

# HOPE ARRIVES

Advent Devotional 2024



# Hope Arrives

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## **DAY 1**

### **EMBRACING THE LIGHT OF EXPECTATION AND HOPE**

BY PASTOR GAYLYN KELLY

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*JOHN 1:1-5*

Advent causes my heart to be drawn to the words of John in the opening verses of his Gospel. In this passage, we are invited to ponder the eternal nature of the Word, the divine Logos, who existed from the very beginning. This truth heralds the advent of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Advent is a time when expectation and hope increase. The anticipation of Jesus Christ's coming permeates the very fabric of this wonderful season. And as we focus on the verses of John, we find the foundational source of our hope.

Life and light—two words of profound meaning and significance. The life embodied in Christ is a life that conquers death, sin, and eternal hopelessness. God with us - the WORD - Jesus. The light that He is pierces through the darkness, dispelling the shadows of hopelessness. During this Advent journey, we are invited to hold fast to the radiant truth that the darkness has not, will not, and cannot overcome the light and life of Jesus Christ.

Advent is not a passive waiting but an active engagement with the promise of God fulfilled in Christ Jesus. It is a journey of the soul, a pilgrimage of the heart, where we navigate through the landscapes of expectation and hope. In the grand tapestry of God's redemptive plan, the threads of promise find their culmination in the birth of Jesus—the Word incarnate; Emmanuel, God with us.

Reread John 1:1-5. What stirs your heart? For me, it's the Word existing before time itself, now taking on human form to dwell with us. The Creator steps into creation. The Eternal One enters the temporal. This is our profound hope. It is the assurance that God is not distant or indifferent but intimately involved in our lives.

Jesus breaks the darkness, bringing the hope of the world. He is the light that guides, heals, and restores. Christ not only illuminates our path but transforms our very being. In a world where despair often threatens to eclipse the light, we cling to the promise that the darkness has not, will not, and CANNOT overcome the light of Christ. The hope we find in Christ is not a fleeting optimism, but an unwavering certainty grounded in the character of God.

In the busyness of the holiday season, Advent invites us to redirect our expectations and priorities, and anchor our hope in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we light the first candle on the Advent wreath, symbolizing hope, remember that Christ is the fulfillment of all God's promises. In Him, we find the hope of redemption, reconciliation, and restoration. The anticipation of His coming transcends that one single night in Bethlehem; it extends to His continual presence in our lives and the promise of His return.

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we enter this Advent season, our hearts are drawn to Your eternal Word, Jesus Christ. We marvel at His coming, bringing life and light into our world. In this time of expectation and hope, remind us that the darkness has not, will not, and cannot overcome the light of Christ. Help us to pause, realign our priorities, and focus on Jesus, our lasting hope. In His name, we pray. Amen.



## **DAY 2**

### **THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

BY JOHN WILLIAMS

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*LUKE 2:6-7*

The Lord of lords and King of kings was born into this world in such a humble way. Mary and Joseph had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to participate in a census. Imagine how difficult the journey must have been, especially given Mary's pregnancy. Once in Bethlehem, it didn't get any easier for Mary and Joseph. The town was overrun with people arriving for the census, leaving only a lowly stable available in which the Christ Child would be born. This isn't what you'd expect for a king.

Jesus didn't come into this world with wealth and privilege but in a quiet and inconspicuous way. God chose for His Son to be born in humility and lowliness, identifying with the most vulnerable and marginalized. This shows us what God values and what we should value as well.

We need to be intentional, especially during the Christmas season, to quiet our lives and be open to the unexpected ways of God. This means making room for Christ in our hearts and minds during this season overrun by distractions. Let's not miss opportunities to identify with the most vulnerable and marginalized in our community, putting aside our own expectations.

As is spoken in Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” May this be a time of recognizing that no matter how difficult the journey has been God has a place for us.

Our significance isn't found in what the world has taught us to expect, but in our identity with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We must make room for Jesus, welcoming Him into the center of our hearts and lives.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, as I prepare my heart this Advent, I'm reminded of Your Son's humble birth in Bethlehem. May I be strengthened by knowing You are with me on my journey. Help me open my heart to You more each day, welcoming Your peace and grace into my life, that I may humbly share Your love with a world in need. I pray this in the precious name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



## **DAY 3**

### **COMFORT AND HOPE**

BY LEON MONROE

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*ISAIAH 40:1-3*

Comfort. I don't know anyone who doesn't like comfort. Comfort has at least two meanings. As a noun, comfort is defined as a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint. It is also defined as the easing or alleviation of a person's feelings of grief or distress.

In the opening verses of Chapter 40 is Jesus' prophesy. The message then shifts to comfort and hope. God says that in the future ALL the sins of "Jerusalem" are forgiven. Romans 11:11-17 says that believers and faithful followers of Jesus have been grafted into God's chosen ones (the Jews). Warfare with God has ended, iniquities are pardoned, "she has received DOUBLE for all her sins." This reference means complete cleansing of sin.

