



Celebrate Advent
2022

**Devotional Readings in
Preparation for Christmas**



This booklet was prepared as a gift for the members of The Worship Place, Sun City, TX.

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Foreword

Christian churches historically have observed Advent as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming. The term “Advent” is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming.” Part of the observance of Advent, celebrated on the four Sundays before Christmas, recalls the centuries of anticipation of the birth of Jesus as written about by prophets like Isaiah in the Old Testament. Frequently, on each of the four Sundays, a candle is lit during the worship service to remind us of a theme for Advent study and reflection. This year, The Worship Place will celebrate Advent from November 27 until December 25 (Christmas Day).

This document supports study, contemplation, and prayer for each day of the Advent period. It contains twenty-nine devotions, one for each of the 28 days of Advent, as well as a devotion for Christmas Day. The devotions were written by the members and pastors of The Worship Place congregation. Many of the devotions written by members are preceded by selected scripture passages that were used by George Fredrick Handel, in his magnificent oratorio *Messiah*, composed remarkably in twenty-four days. Handel’s text is a compilation of scriptures from the Old and New Testaments. The TWP pastors wrote the devotions to highlight the four weeks of Advent: HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE. These devotions are accompanied by memorable hymns.

The Worship Place website provides access to the music - <https://www.twptx.org/resources/advent-2022>. It contains recordings of 29 musical numbers, to accompany the devotionals in the booklet. Selections of Christian art are shown with the devotions to provide additional resources that will inspire your contemplations.

As you meditate, you might remember that each devotion provides different voices. The first is the Biblical voice of the Psalmist, the prophet, or the New Testament writer. The second voice is that of the church member or the pastor who has written the text of the devotion out of their own understanding and experience. The third is the musical selection and the message it brings. The visual experience of the Christian art contributes a fourth voice and an additional perspective.

It is hoped that the scriptures, beautiful music, art, and the Advent devotions will help us all to prepare our hearts for the celebration of the coming of the Lord, and help us all to catch a glimpse of heaven and be drawn closer to the Savior.

What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a Shepherd, I would bring Him a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part,
Yet what can I give Him, — Give my heart.

Christina Rossetti, *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Suggestions for your Use

1. Plan to engage in an Advent devotion each day beginning November 27 and ending on December 25. Your devotional time can be alone or shared with a family member.
2. Connect to the recording of a musical selection from a memorable hymn, or from Handel's *Messiah*. The musical selection will be designated by the day of the devotion.
3. Listen to the musical recording as you read and contemplate the scripture for the day.
4. Read the devotion of the day from this booklet.
5. Pray.

Acknowledgements

- The devotions were written by members and pastors from TWP, Sun City.
- The musical recordings are from memorable hymns, as well as the MIT Concert Choir's performance of Handel's *Messiah*, November 12, 2016. Permission to use is granted by MIT.
- This booklet was created, designed, edited, and formatted by Dan Hull, Tony Hartle and Tim Hutto, members of a TWP Connection Group.

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November 27

The First Sunday of Advent

Day 1

HOPE

[Click here for music selection](#)

Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2



Also known as the “prophecy candle,” the candle of HOPE for Advent assures us we can have hope that God will fulfill the prophecies declared in the Old Testament and that the New Covenant that Jesus revealed offers redemption and salvation.

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

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts. Rom 5:5

Christians sometimes confuse the word hope for wishful thinking. If we “hope” something will happen, it is usually because we have little or no control over the future. But the biblical sense of hope is very different. Hope, in the Bible, exists as a secure assurance, a trust placed in a trustworthy God. God has not failed us in the past, and therefore, if He claims He will do something in the future, we can have confidence that He will fulfill that claim. Hope waits and endures. It isn’t flimsy or merely wishful thinking. It can withstand disease, fire, trials, and despair.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Heb 11:1

Hope changes our lives. It helps us during significant trials or times of distress. It offers us security in the knowledge that God reigns and that while we cannot see Him now, we will see Him face to face one day.

John Bell



November 28

Day 2

[Click here for music selection](#)

Comfort ye – Isaiah 40:1-3

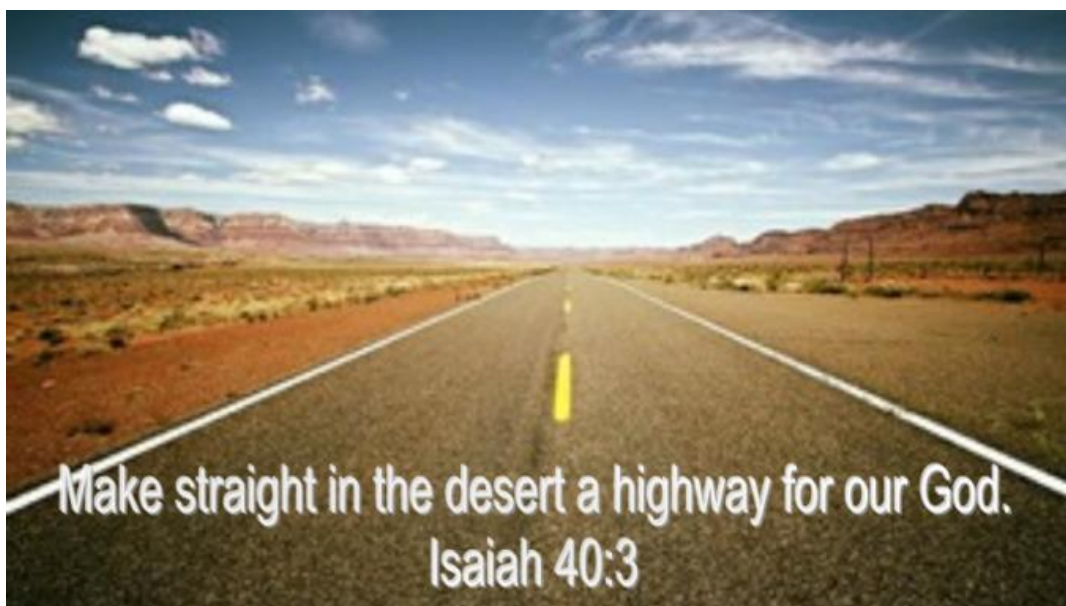
*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God....
The voice of him crieth in the wilderness,
“Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*

In recent years many of us, our friends and/or relatives, have experienced major crises in our lives: isolation due to COVID-19, broken relations, serious illnesses, death, loss of job, spouse, etc. Because these problems are so great and we felt so helpless; we have refocused our prayer life; daily we pray for many of them. We pray for our problems to improve – but most of all, we pray that God will comfort us in all circumstances. We know that our prayers for comfort are answered – not only for others, but for us as well.

In today’s scripture, the prophet anticipates redemption and asks for comfort to the people. In their situation the Jews were suffering separation from God because they had become obsessed with worshiping idols. Isaiah saw that Israel was returning to God and that, in time, He would redeem and comfort them. Ultimately, He did this in a wonderful, miraculous way: He sent *His Son* as the redeemer and comforter.

At Advent, we “prepare the way of the Lord” in hopes that He will return to our lives in new ways for renewal, strengthening of our faith, and comfort. Our daily prayers for ourselves and others will continue.

