ADVENT 2026

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE STORY OF REDEMPTION

From the Fall to the Manger,
God's Promise Fulfilled in Christ



DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 25

HUNTERS GLEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Foreward

When we tell the Christmas story, we usually start with Mary and Joseph. We talk about Mary when she was told she had found favor with God and would bear a child. We recall Joseph waking from a dream and considering leaving Mary but ultimately deciding to take her as his wife. Both Mary and Jospeh had to trust a word from God before they could see the promise fulfilled. This realization means that Mary and Joseph stand at the end of a long line of people who had learned to live by a promise from God.

This Advent, we're going back to where the Christmas promise started. In Genesis 3, just as sin enters the world, God gives a promise. One day, a descendant of the woman will crush the serpent's head. Adam and Eve had barely begun to understand what sin had cost them, and God had already spoken of the day the serpent would be defeated.

There's a long road from that garden promise to the little town of Bethlehem. Along the journey, God tells Abraham that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him. He promises David a kingdom that will endure. Isaiah tells a people walking in darkness that a child will be born to them. Imagine hearing those words, teaching them to your children, and knowing you might spend your whole life waiting for what God had promised. Generation after generation did just that.

Then one day, the promise comes to Mary and Joseph in words they can hardly believe. Mary hears that this son she will give birth to will sit on David's throne and that his kingdom will never end. Joseph is told to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. The promises that had been spoken for generations were now taking shape. When Mary wraps her son in cloths and lays him in a manger, the garden promise people have been waiting for is now close enough to hold.

Advent gives us time to take the long winding road to Bethlehem. We hear the promise in the garden and see that promise take on flesh in the manger baby. We remember that the child Joseph named Jesus would give his life on the cross but three days later he would rise from the grave. So, as we celebrate his first coming, we look forward to his return with the same trust Mary and Joseph had to learn. God keeps his promises.

From November 29 through Christmas Day, A Journey Through the Story of Redemption will take us through that story one day at a time. I'm grateful to our Hunters Glen staff for writing these devotional thoughts that accompany each day's Scripture. As we read together, let's take our time with the promises. When we arrive at the manger on Christmas Day, may we hear the good news with the wonder of those who heard it first.

"A Savior was born for you."

Pastor Jason

November 29
The World Needed a Savior
Genesis 3:1–15

Christmas begins in the Garden.

If we fail to understand why the world needed a Savior to be born in Bethlehem, we will never fully appreciate the Christ of Christmas.

The effects of sin were immediate. Adam and Eve hid from God and covered themselves in shame…and they blamed each other. The relationship they had enjoyed with their Creator was broken. What began with one act of disobedience was about to ripple through every part of creation.

Christmas is about…

1. _____ _____ His _____ _____.

Taylor Johnson said, "God responds to our sin with his promise."
Christ's birth is the introduction of salvation and the possibility of returning to what is right.

God had a plan to rescue humanity. That plan unfolds through Advent.

Reflection Question
How does Christmas change for you, when you pause and consider Christmas began in the garden rather than in Bethlehem?

Prayer
Father, thank You for the rescue plan you began in the garden and fulfilled through Christ's birth. Thank you for pursuing us and desiring to restore us.

Pastor Jason

November 29
The World Needed a Savior
Genesis 3:1–15
Sermon Notes

November 30
Created for God's Presence
Genesis 1:26–31

God created man in His own image. We are like God more than anything in creation. He created man and woman, and He said they were very good. All His other creations He said were good, but man was very good. God had made a wonderful world with everything we would need - air to breathe, light for day, darkness for rest, water to drink and for play, all the food to eat, animals for companionship and love, and He blesses us and gives us dominion over all the other living things He created.

He wants to be near us, to talk to us, to be a part of our lives - to have a relationship with us. But man ruined it. We had to have it our way. Humanity did the one thing that God said not to do. Do you see that in your own life? Do you want things that you should not have, or try to do everything your way? How is that working for you?