God has always had a plan of redemption for us—sinners, descendants of Adam. It is Jesus, and we can rejoice this Advent season that Jesus came at just the right time as a helpless baby, born to poor parents, completely vulnerable to the world. Redemption took human form in Jesus. THIS is the best Christmas present EVER. Those who worship Him in spirit and truth are no longer alienated from God but have become God's adopted children. This gift of reconciliation is Jesus, and its value is beyond measure. This calls for a BIG celebration! Amen.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your incredible gift of Jesus. As we reflect on His birth and the fulfillment of Your promises, fill our hearts with joy and gratitude. Help us to embrace Your love and redemption fully, living as Your adopted children. Guide us to share this message of hope and reconciliation with others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



## **DAY 4**

### **EMBRACING YOUR KINGDOM ROLE**

BY CYNTHIA BROWN

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

#### *MALACHI 3:1-4*

Malachi's prophecy launched 400 years of prophetic silence. John, the Baptizer, the last prophet under the Law, broke that silence. He fulfilled Malachi's word as the messenger preparing the way of the Lord. How does this prophecy relate to us today? Let's look at four points:

- This prophecy mingles the first and second advents (arrivals) of Jesus. Jesus' first advent was one of mercy and grace where He bore our sin and made us new creations, righteous before God. But, "...He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:28) Hallelujah! In John 3:18, Jesus said, "he who does not believe is condemned already." God's will is for ALL to be saved. We have the assignment of being ambassadors of reconciliation.
- "Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?" (Malachi 3:2) If you have received salvation in Christ, **YOU CAN STAND!** You have been given the gift of righteousness. Hallelujah again!
- Malachi spoke of cleansing and purifying. Hebrews 1:3 says, 'He by Himself purged our sins.' Hebrews 10:14 says, 'by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' This is the truth about your reborn spirit. The Christian life is about renewing your mind to your identity in Christ. If we identify as sinners, we will sin. If we identify as the righteousness of God in Christ, we will begin to live out of this glorious truth. We are to identify with Jesus.

- “What is the offering that is pleasing to God” in Malachi 3:4?  
Abraham BELIEVED God. His faith pleased God. Have you believed in  
Jesus for salvation? Then you please God!

Finally, are you ready for this truth? In Matthew 11:11-12, Jesus said, “he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he”. He was talking about you. Believe the Good News!

## Prayer

Thank you for Your wonderful plan of salvation. Help us believe the truths in Your Word about who we are In Christ. This Christmas season, may we have a fresh revelation of Christ in us, the hope of glory. In the matchless name of Jesus. Amen.



**DAY 5**  
**PREPARATION FOR THE COMING KING**  
BY HUGH NOWELL

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*HAGGAI 2:6-9*

One might ask, how is Haggai 2:6-9 an appropriate devotional scripture for Advent? Haggai was one of Israel's minor prophets who prophesied (circa 520 B.C.) to the returning exiles to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Through Haggai, God promises to "shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land" and that "what is desired by all nations will come."

How could anything have been more earth-shaking than the announcement of the Heavenly Host to the shepherds on that Holy Night when Christ, the light of the world, was born? Truly, the Advent of the Savior of the world (predestined before the foundation of the world) was the seminal event of God's abundant love, mercy, and grace. This Advent was for all nations, as expressed by the old man Simeon who was promised by the Holy Spirit that he would live until the salvation of Jerusalem appeared:

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2:31-33)

May our hearts rejoice as we prepare for the appearing of the Christ Child.

## Prayer

Father God, thank you for the earth-shaking gift of your Son, Jesus, born of a virgin and given up for all mankind, that we might experience Your abundance here and in the life to come. In the beautiful and wonderful name of Jesus, Amen.



## **DAY 6**

### **LOOK FOR THE SIGN**

BY ELAINE FRIEDRICH

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*ISAIAH 7:14*

Isaiah 7:14 is a verse just brimming with hope and promise. Try to imagine the impact that such words would have had on those who first heard them, hundreds of years before Christ's birth. Perhaps more than anything, Israel longed for a Savior, someone who would rescue them and bring them near to God. This is the light in the middle of the darkness, the promise that God Himself would come to be with His people.

Fast-forward into the New Testament, and we find the most miraculous fulfillment of this prophecy. Mary was visited by an angel who announced to her that she would conceive a son through the Holy Ghost. That child is Jesus Christ: He is Immanuel, God with us, the full content of Isaiah's words.

But what does "God with us" mean for us today? It means that we are never alone. During the craziness of the holiday seasons, when life gets crazy-busy or downright lonely, Immanuel reminds us God is right here, walking with us through every high and low. He understands our struggles, our joys, and our sorrows because He experienced them, too.

Theologically speaking, this is deep. The gap between us and our Creator is bridged by Jesus Himself, who is fully God and fully man. But His birth testifies to the love of God for us all and His will to relate to us closely in our very lives. God is not merely an austere deity, but a loving Father who sent His Son to dwell among us, to teach us, and ultimately to save us through His death and resurrection.