Dan and Rita Hull



November 29

Day 3

[Click here for music selection](#)

Ev'ry Valley – Isaiah 40:4

*Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low:
And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.*

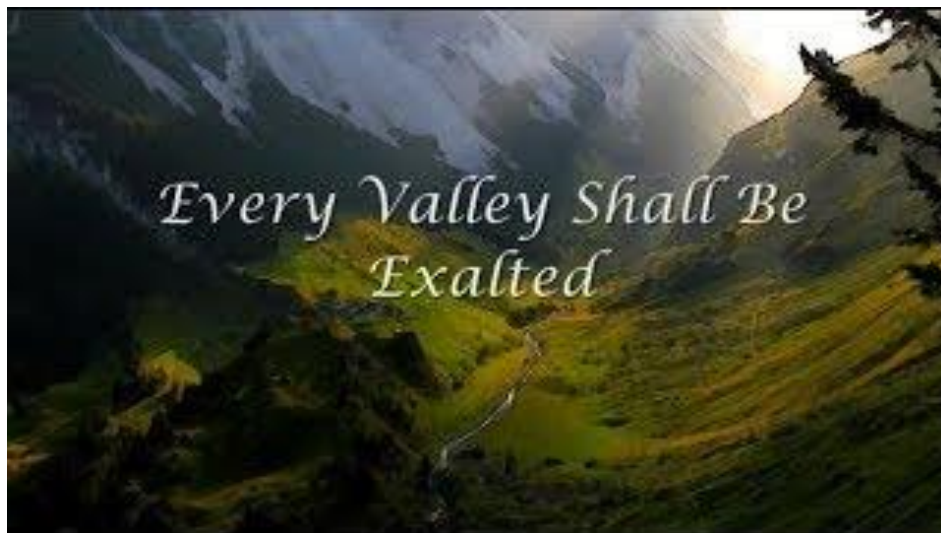
In the days that Isaiah wrote these verses, the kings of earth had absolute power over their subjects and slavery was common. So, when their sovereign visited his people, it was with great pomp and circumstance that he was welcomed. Many times, hills were leveled and valleys were filled so that the road he was to travel would be smooth and pleasing. There were no potholes and no rough gravel or stones to disturb their king.

But the Sovereign that Isaiah referred to was not like any other. John the Baptist (Luke 3:4) quoted Isaiah 40:3 referring to our Lord Jesus – “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” This preparation was in expectation of the Almighty God of the universe – our own Sovereign Lord and Savior – Jesus, the Christ – Who is God.

And He did come “in the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4) as a baby in a manger – as God in the flesh – as our Substitute – as our Savior and Lord. Indeed, we each should be preparing the way for the celebration of the advent of God’s Messiah in Bethlehem about 2000 years ago. The glory of the Lord was indeed revealed, and when Jesus returns all mankind will see His glory (Isaiah 40:5).

So, as we prepare ourselves during Advent, may we experience anew Jesus Christ’s advent into our hearts in this Christmas season.

Dick Pitzer



November 30

Day 4

[Click here for music selection](#)

And the Glory of the Lord – Isaiah 40:5

*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
And all flesh shall see it together:
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.*

The GLORY of the Lord. That's a hard concept for us humans to grasp. Exactly what is glory? When it comes to our Christmas celebrations, we often try to show the "glory" with more lights and more color, and more trappings of traditional Christmas décor. However, the glory of the Lord is not tinsel, or icicles, or sparkles, or shiny, colorful things. It is not even the Star of Bethlehem.

The Hebrew word for glory means "heaviness or weight." The Glory of God is majestic, and weighty, and all-encompassing. It is powerful and lasting and so glorious we cannot even fathom it.

And yet, the Glory of the Lord was revealed in an innocent babe, a humble carpenter, an itinerant teacher -- the perfect Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

When I was a girl, our church used to sing a hymn that went like this: "Oh, that will be Glory for me, Glory for me, Glory for me. When by His grace I shall look on His face, that will be Glory for me!" Even as a child I knew seeing Jesus would be my ultimate joy.

Mankind got its first glimpse of Jesus in Bethlehem. The next was the glory of salvation wrought on the cross at Calvary. And then many saw the risen Lord. The final revelation will be better than any Christmas you have ever experienced. It will be the full majesty and glory and wonder of the Lord Jesus when we see him in all his fullness.

"For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." God promised His people in Isaiah that the glory hidden for so long would BE REVEALED. Our salvation offers us a glimpse, but the most magnificent glory is yet to come.

E. M. and Ann Hay



December 1

Day 5

And He shall Purify – Malachi 3:2-3 [Click here for music selection](#)

² *But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:*

³ *And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

Almost everything we use today, including fuel for our vehicles and the food and liquids we eat and drink must be purified and refined before they are fit for use? Impurities exist in everything and must be refined and removed in order to be productive and safe for use.

Viewing the current condition of our world today, we can see just how much we have let the impurities of the world enter into our lives and Churches. A greater and more recognizable word for impurities would be **sin**

Sin has existed since Adam and Eve; God purified their sin by accepting sacrifices given by those that believed in Him. Today, we remain under the Blood of Christ, and He alone is our refiner and purifier. He will not refine and purify us unless we are repentant and lay our sins before Him. Then we will be washed clean and ready for His service.

Could it be that our nation is ripe for God's extraction of the impurities that daily spread across the world, like a cancer eating away the good and replacing with evil? Yes, I believe so. Sin has taken hold of those that are in positions of authority and is attacking our Christian beliefs and affecting our homes, churches and schools in the most dreadful way.

Purification comes from repentance:

¹⁴ *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will **heal** their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14*

We desperately need to hear from Heaven today and above all else, our world needs healing from false teachers, healing from the evil that has been called good, healing from those minds that have taken good and made it evil, healing from unbelief, healing from hate, healing from prejudice, and healing from the fear of speaking the truth of God's word to those who have no knowledge of truth.

So, as we begin our Advent season, let us all be refined and purified by God's word so that when He comes again, we can stand clean and fit for His appearance.

Gary and June Allen

PURIFICATION AND REFINING

Making something spiritually or ceremonially clean

The process of extracting something from a substance

The Extraction of impurities from gold and silver

FULLER'S SOAP

A very strong soap solution used in ancient Eastern countries to whiten clothing

December 2

Day 6

Behold, a virgin shall conceive [Click here for music selection](#)

Isaiah 7:14

*Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
And shall call his name Immanuel.*

Israel's apostasy had to be punished, and the prophets gave stern warnings of impending judgment, with calls for national repentance. But God in His grace promised to save a small remnant—although the nation would have to pass through an extended period of fire and water and be dispersed among the nations.

God sent a message of hope to Israel, despite their persistent unbelief and blasphemous idolatry. The Lord Himself would give them a sign, which would authenticate the arrival of His anointed Savior—the Seed of the woman, the *Messiah of Israel*, and royal descendent of the great king David. He would save His people from their sins. What a glorious pronouncement was made on that day!

A virgin would conceive and give birth to our Savior, He who would be called Immanuel—God with Us: God incarnate. The immortal, invisible eternal God was to be born into the world as a tiny baby, and He would save His people, Israel, from their sins. Through Him, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

A child was to be born of a virgin, for God was to give His only begotten Son. The government would be upon His shoulder, and His name would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

There are twenty-two astonishing Messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah. Each one points to the Lord Jesus Christ as its glorious fulfillment, while hundreds more thread their way through the prophetic Holy Scriptures.

