipe By: Cheryl Roberson

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Ingredients

1 (3 oz) cream cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk

1 Tbsp butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp onion salt

1 (1 lb) can whole kernel corn, drained (about 2 cups)

Instructions

1. In a medium saucepan over low heat, combine cream cheese, milk, butter, and onion salt.
2. Stir until the cream cheese is fully melted and the mixture is smooth.
3. Add the drained corn and heat through.
4. Serve warm.

Optional: Garnish with parsley or paprika before serving.



DECEMBER 14, 2025 – GREAT JOY FOR ALL PEOPLE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:10-14

“GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.”

The angel does not whisper to a small circle; he widens the lens to the nations. The birth of Jesus is public joy with personal impact. Advent breaks the fences we build and sends us carrying news bigger than our address. Tables become launchpads when joy overflows their edges.

Real joy is not fragile. It survives fatigue, disappointment, even waiting. It lives on the other side of surrender and keeps inviting others in. When we sing, pray, and serve together, joy multiplies rather than drains.

Practice a global table today. Pray for a missionary by name or cook a simple dish from another culture. Tell a child that Jesus' joy is for every tribe and tongue. Ask God for a heart wide enough to carry His welcome.

Prayer: Jesus, widen our joy. Make us generous heralds of Your good news, and let our homes echo with praise that invites the world. Amen.

DECEMBER 15, 2025 – THE SWADDLED SIGN

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:12, 16-20

“YOU WILL FIND A BABY WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHS AND LYING IN A MANGER.”

The sign is not grand; it is gentle. Swaddling speaks of care, a manger of provision, and the whole scene of a God who stoops. Advent retrains our eyes to look for glory in small, faithful things. Bread and cup, candle and prayer, conversation and song—these are His ordinary ways.

Mary treasures and ponders, and the shepherds proclaim what they have seen. Both responses are holy and needed. We keep truth in our hearts so it can take root. We also open our mouths so it can take flight.

Create a moment of remembering tonight. Name three simple places where you have recognized God's kindness this month. Share them aloud and give thanks before you clear the table. Treasure the sign, then carry the news.

Prayer: Incarnate Lord, teach us to notice You. Reveal Your glory in humble signs, and make our lives a faithful witness to what we have seen. Amen.

DECEMBER 16, 2025 — SIMEON'S LONG WAIT

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:25-32

"MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOUR SALVATION..."

Simeon waits, and then he holds salvation in his arms. Advent patience is not empty; it is full of promise. Waiting seasons deepen our hunger and sharpen our hearing. God keeps faith with those who keep showing up.

Hope like this is bold enough to bless the future before it arrives. Simeon speaks peace over Mary and Joseph and points to light for the nations. He names what is coming and rests in God's timing. This is maturity—hands open, eyes clear, heart steady.

Practice active waiting today. Pray for something long-delayed and bless someone younger with your encouragement. Speak a promise of Scripture over them without fanfare. Release the results to the Lord who sees the end from the start.

Prayer: God of promises, steady our waiting. Let our eyes see Your salvation and our words plant peace for the next generation. Amen.

DECEMBER 17, 2025 — ANNA'S FAITHFUL FAST

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:36-38

"SHE DID NOT DEPART FROM THE TEMPLE, WORSHIPING WITH FASTING AND PRAYER."

Anna's worship looks like years of focused love. She lets hunger become attention, and attention becomes witness. When the Child arrives, she knows exactly whom to tell. Advent reminds us that discipline is not cold; it is warm devotion.

Fasting clears the table of distractions to make room for God's presence. It teaches our desires to kneel and our minds to listen. Our weakness becomes the doorway to His strength. Ordinary days turn into holy appointments.

Consider a simple fast this week, appropriate to your health and season. Use the time to pray for those "waiting for the redemption" in your city. Write down names and keep them at your table. Ask the Lord to turn your hunger into intercession and good news.

Prayer: Lord, sanctify our hunger. Turn fasting into attention, attention into clarity, and clarity into faithful witness. Amen.



Homemade Biscuits

Recipe By: Dana Suttle

Recipe Type: Side Dish

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 Tbsp baking powder

1 Tbsp sugar

1 tsp salt

6 Tbsp salted butter (chilled in the freezer for 10-20 minutes before use)

3/4 cup whole milk or buttermilk

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper, or butter and flour the pan.
2. In a large bowl, mix together flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt.
3. Remove the chilled butter from the freezer and cut it into the flour mixture using a pastry cutter, or grate it with a box grater for small shreds. Stir until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
4. Add milk and stir gently with a wooden spoon or spatula until just combined. Do not overmix.
5. Transfer the dough to a floured surface and bring it together with your hands. If sticky, sprinkle with a little flour.
6. Fold the dough in half, rotate, and fold again. Repeat 5-6 times to create flaky layers, being careful not to overwork the dough.
7. Using your hands (not a rolling pin), flatten the dough to about 1 inch thick. Cut biscuits and place them on the baking sheet, spacing them less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart.
8. Rework the scraps to cut additional biscuits until you have about 6 total.
9. Bake for 12 minutes or until the tops are lightly golden brown.
10. Brush with melted salted butter immediately after removing from the oven.
11. Serve warm, ideally with bacon grease gravy.