Light your Advent candles as a reminder that indeed the true light has come into the world. Jesus really is the reason for this season. His being in our lives is forever the greatest gift ever given. May we embrace this truth and share the love and joy of Immanuel with those around us.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, our Immanuel. As we celebrate this Advent season, remind us of Your constant presence and unwavering love. Help us feel Your closeness in every moment and share Your message to those we meet. Fill our hearts with joy, peace, and gratitude, knowing that You are always with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



**DAY 7**  
**WHERE YOU ARE**  
BY MORGAN WORCH

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*MICAH 5:2*

Micah 5:2 is a specific promise to us about the King being born, detailing not just who He is but also where his birth would happen. The “where” is important. Where refers to heritage. There are many “wheres” in your life. Where you grew up. Where you went to school. Where you graduated. Where your first job was. Where you got married. Where you bought your first house. You remember where you were when all big life events occurred. The “where” of our big life events are important to us. The most important “where,” however, is heaven—where we spend eternity at the end of our lives and where we get to strive for in the present.

The Lord specifically calls each of us to be His disciples and follow Him. It is not the amount of good we do for the world or the mission trip we go on to a third-world country. It is not about feeding the hungry or donating your used clothes. All these things are important, but, it is about where our heart lies that ultimately gives us the biggest blessing.

When you think of this verse going into the Christmas season, think about all the places Jesus traveled in His lifetime. Where He shared the Good News, where He completed His miracles, and where all the mountains are that He moves for us. The ultimate “where” for Him was on the cross, dying for our sins. This little baby that we celebrate this holiday is ends up somewhere “ugly” for us so we can all experience the special “wheres” in our life.

Think about your “wheres” today while you go about your life. Is Jesus calling you to go somewhere in your life and change directions? Or is He asking you to pause and meet someone right where they are in their life.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, our Immanuel. As we celebrate this Advent season, remind us of Your constant presence and unwavering love. Help us feel Your closeness in every moment and share Your message to those we meet. Fill our hearts with joy, peace, and gratitude, knowing that You are always with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



## **DAY 8**

### **HE WILL BE OUR PEACE**

BY RICK POSEY

#### DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

*MICAH 5:4-5*

Micah, whose name means “Who is like Yahweh?,” is one of twelve minor prophets. He was a native of Moresheth, a village twenty miles from Jerusalem.

Micah has been called “the defender of the poor” because of his prophecy over Israel and Judah during a period of self-serving rulers, corrupt judges, and idolatrous people around 730 BC. Micah foretold the destruction of the armies of the Assyrians to Israel’s king.

In the backdrop of faithless and corrupt rulers, Micah peers into the future 700 years to contemplate the Bethlehem birth of Jesus, the perfect ruler and Shepherd-King. Consider the description of our Messiah King that will “shepherd his flock,” meaning to teach and to rule as a good shepherd with wisdom, care, and love. This Messianic King will accomplish this by divine power in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God while bringing peace (Shalom) to his people.

As John Wesley wrote, “the standing position of the Shepherd speaks of the readiness, cheerfulness, and stability of the Christ, His government, and kingdom. His church, made up of converted Jews and Gentiles, shall continue; the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. For the church is so redeemed and established that Christ might be glorified throughout the world” (Wesley, 384). The figure of the seven shepherds and eight leaders of men denotes the significance of an all sufficient and more than adequate provision for every need.

## Prayer

Everlasting Father, we are humbled when we recognize that Lord Jesus is in every book of the Old Testament, indicating that His origin is from ancient days. May our lives be marked with watchfulness, faithfulness, and joyful expectation of the “blessed hope” that awaits us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



## **DAY 9**

### **WAITING, ANTICIPATION, AND HOPE**

BY CARLA BRADLEY

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*ISAIAH 64:1-4*

Advent comes from the Latin word “adventus,” meaning “coming.” At the start of Advent, we turn our hearts toward the practices of waiting and anticipation for the coming of Christ. Advent is a period of preparation, expectation, and hope for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, and for the preparation of the Second Coming of Christ.

Advent emphasizes “hope.” The hope we find in Isaiah’s text is not the warm, festive, and cheery hope we might expect leading up to Christmas. Rather, we remember that what we are waiting for is the expectation of the LORD’s coming to deliver His own, as it was with Israel in exile, and as it is today on the eve of the Second Coming.

During Advent, we prepare our homes, our churches, and our hearts for Christmas and celebrating the birth of our Savior. Advent is a time of waiting.

I’m not one to get the Christmas tree up on December 1st, but as time goes by, I find I am doing it earlier and earlier. We put up two trees: an artificial one and a real one. The real one because I still love the smell of the pine tree, and it reminds me that Jesus died on a tree for me.

We have two friends who almost race to get their trees up the earliest. They're filled with Advent expectation, anticipation, excitement, and determined hope. Our hope begins with a baby in a manger but finds its completion in a King who will judge the whole earth, putting every broken thing back together and setting all things right: you, me, the world.

Isaiah repeats his plea throughout the scripture, “Come, oh that you would come, come down, you came down, you come.” O Come, O Come, Immanuel. Of course, God did come down, in Christ, the incarnation of God himself. God has come down.

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, You are holy, holy, holy, the LORD God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come. Let our deepest hope be in You, God, in Your fullest presence. Today, let us be expectant. Open our eyes, our hearts, our souls, all that we are, to all that He is. Let us expect God's greatness to show up and follow that greatness wherever it leads. In His precious name, Amen.



## **DAY 10**

### **GOD'S PLAN FOR RESTORATION**

BY TRACEY FARR

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*ISAIAH 64:1-4*

The words of Isaiah 64:1-4 are a promise of restoration. God would restore Jerusalem, not because the people cried, but because it was part of His ultimate plan. God's plan will always prevail in His perfect timing.