The Word of the Lord is sure, and every prophetic pronouncement in the Scriptures has or will reach its ultimate fulfillment in Christ—for God's Word is sure, His faithfulness is everlasting. His truth endures from one generation to the next, and His promises are *yes* and *amen* in Christ Jesus our Lord.

My Prayer

Heavenly Father, You alone are wise and good. Thank You for the truths that are contained in Your holy Word. Thank You that by Your grace You told the end from the beginning and sent Your Son to be born of a virgin and become the full and final atonement for our sin. Thank You that Jesus walked the earth as a Man and understands the limitations of our humanity. Thank You that He helps us in our trials and temptations, and we praise Your name that He is coming back one day, to finalize His authority over sin, the world and the devil - to Him be all the glory, world without end - AMEN.

Connie and Kathy Cochran

December 3

Day 7

The people that walked in darkness [Click here for music selection](#)

Isaiah 9:2

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

We love to tour caverns, such as Inner Space Cavern here in Georgetown. All cavern tours seem to include a time when all the lights are extinguished so you can experience total darkness. This experience is like no other. It is TOTAL darkness. I always wonder how anyone could find their way out of such a dark place without any light.

In the Bible, walking in darkness is equated with man's defiance against God. Doesn't it seem our world becomes a little darker every day?

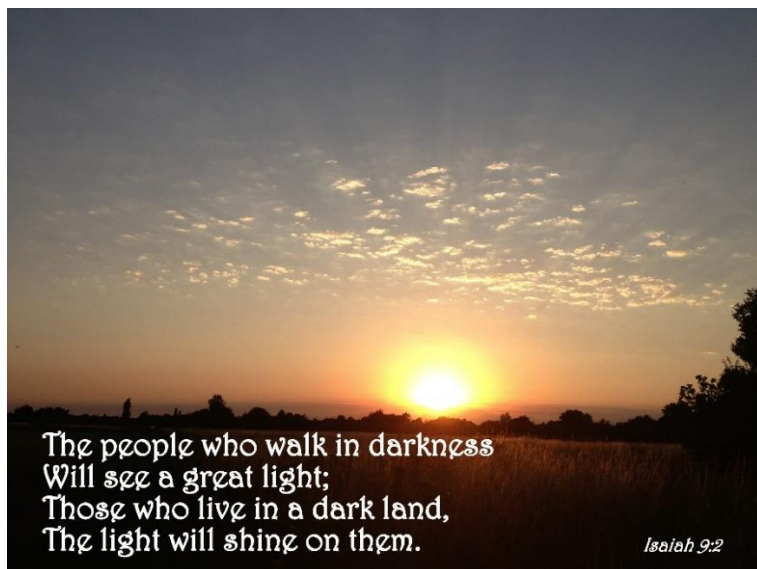
Walking in spiritual darkness has consequences. It separates us from God. This is because God is just and punishes evil, as shown in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

But God also showers us with mercy. As it says in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by Grace you have been saved." God has provided Hope.

Light has indeed come into the world. As Jesus says in John 8:12: "... I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

By God's Grace, Jesus is our Hope. Praise God for sending His Son for our salvation!

Randy and Becky Washington



December 4

Second Sunday of Advent

Day 8

PEACE

[Click here for music selection](#)

I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
Psalms 104:33

The second Sunday of Advent is celebrated with the lighting of the Candle of Peace. When I think of the word “peace,” I have mixed emotions these days. Reports come in daily about the war in Ukraine, where I have ministered and I can’t help but wonder: is lasting peace on earth really possible?

In Acts 10:36, Peter says, “You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” Peace through Jesus Christ has to be our answer.

One of my favorite Christmas carols is “Silent Night, Holy Night”. It is a beautiful lullaby that paints a picture of peace and comfort on a night long ago in Bethlehem. Can you imagine a darkened sky, the twinkling stars overhead, and an unusually bright star shining in the eastern sky?

One of my most vivid memories from past travels was on a night Christy and I were up in the Sacramento Mountains of New Mexico for a revival meeting. The elevation was 7,000 ft above sea level, and the night was “pitch black”! We had driven our RV all day long, and after we got things packed away, we turned out the lights and sat out under the stars. I will never forget how incredible the sky looked that night. We saw so many stars and galaxies we had never seen before. How the shepherd’s must have felt so long ago on that wondrous night when the angels from heaven came flying in for a visit! Luke 2:8-10 tells the rest of the story!

May the peace of God put a song in your heart this Christmas season.

Paul and Christy Newberry



December 5

Day 9

For unto us a child is born. [Click here for music selection](#)

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

We like this particular scripture because it is so specific in its description of God the Father and God the Son. These descriptions help us to understand who God's son Jesus, the Messiah, is to us.

We want to focus on the last description, the Prince of Peace. We long for the fulfillment of peace today. We want to be content, we want to know that all is right in our world. But God's peace is more than that, it is a state of spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being – it is the abundant life that Jesus promised us.

Everyone wants it, strives for it, but most are looking for peace in all the wrong places: the right job, the perfect soul mate, enough money, accomplishments that will confirm our worth to others.

Fulfillment of those desires does not deliver peace. We all soon discover they just aren't enough. We need the Peace that comes only from God our Father. God's gift to us at Christmas is the Prince of Peace. Peace. It is why He came.

But the promise of Advent is more than a promise of peace. It is a promise of eternal life. It is a gift of the Kingdom for all who will receive it. All of our desires are ultimately met in the Prince of Peace who wants to fill our hearts and restore us with His love. The child in Bethlehem was more than a good teacher and a sacrifice for sin. He is the answer to our gaping needs and the fulfillment of our deepest desires. He wants to be our Prince of Peace.

Paul and Judy Clark



December 6

Day 10

[Click here for music selection](#)

Don't Miss the Gift – Luke 2:8-11

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Jesus' birth gave us many gifts, but especially the gift of a forgiving heart. This is so true in the Christmas carols we sing during the advent season.

Below, is verse 3, from the church hymn "Holy Child within the Manger".

*Holy Child within the manger,
Lead us ever in your way,
So, we see in every stranger
How you come to us today*

*In our lives and in our living,
Give us strength to live as you,
That our hearts might be forgiving
And our spirits strong and true.*

Norma James



December 7

Day 11

[Click here for music selection](#)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:13-14

Along with the Angel there appeared a multitude of the heavenly host to the shepherds who were tending their sheep in the fields. The angels and heavenly bodies announced to the shepherds that the Savior, Anointed One, God and man is born. They left in haste for Bethlehem to witness the Lord of Lords.

The prophets had been predicting the coming of the Messiah for hundreds of years. Now, He had arrived! Everyone was excited. As time passed, Christ did not fulfill the expectations of the church leaders as the one to save the Israelites from Roman oppression, and they rejected Him.

How do you think you would react if you were confronted by a multitude of angels telling you that the Messiah has been born to you? Maybe excitement at first, then maybe disbelief, then perhaps rejection. But remember, we have the truth, the whole story: the beginning, the middle, and the end of the book. When the disciples ask Jesus:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Matt 24:3

He told them of many signs to watch for and events that would happen before He would return. So, we also have reasons to have faith that all will work out on His timetable in His way. Take comfort that His death, burial, and resurrection was for you.

A host of heavenly angels announced His birth, and His prophets have given us everything we need to have faith in Him and in His words for us, His Bride.

Bill and Lyn Sutton



Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion – Zechariah 9:9-10

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt.