Serves: 6 biscuits

The Story Behind It

My grandma made biscuits every morning for as long as I can remember, even after she had a stroke that left one arm immobile. Now, my daughter and I make biscuits together as often as we can – it's our way of carrying on her legacy.

DECEMBER 18, 2025 – BREAD OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): JOHN 6:32-35

“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE; WHOEVER COMES TO ME SHALL NOT HUNGER...”

Jesus does not merely give bread; He is bread. He satisfies what success cannot and forgives what effort cannot fix. Advent exposes lesser feasts that leave us empty. It invites us back to the table where Christ Himself is the meal.

This shapes our habits. We come daily, not once a season. We open Scripture as hungry people and we pray like people who expect to be fed. Gratitude becomes our table grace and our way of life.

Choose one way to “come” today. Read a chapter out loud before dinner or take a short walk to pray for five minutes. Ask for fresh appetite, not just another task checked off. Receive the Bread of Life with joy.

Prayer: Jesus, be our daily bread. Satisfy our souls, forgive our sins, and make us generous with Your life to those around us. Amen.

DECEMBER 19, 2025 – THE GREAT BANQUET

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 14:15-24

“COME, FOR EVERYTHING IS NOW READY.”

The Host has prepared, but the excuses multiply. Fields, oxen, relationships—good things become reasons to miss the feast. Advent calls us to drop our pretexts and take our seat. There is still room, and the invitation is urgent.

Notice where the Host sends the servants: streets and lanes, highways and hedges. The guest list stretches to include the ones no one invited. When we live like this, our tables start to look like His. Compassion becomes our RSVP.

Extend an invitation today that costs you a little comfort. Ask a neighbor, a newcomer, or someone often overlooked to join you for a meal or service. Offer a ride, a seat, and real attention. Trust the Host to fill every empty chair.

Prayer: Gracious Host, overcome our excuses. Draw in the overlooked through us, and make our hearts match Your welcome. Amen.

DECEMBER 20, 2025 — HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): EPHESIANS 2:13-18

“HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE...”

Jesus doesn't just broker a truce; He becomes the peace between divided people. He tears down the wall and makes one new family at His table. Advent reconciliation is not theoretical; it shows up in how we talk and who we invite. The gospel makes room where grudges took up space.

This takes courage and humility. We confess where we have wounded and forgive where we were wronged. We ask God to soften hard places and to teach us a new way. The work is slow, but the fruit is beautiful.

Attempt one small act toward reconciliation this week. Write a note, offer an apology, or choose generous assumptions. Pray for boldness and gentleness before you act. Believe that the cross is strong enough to carry both of you.

Prayer: Prince of Peace, break down dividing walls among us. Let Your cross shape our words and Your presence heal our relationships. Amen.

DECEMBER 21, 2025 — GOD WITH US AT THE TABLE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): MATTHEW 1:21-23

“THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL (WHICH MEANS, GOD WITH US).”

“God with us” changes how we set the table. Presence is the gift, and every other gift points back to Him. Advent insists that we do not eat alone, even when we feel alone. The Lord draws near to the fainthearted and sits in our ordinary rooms.

This turns mealtime into prayer-time without strain. We pause before the meal to name where we have seen His kindness today. We invite Him into the conversations that might be delicate. We expect comfort, guidance, and joy that can be felt.

Tonight, light a candle as a sign of welcome. Ask each person to share one “God with me” moment from the week. Keep it simple and honest. Let gratitude warm the room.

Prayer: Emmanuel, be with us in every space. Make Your nearness our strength, and let our table host Your presence with joy. Amen.