These verses refer to both the first and second comings of Christ. At His first coming, He set up His reign in the hearts of believers; at His second coming, He will execute justice and righteousness throughout the whole earth. Christ is the "righteous Branch" sprouting from David, the man after God's own heart. The Branch's coming will fulfill God's promise to David of an eternal kingdom.

As Christ fulfills the role of King, He also fulfills the role of Priest, maintaining constant fellowship with God and mediating for the people. Like Abraham's descendants, the "offspring of David" will be innumerable (Genesis 15:1-6) for believers in the Messiah. They will share the Messiah's inheritance (Romans 8:17). They will also serve as God's priests (Exodus 19:5-6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9).

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

## Prayer

Thank you, God that your justice is always tempered by your mercy.  
Thank you that with Christ as our High Priest, all believers are priests of  
God, and we can come before you personally. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.



## **DAY 11**

### **LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD**

BY JENNIFER BRUNER

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*JOHN 1:9-13*

One of my most treasured Christmas memories as a child was our annual drive to look at Christmas lights. We would all bundle up in the family minivan and my dad would drive us around searching for the best displays of the season.

These sparkling lights bring us joy during what can often be a cold and dark time of year. But most importantly, they point us to Jesus, the true Light of the World!

In today's scripture reading, we see how Jesus was rejected by the world. They did not recognize or receive him. It saddens me to think how many people go through the rituals and traditions of the Christmas season – putting up lights, buying gifts, decorating a tree, etc. – without taking time to reflect on its true meaning. We can be surrounded by lights, but still live in darkness if we don't have a relationship with Christ.

We all have a choice to make. We can reject Jesus and live in darkness. Or we can accept Jesus, move from darkness to light, and embark on the abundant life He promises us. By receiving this incredible gift and surrendering our lives to follow Him, we are given the right to be His children. Let us not be like the ones who rejected Him. Let's be reminded of His incredible gift and share it with others.

Soon, Christmas will be over, and the lights will be put away until next year. But the Good News for believers is that the light of Jesus can never be extinguished. He provides all the light we need and promises to be with us forever.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for this season of Advent. Every time we see Christmas lights, let us be reminded of you, the true light of the world. Thank you for adopting us as your children and help us to share the gift of Jesus with others. In Jesus Name. Amen.



## **DAY 12**

### **THE PROMISE OF PEACE AND RESTORATION**

BY SANDRA CHAPMAN

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

#### *ISAIAH 11:5-9*

Isaiah 11:5-9 is an amazing picture of peace and harmony on the earth! This vision goes beyond mere coexistence; it speaks of a complete transformation of nature itself, reflecting the profound impact of God's righteousness and faithfulness.

This passage not only describes a future reality but also reveals essential truths about the character of God and His ultimate plan for creation. It speaks of His desire for reconciliation and restoration, where all forms of hostility and conflict are replaced with peace and unity. This vision echoes the promise of the coming Messiah, who brings healing and renewal to a broken world.

As we reflect on Isaiah's words, we are reminded of God's sovereignty and His ability to bring about transformation in the most unexpected ways. Just as He promises a future of peace and harmony in creation, He also extends an invitation to experience His peace in our lives today. Through Jesus Christ, we can enter into a relationship with God where His righteousness becomes our foundation, and His faithfulness secures our hope.

Are we agents of peace and reconciliation in our area of influence? Do we embody the righteousness and faithfulness that Isaiah describes as the hallmark of God's kingdom?

Let us pray for a deeper understanding of God's vision for peace, both in our hearts and in our world. May we strive to live as instruments of His peace, working towards reconciliation and eagerly anticipating the day when His kingdom of perfect harmony will be fully realized.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the promise of a future kingdom where peace reigns supreme. Help us demonstrate Your righteousness and faithfulness in our lives today, that we may be agents of reconciliation and bearers of Your peace to those around us. Strengthen our faith and fill us with Your Spirit, that we may live in anticipation of the day when Your kingdom will come in its fullness. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## **DAY 13**

### **IT'S GOOD NEWS, PEOPLE!**

BY ELAINE FRIEDRICH

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*ROMANS 10:15*

Paul's words in Romans 10:15 remind us that we have a mission to share the Good News. 'Beautiful feet' is a strange phrase, but it represents the importance of those who spread the gospel.

The feet bear our steps, even through difficult conditions. Our call, as Christians, is to be sent by God, to scatter hope, peace, joy, and love across the world.

At the birth hour of Jesus, God's promise finds fulfillment and the final Good News emerges. The bullhorn announcement to the shepherds declared that the plan of God for salvation was on course. Jesus, our Emmanuel—God with us—has come to save us from our sins, and this is the message we spread.

During Advent, we recall that we, too, are messengers. Our feet may not tread ancient lands, but they do move through our neighborhoods, workplaces, and social circles. In every step, we have the opportunity to share God's love and truth.

This Advent, dare we accept our mission? Let's make our feet beautiful with the Good News. The birth of Jesus—light and hope coming into this dark world filled with uncertainty. Let us be poised with all our Christmas preparations to step out in faith.