We may look at our lives and think God does not care about us - that our lives are so hard and God does not care. Well, think again. God made it perfect. Everything was good - remember in Genesis man was the one to step away. Man was the one that made the gap between us and God. God has been working every day, year after year, to work everything out to make things right, so that we can have a relationship with Him. He is working around all our sins and messes to get us back to Him. He even sent His only Son to die a horrible death to pay for OUR sins. He is the one that is actually doing all the work, and yet we still sometimes are tempted to think he doesn't care about us.

One day God will create a new world and a new heaven and those of us who have put our faith and trust in Jesus will be able to live with Him. We will be able to live eternally in that perfect world. Think about in what and whom you put your faith and trust. How many times do people or things let you down? God wants a relationship with you, and He is working all things together for you because you are so important to Him. Isn't it time to put your faith and trust in the one true God and see what He can do in your life?

God created humanity to live in joyful fellowship with Him. To appreciate what was lost, we must next see how sin entered God's good creation.

Prayer
God thank You so much for the world You have made for me and all that is in it. Thank You for wanting a relationship with me, even when I mess up. Thank you for never giving up on me and working through my sins to get me back to you. Thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your only Son to die in my place so that I have a way back to You. Help me to be the best person I can be and help me to stay close to You each day. I love You Lord!

Terri Herron

December 1
Everything Changed
Genesis 3:1–13

One of the hardest parts of being a parent is watching your child realize that the world isn't as safe or simple as they once believed. Maybe it's the loss of a grandparent, a friendship that falls apart, or the first time they experience betrayal. As much as we'd like to protect them, there comes a moment when innocence gives way to reality.

Genesis 3 records that moment for all humanity.

God had created a world that was "very good." Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him and with one another. There was no fear, no shame, no conflict, and no death. But when they chose to trust the serpent's voice instead of God's, everything changed.

The effects were immediate. They hid from God and covered themselves in shame…and they blamed each other. The relationship they had enjoyed with their Creator was broken. What began with one act of disobedience was about to ripple through every part of creation.

We still see evidence of brokenness every day. Broken families, injustice, disease, loneliness, anxiety, and death all remind us that something isn't the way that God intended. People often look for solutions in education, technology, politics, or personal improvement. Those things can help us as we navigate our daily lives, but they cannot repair what sin has broken.

The Bible doesn't leave us wondering why the world feels so fractured. It tells us the truth—not to leave us without hope, but to prepare us for the hope God provides.

Sin fractured every part of God's good world, leaving humanity separated from its Creator. Yet even in judgment, God was already preparing to reveal His grace.

Where do you see the effects of humanity's brokenness most clearly, and how does that deepen your appreciation for God's promise of redemption?

Prayer
Father, thank You for telling us the truth about our broken world and our own hearts. Help us recognize our need for Your grace and to place our hope in the Savior that You promised from the very beginning.

Stuart Sumrall

December 2
A Promise in the Darkness
Genesis 3:14-15

The very first Christmas promise in the Bible is not found in the sleepy streets of Bethlehem, but in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 3:14-15, after Adam and Eve's sin entered the world, God spoke a word of unexpected hope to the serpent: the woman's future child, meaning Jesus, would crush its head. Advent began here—in the dark shadow of our need, with God promising a Savior.

God did not wait for us to fix our brokenness. His judgment on the serpent was a grace-filled rescue. A descendant of the woman would rise to fight for us. Victory was declared long before a single Advent candle was ever lit.

The serpent would strike the Savior's heel at the cross, meaning the nails through the feet of Jesus. Jesus' suffering and death were real, but that was not the end. Christ rose again and crushed the power of sin and death!

At Christmas, that ancient promise came true. Jesus was born in a quiet stable and He lived a sinless life. On the cross, the serpent bruised His heel and Jesus suffered and died. But on the third day, He rose again! In His victory, He crushed the power of sin and death for all who believe.

This Advent season, we look back at the manger with joy. We also look forward to Christ's return when all wrongs will be made right.

God's story of redemption began in a garden and ends in a glorious new creation.

Prayer
Heavenly Father, thank You for Your faithful plan of redemption. Even in the darkest moments of the Garden, You promised a Rescuer. Thank You for sending Jesus to crush the power of sin and death. This Advent, help us rest in Your unchanging love and wait with joyful hope for the day Christ returns. Amen.