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

At the end of World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Edwin P. Ramsey received numerous awards of recognition for his service in guerilla warfare in the Philippines. Unable to evacuate, Ramsey was also credited with leading the last horse cavalry charge in U.S. history. With this last act, the significance of the war horse in projecting dominance over an enemy had come to an end.

In ancient times kings entered a city with might and power, riding astride a war horse. Their authority and right of rule were clearly established through their capacity to make war against all enemies. In contrast, Zechariah's prophecy describes the arrival of a king who's coming is entirely new in character and completely misunderstood. A king is coming who will ride astride a colt, the foal of a donkey. Unlike the haughty nature of other kings, this Messiah was characterized as gentle, righteous, and having salvation. The people of Jerusalem might easily wonder how any king could establish his authority in meekness. And yet Zechariah called the daughters of Jerusalem to rejoice because this king would also bring true peace on earth.

In our age, peace is something hoped for but never achieved. So, are we to conclude that Zechariah's prophecy was only half-right? He described the arrival of Jesus the Messiah with great accuracy, and yet chapter 9 verse 10 describes an end to war and predicts that peace will prevail across the entire earth. Only now do we realize that we live between the two parts of Zechariah's prophetic time-line. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at His first coming was a pledge of the full accomplishment of this prophecy at His second coming.

Alison and Don Greene



December 9

Day 13

No music selection for today

Light for Blind Eyes - Isaiah 35:5-6

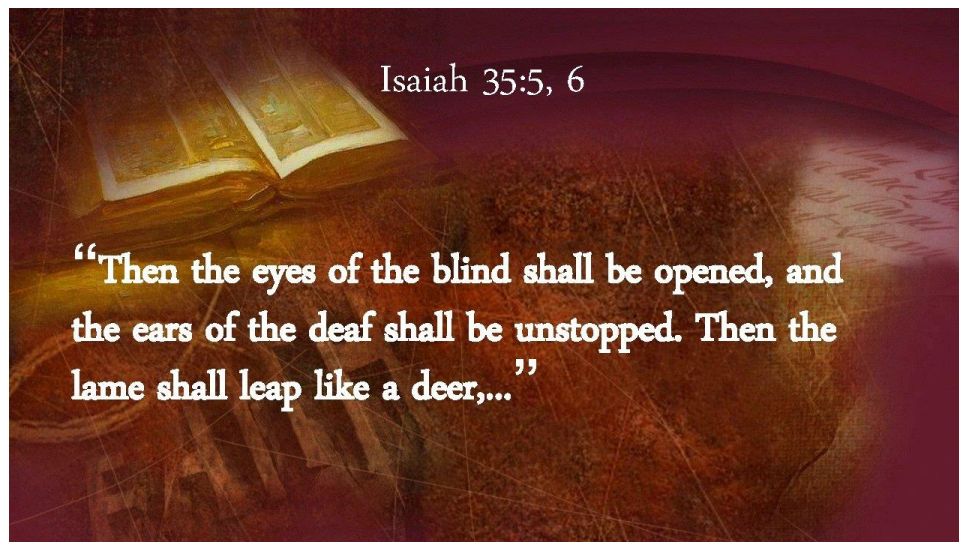
*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness
shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.*

Oh, the ills, the aches, the pains and imperfections of life on this earth. As older folks we have reached a stage in life where we have started to experience (in most cases, in a really minor way) what it is like to be blind, deaf, lame, and mute. Think cataracts, think artificial knees, and think about a mind that simply cannot dredge up the right word for your tongue. If you have not been there, you will be.

But God sent His Son to earth to deal with our greatest affliction, our sin. To demonstrate that He really was the promised Messiah and Redeemer, and to show that He had power over sin and death, Jesus healed. He healed the blind, the deaf, the lame, the mute. The New Testament is full of His healing. In Matthew 11:5, Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist to tell John that “the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” When Jesus fixed your bad knee there was no recovery time, no rehab—immediately the lame would “leap like a deer.” People heard the gospel, people believed, and they praised God.

So, Jesus fulfills this prophecy—in part. He came, He died, He rose again, He ascended into Heaven, He promised to come back, and He will! And then, or when we join Him in Heaven, all glory will break loose and there will be “Light for Blind Eyes” and “streams in the desert.” And not for just a few, but for all the saints. Formerly blind eyes will see Him like never before, and formerly mute tongues will praise Him with a new song.

Ray and Kay Neathery



December 10

Day 14

[Click here for music selection](#)

He shall feed His flock - Isaiah 40:11

*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.*

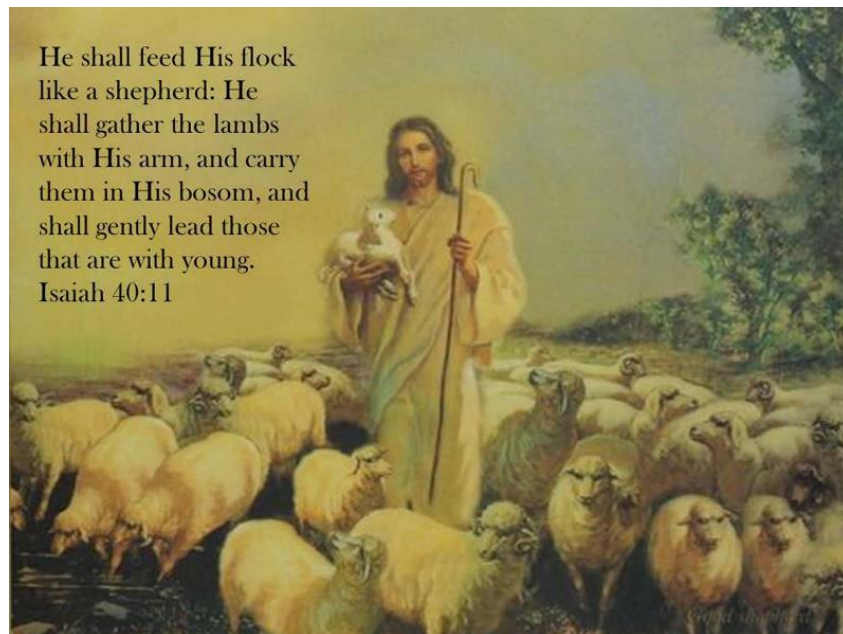
The responsibilities and character of a Shepherd appear extensively throughout the Bible. In Psalms 80:1, God is referred to as the “Shepherd of Israel.” In John 10:11, Christ is the “good Shepherd.” Matthew Henry says, “The same hand that rules with the strong hand of a prince, leads and feeds with the kind hand of a Shepherd.”

In the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah, the prophet delivers warnings of pending wrath to those who have turned their backs on the Lord and are worshiping false gods. In Chapter 40, Isaiah begins to comfort the believers by telling them that their God will never abandon them and will be there to comfort and care for them.

The same words can be applied throughout history and certainly to the present as we continually turn to false gods to solve our problems without realizing that the short-term answers and short-term gains that may be realized with wealth, fame, and power will not last and cannot offer the great reward, the eternal Salvation that comes only from walking with our Lord, Jesus the Christ.

What I conclude from this reflection is this: rather than spending my days anguishing over the direction our country and the world seem to be taking, I will continue to know that God is in control and that He will never leave me or anyone else who believes and asks Him to come into their lives.