Offer a kind word, perform an act of service, or invite someone to learn about Jesus. But whatever it is, know this Advent season you are part of God's mission. After all, we are On Mission 365 days a year!

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we journey through this Advent season, open our hearts to the incredible news of Jesus' birth. Thank You for sending Your Son to be our Savior. Help us to embrace our role as messengers of Your love and grace. Give us the courage to share the Good News with those around us, making our feet beautiful in Your sight. May our words and actions reflect Your light in a world that so desperately needs hope. Guide us in every step we take, and let us be instruments of Your peace, joy, and love. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.



## **DAY 14**

### **GOD USES UNLIKELY PEOPLE**

BY JOHN & SUZIE BUTLER

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*LUKE 1:30-33*

Throughout history, God has chosen some of the most unlikely people to serve Him in pivotal ways.

A few of the many examples include Abraham, an old man who became the father of an entire nation; Moses, a stuttering murderer who challenged the most powerful ruler in the world, led God's people out of slavery in Egypt, and recorded the Ten Commandments; David, an adulterer and murderer who was called "a man after God's own heart"; Rahab, a prostitute who helped Joshua's army conquer Jericho; and Mary, an unremarkable teenager living in a tiny village in the middle of nowhere who gave birth to the Son of God!

Why did God choose Mary? Why does God choose any of His unremarkable children to accomplish history-altering things for Him?

Could it be that He sees what we can't see in another person? Could it be that He sees in you what you can't see in yourself?

God has called you, as His child, to be part of altering history for others in His name. It's up to Him to determine how many lives will be changed through your obedience to Him.

Will you humbly submit to His call to alter history in your world?

## Prayer

God, I love you and want to love and serve you with my whole heart. Help me to be open to your call on my life to follow you in whatever way you lead. Amen.



**DAY 15**  
**JOYFUL ANTICIPATION**  
BY PASTOR GAYLYN KELLY

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*MARK 1:1-3*

The proclamation of good news—the long-awaited Messiah is near. Mark’s opening verses echo Isaiah’s prophetic words, emphasizing the urgency and significance of this divine announcement. We are called to be voices of proclamation in our lives, heralding the Savior’s arrival and sharing the Gospel of Jesus with others.

The gospel invites us to align our hearts and place our faith in Jesus as Savior. By His grace, we are saved and transformed by the promised Holy Spirit. This Advent, let our lives echo the proclamation that the Messiah has come, bringing hope and redemption.

John the Baptist’s call to prepare the way is not a somber command but an invitation filled with joy. Read verse 3 again. Notice this imagery conveys anticipation and expectancy—a wilderness transformed by the Lord’s advent.

The joy in this proclamation challenges us to examine our hearts. How often do we approach Advent with a sense of duty rather than joyous expectation? The preparation we are called to is not a burdensome task but a joyful anticipation of encountering the Lord’s presence.

As we prepare this season—decorating our homes, selecting gifts, and planning gatherings— let us not lose sight of the inward preparation that brings joy to our hearts. Creating straight paths means removing obstacles that hinder our time and intimacy with Christ.

The choice of the wilderness for John’s proclamation is symbolic. The wilderness represents the desolate and challenging spaces of our lives—places of uncertainty, isolation, and longing. Yet, it is precisely in these wilderness moments that the joy of the Lord can shine most brightly.

As we navigate the wilderness of our own lives, Advent becomes a season of profound hope and joy. The proclamation to prepare the way assures us that, even in the wilderness, the Lord draws near. The joy from this truth transcends circumstances and becomes a resilient foundation for our expectations and hope.

This Advent, in the spirit of John the Baptist, may our lives echo the proclamation of good news — marked by the joy and hope that come from knowing Jesus. Let our lives be a proclamation of the Good News, sharing the transformative message of Christ with others. As we prepare the way in our own wilderness, may we experience the profound joy of His presence and become a beacon of hope to those around us.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, As we journey through this Advent season, we thank You for the proclamation of Your Good News and the hope it brings. Prepare our hearts to receive Jesus anew and help us to joyfully anticipate His presence in our lives. Clear the obstacles that hinder our intimacy with You, and let our lives echo the joy and hope of the Savior’s coming. May we be voices of proclamation, sharing Your love and light with others. Transform our wilderness moments with Your grace and make us beacons of hope to a world in need. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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## **DAY 16**

### **THE LIGHT**

BY BROOKE O'HARA

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*Isaiah 9:2*

Christmas is a season of light! You see lights on your Christmas tree, candles burning, and lights hanging all around the church. But imagine, what would the Christmas season look like without light? It might feel cold, dark, and lonely.

This imagery reflects the spiritual condition of Israel during their exile, as shared by Isaiah. Their disobedience led them into a place of spiritual darkness without Christ. Yet, Isaiah's prophecy is one of hope, declaring that they would not remain in darkness forever.

Christ was born into the world and brought the light with Him. In John 8:12, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." This is the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus is the reason we have joy and hope. Most of all, He is the light of the world, guiding us out of darkness and into His marvelous light!

### **Prayer**

Heavenly father, thank you for sending us your son, Jesus Christ, to be the light of the world. We thank you for taking us out of the darkness and bringing us into your light. Lord, I pray each light we see reminds us of your most precious gift. I pray that we will follow you with obedience and trust. Lord, fill us with your spirit as we embrace this holiday season. It's in your Holy name and the reason we celebrate. Amen.