Jeff Bennett

December 3
Sin Runs Deep
Genesis 6:5–8

Sometimes we underestimate how serious sin really is. We might look at the world around us and think, "People aren't perfect, but surely we're basically good." Genesis 6 gives us a much different picture. It is a difficult passage to read because it forces us to see sin for what it really is.

By this point in God's story, humanity had multiplied across the earth, but so had its rebellion against God. Genesis tells us that "every inclination of the human heart was only evil all the time." Sin wasn't simply an occasional mistake; it had infected the human heart. The same hearts that were created in God's image had become deeply corrupted by sin.

God was grieved that He had made humanity. His response reminds us of something we often forget: God is holy, and sin is detestable to Him. Sin isn't merely breaking a rule; it is rebellion against the holy God who created us. God's judgment on the earth would be severe, but even in judgment, we see His grace. "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."

Noah wasn't the answer to humanity's sin problem. God's grace was. And that same grace would ultimately lead to God's greatest provision: Jesus. Unlike Noah, Jesus was perfectly righteous. He lived the life we could never live and willingly took upon Himself the judgment our sin deserved. At the cross, God's holiness and God's mercy meet.

Sin runs deep, but God's grace runs deeper. The flood reminds us that God takes sin seriously; the cross reminds us that He took our sin upon Himself because He loves us.

Humanity's sin had become so deep that God's judgment was unavoidable, yet His grace preserved Noah and continued His redemptive plan. One day, God would provide a perfect Savior who would bear sin's judgment once and for all.

Where are you tempted to minimize the seriousness of sin, and how does the cross help you see both the holiness of God and the depth of His grace?

Prayer
Father, help me see sin the way You see it and never take Your holiness or Your grace for granted. Thank You for Jesus, who took the judgment I deserved and made a way for me to be reconciled to You. Amen.

Bo Faulkner

December 4
Grace After Judgment
Genesis 9:8-17

In my early 20s, during a particularly heavy storm, I was involved in a major car accident. Sliding into the driver's seat following this experience brought concerns and doubts I had not previously considered. I was now confronted with the possibility of another accident each time I put the key in the ignition and I longed for the reassurance that I would arrive safely at my destination.

In Genesis 9:8-17 Noah has just survived a devastating experience as the waters rose and the earth was flooded with only the ark's inhabitants surviving. God's judgment was upon humanity and Noah had a front row seat. As Noah and his family exited the ark and saw the destruction, he probably needed reassurance of God's grace and redemption. Did Noah become anxious every time clouds formed or rain began to fall? Did he worry about God's judgment? Throughout verses 8-17, God promises Noah that He will never destroy the earth by flood again. He tells Noah that whenever he sees a rainbow, it will serve as a reminder of this promise. In fact, seven times He uses the word "covenant" to emphasize to Noah that He is faithful and keeps His promises. This promise to Noah was regarding the physical destruction of the flood but it reminds us that we are assured of a spiritual promise of deliverance from judgment through Christ. As we experience challenges and trials, we can rest assured that God is faithful to keep His promises. We have been delivered and can rejoice in the grace and peace of our Savior Christ Jesus.

God's covenant with Noah reminds us that judgment is never God's final word. Though humanity would continue to rebel, God's plan to redeem the nations was still moving forward.

As you reflect on Noah's story, what storms are forming in your life? Could any anxiety be alleviated by remembering God's promises and looking for a rainbow?

Prayer
Father God, thank You for your covenant promise. Thank You for Your son, Jesus, who lovingly sacrificed himself so that I can have the assurance of eternal life. Help me find peace in remembering Your faithfulness and grace. Amen.

Kim Daniels

December 5
Scattered Nations
Genesis 11:1-9

The Christmas season brings excitement and anticipation, especially for children, of gifts they will receive and time with family. There are parties, cooking, shopping, decorating, and so many extra activities to enjoy. We often refer to this as the "hustle and bustle" of the season. If we allow it to happen, the busyness can overshadow what should be our focus as we celebrate Jesus.