Dave and Carol Smith



December 11

Third Sunday of Advent

Day 15

JOY

[Click here for music selection](#)

*Joy to the world, the Lord has come.
Let earth receive her king.*

In Luke 2:8-14 we read of the Announcement of Jesus by the angels: “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night” (Luke 2:8). The appearance of the angels terrified the shepherds, but an angel said, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10). The shepherds went to Bethlehem, where they met Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, confirming what the angels had said. “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told” (Luke 2:20).

The passage in Luke tells us little about the shepherds who decided to go and find this baby in a manger, but we know they were joyful. These were the shepherds who raised the special lambs that were used for Passover sacrifice at the Temple for the sins of the people. They were given the remarkable opportunity to meet Jesus, “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World” (John 1:29).

We go through seasons of silence from God, but then God shows up in some amazing way: a long-awaited answer to prayer, a phone call from a friend, unexpected financial provisions. These are reminders that God’s plan is secure, personal echoes of the experience of the shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem.

God’s surprises often result in our glorifying and praising God for who He is and all that He is doing. Though we can only imagine what the shepherds felt, we can all rejoice in God’s blessings and God’s grace.

Daniel Patrick



***His yoke is easy, and His burden is light* – Matthew 11:30**

For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.

This is part of a larger passage (Matthew 11:28-30) in which Jesus tells all who are weary and burdened to come to Him for rest. Jesus was offering to relieve the oppressive religious laws that the Pharisees laid on the backs of the people.

The burdensome weight of self-righteousness and legalistic law-keeping came from the Jewish leaders, not from God, and no amount of law-keeping can bridge the gap between our sinfulness and God's holiness.

The good news is that Jesus promises to all of us who come to Him, that He will give us rest from the burden of trying to earn our way into heaven and will give us rest from the oppressive yoke of self-righteousness and legalism. Jesus encourages us who are "heavy laden" to take His yoke upon ourselves, and in so doing we will find rest for our souls. The yoke of Jesus is light and easy to carry because it is the yoke of repentance and faith followed by a singular commitment to follow Him.

So how do we identify with an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God? How do we know He can identify with us — with all our trials? Through Jesus. He came to mankind in the season we celebrate as Christmas.

Now... our yoke is easy; our burden is light. Jesus bridged the gap!

Have a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and a Joyous Eternity.

Bill and Carol Ceclre



December 13

Day 17

[Click here for music selection](#)

BEHOLD! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - John 1:29

Can't you just hear John the Baptist loudly proclaiming these words to the crowd as Jesus is approaching them? "Everyone look! Do you see who's coming! I've been telling you about the one who is coming who is far above me, who existed before I was even born. There He is! Look! Look!"

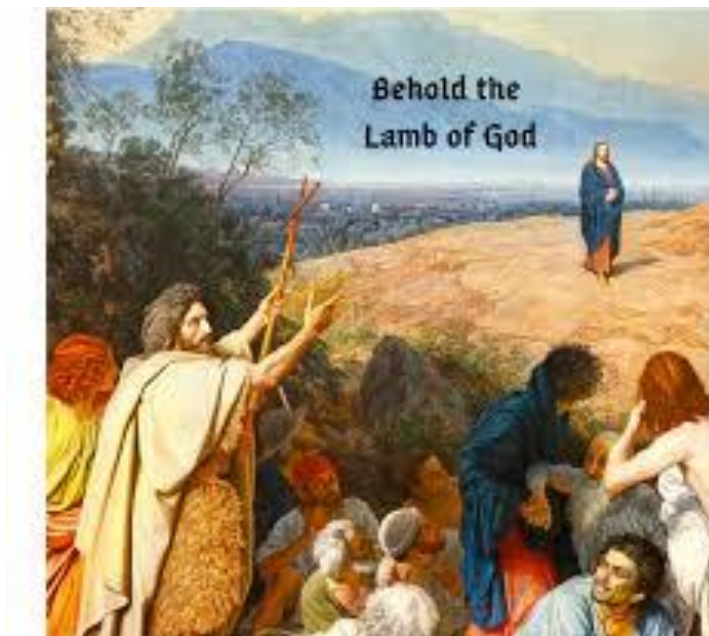
John the Baptist had been describing the coming of the Messiah, the True Light, to all his followers. He'd been testifying that he was not the light and that he only came as a witness to the True Light. John wanted his followers to believe in the name of Jesus and to believe He was the Lamb of God—the one and only, forever sacrifice for their sins. And because of His ultimate sacrifice, they would receive grace heaped upon more grace. John wanted them to become children of God. He desperately wanted them to recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

A very similar situation at The Worship Place is upon us. It's Advent. And we're preparing for the coming of Jesus—not only into our church and our community but also into our hearts. Do you think we will recognize Him in the midst of all the celebrations and activities? Are we prepared to tell our family and neighbors to "Look! Look! Here comes Jesus!" Will we take the opportunity to testify like John that Jesus is the True Light, the true meaning for which we celebrate Christmas?

Father, God,

Be in my heart and mind not just today, but every day, and guide me to tell someone about the coming of Your Son, Jesus.

Ken and DeBe Wantzloeben



December 14

Day 18

[Click here for music selection](#)

Surely, He hath borne our griefs – Isaiah 53:4-6

*Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities;
Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
And with His wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

The verses above from Isaiah about the Suffering Servant (referring to Jesus) reveal to us important things about Him that we need to understand. These prophetic verses suggest that many people of His time saw Him as a victim without power. He was despised and rejected by men. He was not valued by His community. Jesus experienced not only the pain of physical suffering but also the pain of rejection. YET, and this is everything, He willingly carried our grief and sorrow and was crushed for our iniquities to atone for our sins. And we all have sinned.

The Christmas season can be special with its memories, traditions, and time with family and friends. But among us are those who, for whatever reason, do not find joy in this season. They are experiencing the pain of suffering or even the pain of rejection and of feeling like they have no value. Maybe you are one of them. So, to those who love this season and to those of heavy heart, we can lift up Joy – the Joy of knowing that we are all unconditionally loved by our Savior who gave everything, absolutely everything, for us.

On the third Sunday of Advent, we lit the Shepherd's Candle, or as it is called, the "Candle of Joy". May we treasure with joy in our hearts all that Jesus has done for us by coming to this earth. May we wait with joy for His return. May we serve Him by seeing others through His eyes.

Mary Campbell



December 15

Day 19

No music selection for today

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him – Psalm 22:7-8

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted in the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

As we look ahead to the birth of Christ, we must also look ahead to His crucifixion where He secured salvation for us. Charles Spurgeon refers to Psalm 22 as the “Psalm of the Cross.” The Psalm is written by King David approximately one thousand years before the birth of Christ. Although King David describes his own sufferings, he prophetically looks ahead to the crucifixion. Psalm 22 begins with, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When we compare the Psalm with the New Testament gospels we see our suffering Savior repeating the words of King David from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” in reference to Himself.

Our verses today focus on the cruel mocking hurled at our crucified Lord. From the religious leaders to the Roman soldiers, they all scoffed at and ridiculed Him at a time when He was in anguish and about to die. Their behavior was malicious and full of contempt. They used facial gestures to show their disdain and laughed at His sufferings. They made fun of His faith and the love He and His Father shared.

King David could relate to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and in a very small way, so can we. Jesus looked ahead to the glory He would once again share with His Father. He conquered death so that we may also look ahead to eternal life in everlasting glory!