## **DAY 17**

### **THE FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE OF JOSEPH**

BY PAT PRESCOTT

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*Matthew 1:18-21*

Ever wonder about Joseph? What type of man was he? Depending on the translation, these words come up: righteous man, faithful to the law, just a man, a good man. During this time, Joseph was well within his rights to not only divorce Mary but under God's Law to Israel, a woman who is engaged to one man but willingly has intimate relations with another man is to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:23-24).

Joseph knew Mary was a good woman and she had a fine reputation. Yet, despite what she claimed, it seemed to Joseph that she could only be pregnant by some other man. So, as a good man, a righteous man, he had in his mind to privately divorce Mary.

However, God chose Joseph too. It was not by coincidence, but a God incident that Joseph was Mary's betrothed. God saw the confusion building in Joseph and sent an angel to him to confirm Mary's story. Joseph did not need further confirmation. He never doubted God's will or his role in watching over Mary and her son. Joseph would remain faithful to God and his wife. God's plan was more important than the thoughts of men and their perceptions of what is right.

Joseph would remain vigilant in understanding God's plan for his life. Later, he would take the infant Jesus and Mary to Egypt to escape impending danger (Matthew 2:13-15). Joseph was truly a humble man who could be counted on to follow God's plan regardless of the cost.

Are you ready to be vigilant in understanding God's plan for your life? Commit yourself to a daily walk with Christ in prayer and quiet time. Make a commitment to God and to your loved ones that you will stand firm in your devotion to Christ, the Word, and to them. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.

## Prayer

Lord, grant us Joseph's unwavering trust and obedience. Help us discern and follow Your plan with humility and courage. Strengthen our faith and devotion to You, Your Word, and our loved ones. Guide us by the Holy Spirit, prioritizing Your will above all. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## **DAY 18**

### **IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US**

BY ADAM THOMAS

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*Matthew 1:22-23*

If we aren't careful this Advent season, we can turn our traditions on autopilot, with Scripture becoming a familiar scene we pass through on our journey to Christmas. The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew, the disciple of Jesus and former tax collector. Some scholars believe he was the scribe of the group and, due to the nature of his previous vocation, would have been a meticulous note-taker.

Why is that important? The words Matthew chose when writing his Gospel were not chosen lightly. So as followers of Jesus, we must not treat them with anything less than reverence and full attention of our hearts during this Advent season. There's so much to unpack in these two verses:

- "All this took place to fulfill...": This is the first time this phrase is used to proclaim Jesus' birth as the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. (Isaiah 7:14)
- "The virgin shall conceive...": Jesus' conception was divine and a foundational piece of our belief system that can't be glossed over.
- "They shall call his name Immanuel": Immanuel means 'God with us.' This does not just speak to Jesus being fully God but also His nearness to man and His nearness to us.

My prayer is that whether this is the first time you've read these verses or the hundredth, they would resonate in a new way in your heart. Immanuel is coming, and His name is Jesus. He longs to be near you, so take the time to be near Him this Advent season.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we light the Advent candles, help us pause and reflect on the profound meaning of Jesus' birth. May Your Word resonate deeply within us, reminding us of Your nearness and love. Draw us closer to You this season, filling our hearts with reverence and joy. Amen.



## DAY 19

### A CHILD IS BORN

BY BROOKE O'HARA

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*Isaiah 9:6*

The prophetic message of Isaiah is indeed a profound testament to God's faithfulness and His divine plan for humanity. When Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah and attributed these four significant names to Him—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace—he was providing the people of Israel with a deep sense of hope and reassurance during a time of uncertainty and turmoil.

- **Wonderful Counselor:** Emphasizes the wisdom and guidance that Jesus offers. As our Wonderful Counselor, He understands our struggles and concerns. His counsel leads us to truth, comfort, and wisdom, allowing us to navigate the complexities of life with confidence, knowing we can rely on His guidance.
- **Mighty God:** Highlights the sovereignty and power of Jesus. It assures us that He is not only a spiritual guide but also a powerful protector. There is no challenge or enemy greater than Him, and in Him, we find the strength and might to face life's battles.
- **Everlasting Father:** Speaks to the everlasting relationship we have with Jesus. He is not a distant deity but a caring Father who provides love, protection, and a sense of belonging. His defeat of death ensures that we can have eternal life and communion with Him beyond this earthly existence.

- **Prince of Peace:** Encapsulates the mission of Jesus to bring peace to a world often filled with strife and anxiety. He offers a peace that transcends understanding, calming our hearts and minds regardless of our circumstances. Jesus fosters reconciliation—not just between us and God, but also among ourselves.

Isaiah’s message serves as a beacon of hope for the Israelites, who faced many trials, and continues to resonate with us today. It reassures us that God is always at work, weaving His plans for our lives, even when we cannot see it. The fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies in Jesus Christ underscores the certainty of God’s promises and His unwavering commitment to His people.

The anticipation of the Messiah shows us the importance of hope and patience in our own lives as we wait for God’s promises to unfold. Just as the people of Israel did, we can live with the assurance that God is faithful, and His plans for us are indeed greater than we can fathom. By embracing these truths, we find purpose and peace, knowing we are welcomed into His eternal family through Jesus.