In Genesis 11:4, it was proclaimed, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Even before God confused their language, they were very confused! They were filled with pride! They were not building a tower to honor God, but to get to Heaven by their own hard work! This is not what God had planned. God chose to confuse their language so they could not communicate and build a tower to honor themselves. Through this, many nations were made and scattered throughout the earth.

The nations were scattered because of pride and rebellion, but God was already preparing to call one man through whom every nation would one day be blessed.

God had another plan for Heaven, a perfect plan, a plan of love and sacrifice, a plan to redeem confused people that tried to do things their own way and failed. People can never work hard enough or build a tower high enough to get to Heaven. God brought Heaven to us in the form of a tiny baby born in a manger. Baby Jesus, our Redeemer, lived a perfect life and gave Himself for us. He took the punishment for the wrong choices we make so that we may enjoy eternity with Him in Heaven.

What "hard work" might you be doing that overshadows experiencing God's great love for you through our precious Redeemer?

Prayer
Dear Jesus, thank You for Your presence here with me now. Help me to experience Christmas differently this year with more of You and less of me.

Beth Singleton

December 6
God's Promise to His People
Genesis 12:1-9

The promise God made Abraham became a promise to humanity.

The Advent season is all about waiting. Waiting is tough and requires preparation.

Christmas reminds us that our waiting results in a…

1. _____ _____ _____.

God promises Abraham a blessing of multiple generations throughout the stories of Genesis (12:3; 26:4; 28:14), and it's finally realized in the birth of Christ.

Sometimes in life we must wait for a promised reward.

There in the manger, the long-awaited promise that God had prepared His people for - and declared would come - had come.

Reflection Question
How have you seen God's promise(s) fulfilled in your life? Write them down!

Prayer
Father, thank You for promises and the blessings that come when we follow You, even to places that are unknown and scary. Help us to trust You because You always come through on Your promises. Thank You for the promise of Jesus.

Pastor Jason

December 6
God's Promise to His People
Genesis 12:1-9
Sermon Notes

December 7
Blessed to Bless
Genesis 12:1–3

Taylor. Cher. Ringo. Bono. Elvis. Oprah. We recognize each of them by a single name. Each became famous in a unique way, and each has experienced both the privileges and the pressures that come with being widely known. Yet in today's passage, we discover a vastly different kind of fame—one rooted not in personal achievement, but in God's gracious purpose.

In today's passage, we meet Abram at a life-changing moment: God invites him to leave the familiar and follow Him into a land yet to be revealed. Abram does not know every step ahead, but he can trust the One who is leading him. God promises to make Abram into a great nation, to bless him and his family, and even to make his name great or famous (NLT). Yet this blessing is not meant for Abram alone. God will bless him so that he can become a blessing, and through his family, blessing will reach others.

The promise may sound simple, but leaving everything familiar behind would have been daunting. Abram was called into the unknown, with no clear picture of how God would fulfill His promise to him and his family. And the promise was not just to Abram's immediate family. It was for all peoples of the earth. God was not only calling Abram and his family into covenant, but all nations and peoples of the earth.

For this to happen, Abram and his descendants needed great faith to continue believing in and trusting God's covenant. We see that faith throughout the Old Testament, and we see the covenant fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Today, we see its blessings reaching people from many different people groups who have come to faith in Christ. We also pray for those who do not yet know Him, asking that they, too, may come to faith.

God's covenant with Abraham reveals that His mission has always extended to every nation. But God's promise would require faith that trusted Him even when the future seemed impossible.

How can you and your family bless others this Christmas season?

Prayer
Father, thank You for the many blessings You give us. Please show me how I can be a blessing to others this Christmas season. Amen.

Meredith Archer

December 8
The Lord Will Provide
Genesis 22:1-14

Christmas has a way of bringing out the best of generosity in people. In our own church, we do a great job of providing for others through Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes that bring joy to children around the world. We have a toy drive that serves families in our community and provide Food Packs for a local elementary school. We do this to represent the greatest gift, which fulfills the greatest need of our hearts.