Gary and Jackie Curran



December 16

Day 20

[Click here for music selection](#)

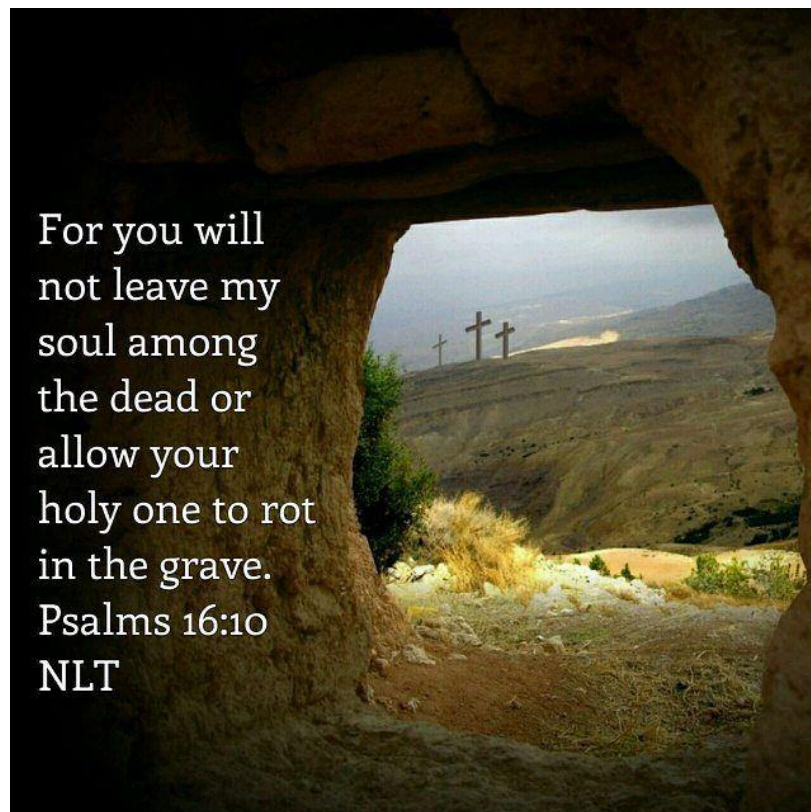
But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell. - Psalm 16:10

Today, let us look at the promise of everlasting life as anticipated by David and later presented and made clear by our Savior Jesus Christ. Think about heaven and spending eternity in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was at the birth of Christ that God's plan for humanity emerged and changed history forever.

Psalms and others in the Old Testament wondered what would happen after death. They lived at a time when life extending health science was not available. Death was mysterious to them, and they referred to a dark place called Sheol where dead people might go. They did not want to go there and asked God what possible value there might be in death. Questions about the truth of their righteous deeds, worship, and relationship to God troubled them. But for those who believe in the promise of eternity after life on earth, no proof is required. While those who do not, no proof will ever be satisfactory. David made his leap of faith based on his deep faith and reverence to God who is infinite in unlimited dimensions, to include the power that can redeem someone from Sheol. Peter and Paul both saw Psalms 16:10 as a prediction that Jesus would rise from the dead as stated in Acts 2:27 and 13:35.

When we celebrate Christmas, let us remember the great gift that the birth of Jesus brought forth to all people and that Heaven is an extension of God's constant love.

Roger and Sulin Best



December 17

Day 21

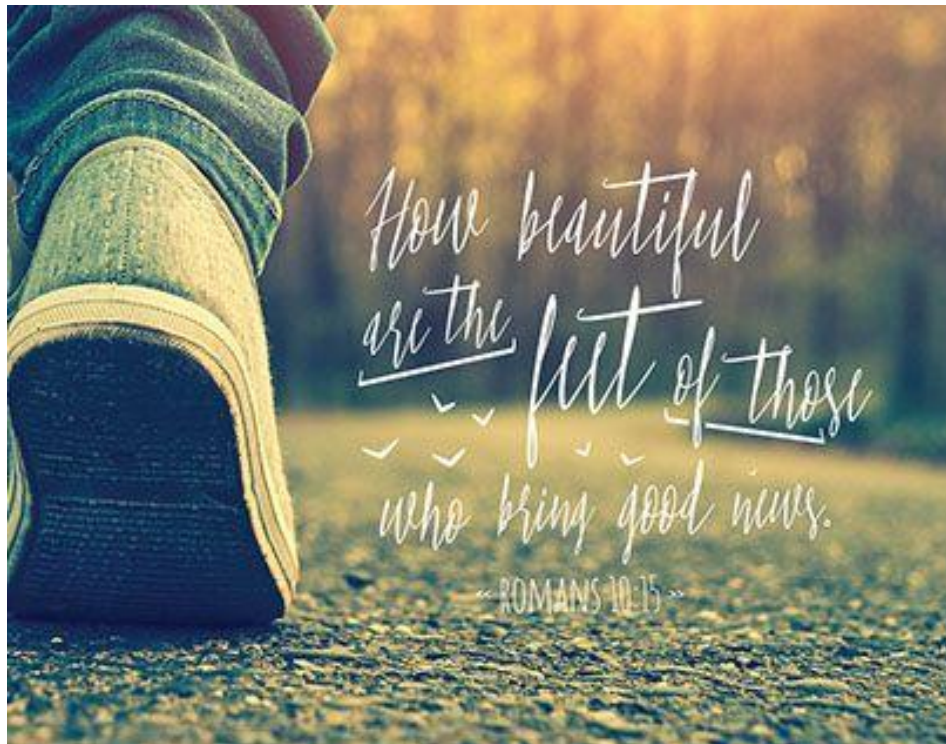
[Click here for music selection](#)

“How beautiful the feet of them.....” - Romans 10:15

Although our feet are indeed beautiful, that is not the reason for Romans 10:15. Paul’s full statement is: “How beautiful the feet of those who bring good news!” This statement is simply a requote of a line from Isaiah that has to do with spreading news throughout the land. In ancient times, messengers were sent to the king and to major cities to deliver news about battles or attacks from other nations. The messengers often ran a long way, and their feet became dirty and bloody. But when the message was good news, those tortured and bleeding feet were considered beautiful. So, the prophet Isaiah used that imagery to describe a messenger who brought the good news of salvation and peace, announcing “Your God Reigns.”

Centuries after Isaiah’s time, God sent his son Jesus to offer the chance for salvation and everlasting life. This is clearly life-changing good news, but there are those who are unaware or do not understand this simple reality. So, the opportunity and the need exist for each of us to spread the good news and have beautiful feet.

John and Elaine Cielo



December 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Day 22

LOVE

[Click here for music selection](#)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 1 John 4:7-9

We are entering the week in the Advent season commonly reserved for reflecting upon the “love of God”. Specifically, we recall and celebrate the immeasurable love that God demonstrates in sending His one and only Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin. Though during this season, we celebrate Jesus’ birth; we know that His destiny was to die for our sins and for the sins of the world. To pay such a high price for me and you...such is the lavish, limitless, love of God for us. Experiencing His love should, and is meant to, compel us to love others in the same way that He has loved us.

Leo Tolstoy wrote, “We think there are circumstances when one may deal with human beings without love. But there are none. You may deal with things without love. Cut trees, bake bricks, hammer iron, but you cannot deal with human beings without love. For in the moment that you do they are no longer human beings. They are things — mere commodities.”