## **Prayer**

Lord, we thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, who was born in a manger to provide hope for all the world. We thank you for the Bible and how it tells Your story and Your truth about the coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace. Lord, I pray that we would lean into learning more about your character as we grow in our faith this season. Thank you for keeping your promise. Lord, we love you and we thank you. Amen.

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## **DAY 20**

### **FULLY GOD - FULLY MAN**

BY ELAINE FRIEDRICH

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*John 1:14-18*

As the weeks of Advent progress, let us step to one side for a moment and reflect on one of the most profound truths of Scripture: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Imagine! The Creator of the universe, that eternal Word, stepped down into our world, our mess, and dwelt among us. Not as some distant deity but as Emmanuel, God with us.

Now, consider this. Jesus, fully God and fully man, walked the dusty streets; he hungered, he grew tired, he laughed with friends, he wept at a tomb, and he embraced the outcast. He brought heaven to earth—not as a theory but in the tangibility of his person. He revealed to us what God is like, and our lives were forever changed by that revelation.

Now, John 1:14-18 provides more explanation concerning this mystery. Jesus, the Word, as referred to by John, is full of grace and truth. Grace that welcomes sinners and truth that rebukes their sin. Grace that heals the broken and truth that frees enslaved people. In Jesus, we see the perfect mixing of both. He never sold out truth for grace or withheld grace in the name of truth. He showed the perfection of both.

Verse 16 says, “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Jesus pours out abundant, overflowing grace onto us. It is grace that forgives our sins, enables us to stand under trials, and empowers us to live for Him. It never stops because it is from the infinite fullness of Jesus.

Then there is verse 18, which tells us that Jesus reveals the Father to us, and if we want an insight into God's heart and character and purposes, then we look to Jesus. Jesus is God—God showing His love to reach out to humankind, God showing His justice in dealing with man's sin, God showing His mercy in providing a way for man to be reconciled to Him.

May these truths this Advent season deepen our awe and wonder in the face of the miracle of the Incarnation. The Word became flesh to bring grace and truth into our lives, to manifest the Father to us, and to offer us a relationship with Him. What an amazing gift!

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible gift of Your Son, Jesus. As we reflect on the mystery of the Word becoming flesh, fill our hearts with awe and wonder. Help us to see Your grace and truth in every moment and to embrace the fullness of life that Jesus offers. May this Advent season draw us closer to You, deepening our relationship with You and reminding us of Your endless love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



## DAY 21

### MARY'S FAITHFUL SURRENDER

BY SANDRA CHAPMAN

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*Luke 1:34-38*

In Luke 1:34-38, we witness a profound moment in biblical history where Mary, a young virgin, receives the astonishing news from the angel Gabriel that she will conceive and bear the Son of God. Mary's initial question, "How will this be?" reflects her human wonder and curiosity. Gabriel's response, affirming God's miraculous power, leads to Mary's beautiful declaration of faith and obedience. This passage not only highlights the miraculous nature of Jesus' conception but also exemplifies Mary's trust, surrender, and willingness to serve God's higher purpose. Let's explore how Mary's faith journey can inspire and guide us in our walk with the Lord.

- **Trust in God's Sovereignty:** Just as Mary trusted in Gabriel's message, we are called to trust in the promises of God, even when they seem improbable or unconventional.
- **Surrender and Obedience:** Mary's willingness to submit to God's plan, despite potential hardship or misunderstanding, challenges us to surrender our own will and desires to God's higher purpose for our lives.
- **Faith in God's Power:** The miraculous conception of Jesus reminds us of God's power to work beyond the natural order. It encourages us to believe that God can transform our lives and circumstances according to His divine will.

- **Willingness to Serve:** As we reflect on Mary's response, let us consider how we respond to God's call in our own lives. Are we willing to trust God's plan even when it seems beyond our understanding? Do we surrender our own will and desires to His sovereign purpose? Are we obedient to His word, believing in His promises despite the challenges we may face?

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, I pray for grace like Mary had. May her faith be an example in my life, that I might emulate that kind of faith in my own journey of discipleship. Help me to say with confidence and humility, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Amen.



## **DAY 22**

### **IN ALL SEASONS, TRUST GOD**

BY LARRY ARMSTRONG

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*Luke 1:46-48*

In our faith journey, we can find ourselves in situations that are testing us for the trust we have in God. It is then that words by Ashley Hooker make much sense to the moment: “We are to trust in our God. No matter what the situation or circumstance, God has it all in His hands...Let this mindset be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” This should always be our goal—that we might imitate the heart and mind of Mary. This wisdom doesn’t keep itself confined to the Advent season but shows its relevancy every day of our living.

Probably one of the deepest examples of trust and obedience is Mary, Jesus’ mother. When the angel Gabriel came to her with the announcement of becoming the mother of the Son of God, the reply by Mary was one of humble subjection: “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38). She didn’t understand very well how everything was going to happen but trusted God’s plan.

It is this same trust that we are called to imitate. Life is full of uncertainties: struggles in our careers, health problems, relationships, and the normal pressures that burden us. Just as Mary trusted in God’s plan, so we also are called to have faith in Him, knowing He holds all things in His hands.