Sweet Potatoes at 130 Broad

Recipe By: Janet Hendrix

Recipe Type:
Side Dish

Ingredients

Sweet Potatoes:

4 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed sweet potatoes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar (can use a little less)
3 eggs, slightly beaten
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, melted
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
A few sprinkles of cinnamon, to taste

Topping

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
6 Tbsp butter, melted
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped pecans
A few sprinkles of cinnamon, to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Boil or bake the sweet potatoes until tender. (Baking is preferred for richer flavor.)
3. Once cooled, peel and mash the sweet potatoes.
4. In a large bowl, combine the mashed sweet potatoes, sugar, eggs, melted butter, vanilla, milk, and cinnamon. Mix well.
5. Pour the mixture into a greased 9x13x2 casserole dish.
6. In a separate bowl, mix together the brown sugar, flour, pecans, melted butter, and cinnamon for the topping.
7. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the sweet potato mixture.
8. Bake for 30-45 minutes, or until the topping is golden and the casserole is heated through.
9. (Optional) This recipe can be cut in half for a smaller group—but you might regret not making the full batch!

The Story Behind It

This sweet potato casserole has become a holiday favorite for the whole family—especially Pastor Jason. It's a must-have dish at every celebration, full of warmth and tradition.



DECEMBER 22, 2025 – LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS

SCRIPTURE (ESV): ISAIAH 60:1-3; LUKE 2:30-32

“ARISE, SHINE, FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME...”

Simeon calls the Child a light for revelation and glory for His people. Light exposes, heals, and guides, and it does not ask permission from the dark. Advent is the dawn that keeps spreading. We rise because His light has come.

Light also travels. It moves from house to street to nation, carried by people who have been with Jesus. Our tables become little lighthouses when we practice welcome and witness. Conversations turn into open doors.

Do one outward-facing act today. Deliver a meal, write a note of hope, or invite someone to Christmas services. Pray for a country on your heart while you eat. Ask God to let His light run swiftly through your life.

Prayer: Father, shine through us. Make our hospitality a lantern and our words a clear road to Your Son. Amen.

DECEMBER 23, 2025 – CHRIST THE LORD

SCRIPTURE (ESV): LUKE 2:11, 15-20

“FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY... A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD.”

Christmas Eve’s eve hums with expectancy, and rightly so. The Savior is here, and the right response is worship that spills into telling. The shepherds hurry, then return different, carrying good news. Advent ends with movement—toward Jesus and then toward others.

Make your home a sanctuary tonight. Read the story out loud and sing even if it’s off-key. Thank God for what He has done this year and for what He will do next. Let peace settle like a warm blanket on the room.

Then carry it. Text someone a blessing, offer help to a neighbor, or pray with a family member who is hurting. The Christ who came low raises us to serve. Joy is meant to travel.

Prayer: Christ the Lord, we adore You. Fill our home with Your praise and send us as quiet heralds of Your peace. Amen.

DECEMBER 24, 2025 – WORD MADE FLESH AT OUR TABLE

SCRIPTURE (ESV): JOHN 1:14

“AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US...”

Today we celebrate Presence, not just presents. God has moved into the neighborhood and taken a seat at our table. In Jesus, glory has a face and grace has a name. Christmas is the pledge that God will finish what He started.

Eat slowly and notice the goodness all around. Laugh, bless, and rest without apology. Tell the story again so the kids can repeat the lines. This is a small preview of the feast that awaits.

Let gratitude be the last word tonight. Step outside, breathe the cool air, and thank the Lord for being this near. Ask for eyes to see Him again tomorrow. He is here, and He is kind.

Prayer: Jesus, we welcome You. Dwell with us, delight us with Your glory, and keep us hungry for the day we feast with You face to face. Amen

DECEMBER 25, 2025 – FROM MANGER TO MARRIAGE SUPPER

SCRIPTURE (ESV): REVELATION 19:6-9

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE INVITED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.”

Christmas morning announces more than a birthday; it announces a future banquet. The Child wrapped in cloths is the Lamb who will one day host the world. Heaven’s loud hallelujahs remind us that the story doesn’t end at a cradle or even a cross—it ends at a table. Every Christmas plate and cup can preach: God began in a feeding trough so He could finish with a wedding feast.

Until that day, we live between tables with steady joy. We remember that grace has appeared, and glory will appear, and our lives are set like place settings for both. The same presence we welcome into our homes is a foretaste of the presence we will enjoy forever. Hope strengthens our hands to serve, forgive, celebrate, and keep room for one more chair.

So eat slowly and let gratitude rise. Name aloud three mercies from this year and one promise you are still trusting God to fulfill. Bless the people at your table and pray for the ones who couldn’t be there. Then carry the good news to someone who needs it—because the invitation still stands.

Prayer: Lamb of God, thank You for coming near and for preparing a feast that will never end. Fill our house with Your joy, fix our eyes on Your future, and make our lives an open invitation to Your table. Amen.