Thank Jesus now for His extravagant love for you. Pray that He would in some way help you to understand how immeasurable His love actually is. Then, today and throughout this week, demonstrate His love to those you meet.

Terry Goodnight



December 19

Day 23

[Click here for music selection](#)

Alleluia: for the Lord reigneth. - Revelation 19:6, 11:15, 19:16

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds they learned the good news of great joy for all peoples. Christ the Lord was born!

There was suddenly with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men. The message from the heavenly host brought awe and trembling, then wonder and joy. What a wonderful gift the shepherds were given!

We have the advantage of knowing the whole story, of knowing that all mankind received the astonishing gift. Christ was born, Christ died, Christ will come again. Christ reigns and offers salvation! How comforting to us to have that knowledge. It makes our challenges in this world easier because we know that our God is bigger than any of our problems. Salvation, power, and glory belong to our God.

When He comes again in all his glory, there will be a great multitude crying out, "Hallelujah! The Lord our God the Almighty reigns! King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!"

Pat and Tom Russo



December 20

Day 24

[Click here for music selection](#)

For I know that my redeemer liveth – Job 19:25-26, 1Cor 15:20

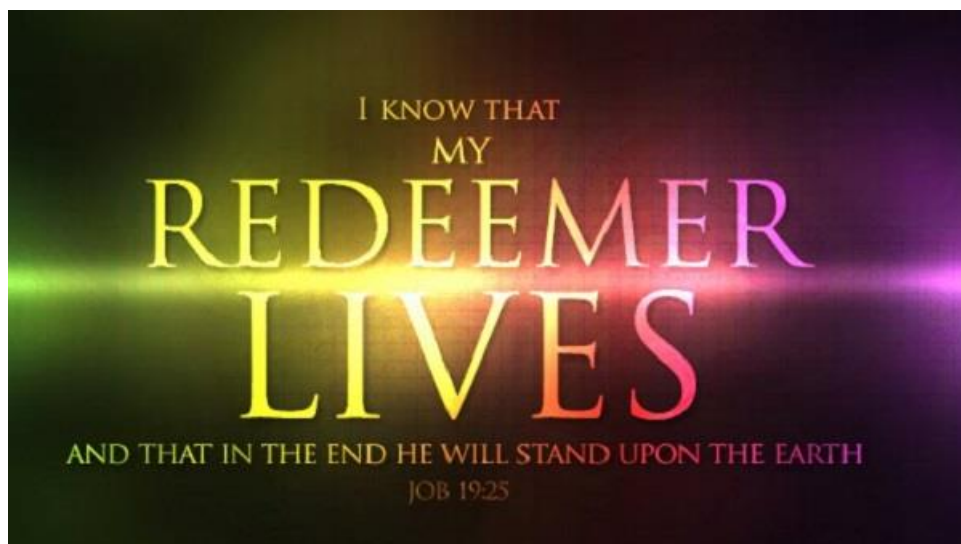
*For I know that my redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:
And though after my skin worms destroy this body,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God.
But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

Job did not understand why his life was falling apart. He had been a wealthy and prosperous man, with a large family, but Satan accused Job of serving God only for the blessings that God gave him. To refute Satan, God allowed him to take all those things away—even Job’s health. As he sat on an ash heap, stripped of all his blessings, with his friends accusing him of some hidden sin that was causing all his heartache, Job proclaimed, “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

In ancient Israel a redeemer was a family member who bought a slave’s way to freedom or who took care of a widow. Job had an abiding faith in his Redeemer who lives, and who would make things right for him, so that one day, he would see God.

Jesus redeemed us by paying a price for our sins with His death on the cross. We too can have the kind of outlook Job had because we have a Redeemer who lives. When things happen to us or our loved ones that we don’t think are deserved, we can be assured that this life is not all there is. Our suffering in this life is just a “flicker” of a moment compared to eternity in heaven. If we keep our faith in our Redeemer who lives, we can KNOW that no matter what happens to us in this life, things will work out for us in the end. But we can only be assured of that if we know the Redeemer who Lives.

Barry and Cindy Tripp



December 21

Day 25

[Click here for music selection](#)

Since by man came death – 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

*For since by man came death,
By man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die,
Even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

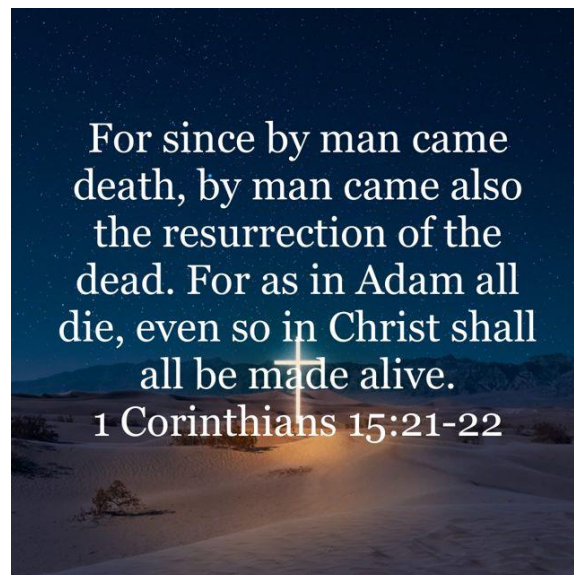
These words from Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth served at least two purposes: reducing strife within the church and, more importantly, emphasizing the central truth of Christianity. The words inform us and bless us still.

Paul was addressing quarrels among church members by emphasizing eternal truths beyond debate for believers. Preeminent among such truths, overshadowing all else, stands the revelation that the sin of Adam and Eve, which brought death into the Garden of Eden and resulted in a penalty inherited by every human soul that came after them, can be washed away by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. As Christ was resurrected, we can be also. This central truth of Christianity, Paul reminded the Corinthians, supersedes all quarrels and dissension. As Adam and Eve brought sin and death into the world, another man, Jesus Christ, made it possible to be liberated from sin and the finality of death.

The revelation of God's mercy and God's grace renders all else secondary. That revelation illuminates a path to resolving our differences and to addressing our unbelief. And above all, we can each find eternal life.

Advent provides us the opportunity to reflect on Christ's role in our lives and on the miracle of His birth and resurrection. He came for each of us, and Paul reminds us that His sacrifice changes everything.

Karen and Tony Hartle



December 22

Day 26

[Click here for music selection](#)

But thanks be to God—1 Corinthians 15:57

*But thanks be to God, which giveth us
The victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*

Though marred by sin and death, human beings are still created in God's image and fashioned in our mother's womb by His sovereign care. But we still face the hard reality of our weakness and failure.

We cannot be like God in his most defining attributes, holiness. We sin, we rebel, we fail to meet our own standards, let alone those Jesus gave us; we do what we know we should not do. We neglect the important matters of God's will, knit pick at nothing; and with our words, we hurt and injure those we love. Who can save us from these bitter and limiting realities in which we find ourselves?