Trusting God does not always mean that we will have crystal-clear answers or that the way ahead will always be clear. It means laying our fears, doubts, and anxieties before Him, trusting that His plans for us are good even if not clear to us. It is for a heart like Mary’s, one that says, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

As we move through each season of life, may we not forget that the call of God to trust is not seasonal. It's the daily invitation into walking in faith, as it were, according to the example of Mary, the one whose heart and mind remained oriented toward God above all else. May we work toward her kind of trust, knowing our God is ever faithful.

## Prayer

Father God, your name is holy, and you do great things. You are the source of our joy and worthy of our praise because you give grace to the humble and reject the proud. Because you fill the hungry soul with good things, we pray you will fill us with the spirit of the Advent season. Thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ, and it is in His name we pray. Amen.



## **DAY 23**

### **THE GLORY OF ZION**

BY JOHN WILLIAMS

*DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*  
*Isaiah 60:2-3*

In Isaiah 60:2-3, the prophet Isaiah is speaking of a time when the darkness and despair of sin and the struggles that afflict humanity will envelop the earth. Not just “darkness,” but “thick darkness.” Yet, amidst this gloom, Isaiah prophesies the light of the Lord will break through the darkness and the glory of God will bring hope to His people. The light of God will shine through a redeemed Israel for all the nations to see.

The contrast between darkness and light reminds us of the considerable challenges in our own lives. These are the moments when we feel overwhelmed by the weight of our circumstances and the darkness of the world that surrounds us. But, God. As spoken of by Isaiah, God’s light shines through even the thickest darkness. The brilliance of His presence brings us hope and clarity regardless of our circumstances. As believers, we are delivered from sin and its consequences, and we reflect His light for all to see.

Isaiah speaks of nations not only seeing the brightness of God’s glory shining over Zion, but of nations and kings being drawn to the light. There is transformative power in God’s light breaking through the darkness of the world, drawing others into a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Let us reflect the light of Christ as a testimony to His transformative power in our own lives, so others will know Him through our words and actions and be drawn to the brightness of His love.

## Prayer

Lord, as darkness covers the earth, may Your light shine through my heart, illuminating Your peace and reflecting Your glory. I pray that nations will be drawn to You, as darkness gives way to Your radiance. In this Advent season, prepare us to welcome Christ, the light of the world, into our lives now and forever. Amen.



## **DAY 24**

### **A SAVIOR IS COMING!**

BY BROOKE O'HARA

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING* *Luke 2:8-12*

In Luke 2:8-12, the imagery of the dark, star-lit fields contrasting with the burst of divine light serves as a powerful symbol of hope and revelation.

The choice of shepherds as the recipients of this monumental message underscores God's intention to reach all people, regardless of their social standing or status. Shepherds, often seen as outcasts or marginalized in society, became the first to receive the news of Christ's birth. This act demonstrates God's inclusivity and highlights the gospel's message that salvation is available to everyone.

Furthermore, the notion that God initiates a relationship with humanity is central to Christian belief. The shepherds' response, both to listen to the angel's message and to seek out the newborn Savior, illustrates the call for all believers to actively engage with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Just as the shepherds were encouraged to investigate and spread the news of Jesus' birth, we are also invited to respond to the grace offered to us. Our call is not only to receive the good news but also to share it in our own lives, embodying the joy and hope that Christ brings to the world.

This moment in Luke serves as a reminder to us that every Christmas, and indeed each day, offers us an opportunity to embrace our relationship with God and to share that transformative love with others.

## Prayer

Lord, thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ! We are so thankful for the birth of Jesus and what it represents for the world. I pray that over this holiday season, we will put our focus on Good News. That we have salvation and everlasting life because God sent his only son down from heaven to earth. Lord, we love you and we thank you! Amen.



## **DAY 25**

### **WOULD YOU LIKE A TOUCH FROM HEAVEN?**

BY REVEREND RON TYLER

#### *DAILY SCRIPTURE READING*

*Luke 2:13-14*

The early church used these words to create a doxology, a short hymn of praise to God, the words “Glory to God in the highest,” known as the “Greater Doxology.” This hymn begins with the words the angels sang when the birth of Christ was announced to the shepherds. God reaches from Heaven to earth, offering a special touch to all who open their hearts to receive.

Belinda and I were missionaries in Africa, where I oversaw the continental Evangelism Explosion (EE) ministry. In Tanzania, we held a Kids EE training.

Elise, the lead teacher, walked away from the training location to pray alone during one of our breaks, “Lord, I just need a touch from You.” Suddenly, she felt the touch of the Lord through a young boy who gently held her hand. Elise opened her eyes, and the young boy asked, “I walk with you, yes?” Elise smiled. As they walked along the dusty trail, holding hands, Elise felt more than a human hand in hers; she felt the Lord’s presence. He had answered her prayer!

Today, the Scripture is Luke 2:13-14. As you thank and praise God for His perfect gift, may you celebrate the birth of Jesus, the One who came to be the Messiah, your Savior. The Heavenly Host, an army of angels, announced peace—real peace on earth. God, not man, is the One who brings peace. Peace between God and man.

## Prayer

May today be that special Christmas I receive “a touch from Heaven.” In Jesus’ name. Amen.