Christmas Roast Beast (Prime Rib)

Recipe By: Jessica Burgbacher

Recipe Type: Main Dish

Ingredients (Serves 12)

10 pound bone-in standing rib roast
2 tablespoons kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, softened
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary (1 tablespoon if dried)
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme (1 tablespoon if dried)
2 tablespoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon oregano
Freshly cracked black pepper

Au Jus:

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups beef broth
1 cup red wine
1 tablespoon butter

Instructions

1. Season roast generously with kosher salt. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
2. Remove the roast from the refrigerator and allow it to come to room temperature.
3. Preheat the oven (or smoker) to 200 F.
4. In a small bowl, mix together the butter, rosemary, thyme, seasoning, and black pepper.
5. Slather the butter mixture over the roast and place it in a large roasting pan.
6. Transfer the roast to the preheated oven (or smoker) and cook until the internal temperature reaches 115 F for medium-rare, about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -4 hours.
7. Remove from the oven and tent with aluminum foil; allow to rest for 20 minutes.
8. While resting, make the Au Jus: Combine beef broth and red wine in a small saucepan and bring to a boil.
9. Cook until reduced to about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (approximately 15 minutes).
10. Remove from heat, then stir in butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt.
11. Meanwhile, heat a large cast iron skillet over high heat.
12. Carefully transfer the roast into the skillet once hot and sear on all sides for 1-2 minutes until a nice crust forms.
13. Remove from the skillet and let rest for another 3-5 minutes.
14. Remove the ribs and slice into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick pieces.
15. Serve with Au Jus and your favorite horseradish sauce.

The Story Behind It

When our boys were little, we would transform our home into surprise themes on the weekends leading up to Christmas. One year, while creating a green Grinchy experience, I discovered that standing rib roast goes on sale for about half price during the holidays. That's when the tradition of carving the "roast beast" together with those we love began! Since then, we've tried many recipes—landing on this mouthwatering reverse-seared method from Gaby Dalkin as our hands-down favorite. It's such a special way to celebrate Christmas!

Pecan Pie Cheesecake

Recipe By: Dana Suttle

Recipe Type: Dessert

Ingredients

Crust:

2 sleeves crushed graham crackers
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup melted unsalted butter

Cheesecake:

16 oz softened cream cheese
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sour cream
1 Tbsp all-purpose flour
2 eggs, room temperature
2 tsp vanilla
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

Pecan Topping:

6 Tbsp unsalted butter
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup brown sugar
2 cups chopped pecans
Pinch of salt (I add a bit more than a pinch for enriched flavor)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
1 tsp vanilla

Instructions

1. Combine crust ingredients in a bowl until fully mixed.
2. Press the mixture firmly into the bottom of a 10-inch springform pan. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, beat together all cheesecake ingredients until smooth and creamy.
4. Pour the cheesecake mixture over the prepared crust.
5. Bake at 350 F (175 C) for 30-45 minutes, until set.
6. Allow to cool, then refrigerate for 1 hour.
7. In a saucepan over medium heat, melt butter, brown sugar, pecans, and salt, stirring constantly. Once it begins to simmer, continue stirring for 3-4 minutes.
8. Remove from heat and stir in heavy cream and vanilla until fully combined.
9. Return to the heat and let simmer for another 2-3 minutes, until thickened.
10. Allow to cool completely.
11. Pour the cooled pecan topping over the cheesecake.
12. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.





Great Grandma's Chocolate Cake (Jesus Birthday Cake)

Recipe By: Kara Rogers

Recipe Type: Dessert

Ingredients

2 cups sugar
2 sticks butter
4 egg yolks
2 Tbsp hot water
1 cup buttermilk
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp allspice
1 tsp nutmeg
1 tsp ground cloves
2 cups all-purpose flour
4 egg whites

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, beat together sugar, butter, and egg yolks until creamy.
2. Add hot water, then buttermilk with baking soda dissolved into it.
3. Mix in cocoa, cinnamon, ground cloves, allspice, and nutmeg.
4. Add flour and gently fold in beaten egg whites until well combined.
5. Pour the batter into two round cake pans or one Bundt pan.
6. Bake at 300 F until the center is fully set.
7. Let the cake cool completely before icing.
8. Frost with white icing and enjoy!

Yields: 2 layers or 1 Bundt cake

The Story Behind It

This cake is made each year to celebrate Jesus's birthday. Every element of the cake has a special meaning:

Round chocolate cake - Represents the world and the sin of the world.

White icing - Represents Jesus washing our sins white as snow.

Green garland - Symbolizes the everlasting life we have in Jesus.

Angel on top - Reminds us of the good news of great joy brought by Jesus.

12 red candles - Represent the blood of Jesus that covers us every month of the year; they are lit because Jesus is the light of the world.

Star topper - Reminds us to always follow Jesus.

Notes:





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