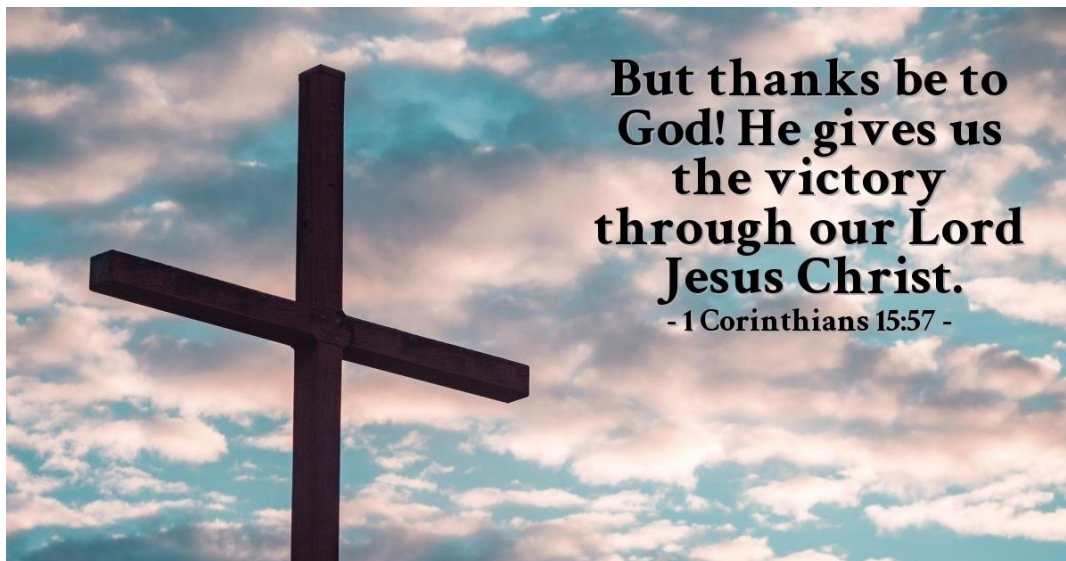
O wretched man that I am!

Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus our Lord. – (Romans 7:24-25a)

Praise and hallelujahs go to Jesus when we trust Him as our Messiah and Lord. He can save us from these evils and make us ready to live a life of blessings to others and of submission to God.

Roger and Ev Rhoderick



If God is for us, who can be against us? - Romans 8:31-32

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?
 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,
 how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?
 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.
 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is
 at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.*

Romans 8:31 is on just about every list of encouraging Bible verses. “What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

But what are “these things?” Is the verse really saying that we as believers will never face opposition or failure? Christian experience amply demonstrates that many people can be against us; persecution is a very real problem for Christians all over the world. So, what is Paul trying to tell us?

In Romans 8:1, Paul explains, “Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Paul goes on to expound upon life in the Spirit. “But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10). He explains that we are God’s children.

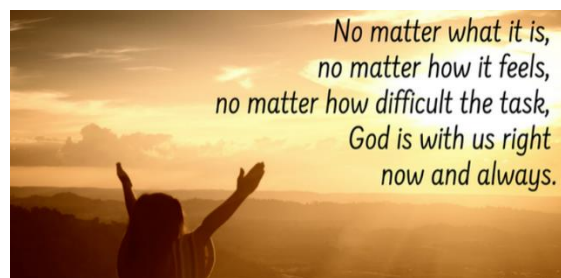
“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his **glory**” (Romans 8:17). Paul explains that our current sufferings pale in comparison to the coming glory. The Spirit will be with us to help us, and God works all things for good. The Christian is destined to be conformed to the image of the Son – called, justified, and glorified (Romans 8:29-30).

Paul is trying to tell us that because we are children of God, nothing can separate us from His love. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

This verse gives us hope, not that we will always prevail, but that our eternal destiny and the love of God are secure. Though we may suffer, we will not be destroyed. No matter how bad things seem, we must remember that “God is for us.” He loves us deeply. We are His children, with Jesus as our oldest brother (Romans 8:29).

This passage provides a powerful reminder of God’s great love and excellent plans for us.

Tim and Diane Hutto



Worthy is the Lamb that was slain – Revelation 5:12-13

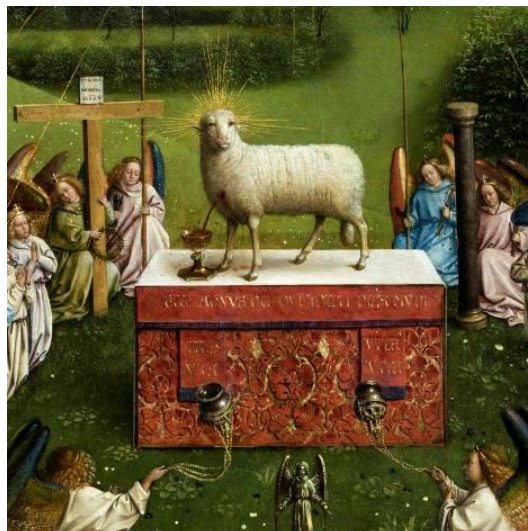
*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,
“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

Scripture proclaims it. Christ’s actions in becoming a man and walking this earth display it. His decision to go to the cross in our place seals it. **He is worthy!** Worthy of all the honor and glory. Worthy of our time, our talents, and our gifts. Believer, we would never publicly besmirch His worthiness and His holiness. We would never say out loud that He isn’t worthy. But how do our actions declare His worthiness? How does our every day, walking around life reflect Him to others?

Before we can impact others for the cause of Christ, we must demonstrate how He has impacted us. Jesus is worthy of our praise simply because He is “the Lamb who was slain.” But that is simply where our adoration begins. Make a list of everything that He has done for you this very day that makes Him worthy of your praise and adoration. Expand the list to include this week, this season, this year. Unexpected, and even traumatic, experiences have brought unimagined changes to our lives over the years, yet our Lord is never taken by surprise. He is ever present, providing us with strength, wisdom, and the peace of His presence to get us through. What are some specific ways that He has brought you through the hard times?

Cry out to Him this Advent season and thank Him for everything that He has done in your life. For He is worthy! If we keep silent, the very rocks will cry out in our place. Don’t let the rocks sing your song of praise to the Lord! Open your mouth AND use your life to declare blessing and honor and glory and power to Him forever!

Shanna Goodnight



December 25

Christmas Day

[Click here for music selection](#)

King of kings and Lord of lords – Revelation 11:15, 19:16

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever. Revelation 11:15

Millions of people mark Christmas day as special. It is a time to celebrate. But as we remember the entrance of God's Son into our world, we look forward to His return and eternal reign as King of all kings!

One of many Christmas hymns I find moving is "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." There is one melody I prefer over others, but what strikes me are the lyrics.

And in despair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said, "For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells, more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth he sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men."

Those words are only true because of the promise of Christ. The day is coming when the hosts of heaven will shout "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God," as the rider on the white horse returns bringing justice.

*On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written:
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:16*

The one who is our peace will cause the right to prevail...forever. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Senior Pastor John Beukema





MISSION, VISION, & CORE VALUES

Approved April 27, 2022

Mission

Go, make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded. Matt. 28:19-20



Christ-Centered

- We value the good news of Jesus as the reason for and the goal of everything we do.

Biblical Truth

- We value relevant Bible teaching that penetrates hearts, renews minds, and transforms lives toward growing Christ-likeness.

Genuine Worship

- We value worship that proclaims the glory of the triune God; celebrating his holy name, great power, and sovereign will.

Sacrificial Mission

- We value service and outreach that demonstrates our love for God by ministering to those in need and sharing the gospel with those who don't know Jesus.

Authentic Fellowship

- We value a faith family that shares spiritual gifts, personal resources, mutual acceptance, and caring accountability to encourage each other to become more like Jesus.

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Traditional Worship
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