In Genesis 22:1-14, God gives us a very clear picture of His provision in a time of need through the faithfulness and trust of Abraham. God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Wow! What an ask! As a parent and grandparent, I cannot imagine the chaos that would be in my heart. Yet Abraham listened to his Heavenly Father and walked up the mountain in obedience. Trusting and walking. Setting an example for his son that he loved so much.

As the day progressed, Isaac asked, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." This young son trusted his earthly father. This brave dad trusted his Heavenly Father.

Continue with this story to see God's miraculous provision. As you do, think ahead to the story of Jesus, the ultimate provision for each of us. He is the Son that climbed a mountain carrying wood, a cross made of wood. He, too, trusted His Father, knowing God had a plan for the people He loves so much.

On Mount Moriah, God provided a substitute in Isaac's place, pointing forward to the greater sacrifice He Himself would one day provide. That pattern of redemption would become central to Israel's story.

You are one of those people He loves. Your redemption story begins with the Christmas story, a baby born with humble beginnings. Even Jesus grew as He trusted earthly parents and His Father in Heaven.

How are you trusting God in this Christmas season?

Prayer
Father, help me to be aware of Your presence and work in my life and the lives of my family members. Help me to trust You more and through my walk, point others to You. Amen.

Beth Singleton

December 9
A Lamb for God's People
Exodus 12:1–14

The story of the Passover is one of rescue, but it is also a story of sacrifice. God's people faced judgment, and God provided a way to spare them. Each household was to take a lamb—one without blemish—and place its blood on the doorposts. When God's judgment came through the land, He would "pass over" the homes marked by the blood of the lamb.

The lamb was not simply a symbol of Israel's deliverance that night. It pointed forward to something—and Someone—far greater.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd, but He is also **the Lamb of God**. The Passover lamb had to be perfect and without blemish. Jesus was the perfect, sinless sacrifice. He became our Passover Lamb, willingly giving His life so that we could be rescued from the judgment our sin deserves.

The Israelites could do nothing to make themselves safe that night except trust God's instructions and provision by placing the blood of the lamb where He instructed. Their safety was not based on their goodness. It was based on obedience and the blood.

In the same way, our salvation does not rest on how good we are, how many good things we have done, or whether we have lived a perfect life. It rests on Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. His blood covers our sin, and through Him, God's judgment passes over us.

What an incredible picture of grace.

The Israelites were told to stay inside the house marked by the blood. They were safe under God's provision. Today, we find our safety and salvation in Christ. His sacrifice paid the price we could never pay ourselves.

The Passover reminds us that redemption required more than rescuing God's people from temporary danger. It would require a righteous King who could deal with sin once and for all.

Jesus is that King. He is both our Shepherd, who leads us, and our Lamb, who gave Himself for us. When we look at the cross, we are reminded of the tremendous cost of our redemption—and the tremendous love of the One who paid it.

Where are you tempted to rely on your own goodness or efforts instead of resting in the finished work of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God?

Prayer:
Father, thank You for providing a way for us to be rescued, for sending Jesus, Your perfect Lamb, who was without sin and yet willingly gave His life for us. Thank You that we do not have to earn Your forgiveness or try to make ourselves worthy. Jesus paid the price for our sin, and His blood covers us.

Carol Reynolds

December 10
An Everlasting King
2 Samuel 7:8-16

Most things in life don't last forever. Buildings wear down, traditions change, leaders come and go, and even the things we work hard to build eventually pass to someone else. That's why God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 is so remarkable. God promises David something no earthly king could accomplish on his own—a kingdom that would last forever.

David wanted to build a house for God, but God turned the conversation around. Instead, God reminded David of everything He had already done. God had taken David from tending sheep and made him king. He had been with David, defeated his enemies, and established Israel as His people.

Then God made an even greater promise: He would build a "house" for David—not a building, but a royal family line. One of David's descendants would reign as king, and God promised, "Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

David's earthly descendants would eventually lose the throne, but God's promise had not failed. It pointed forward to Jesus, a descendant of David and the everlasting King. Jesus would establish a kingdom that no enemy, circumstance, or even death could bring to an end. Earthly leaders and kingdoms are temporary, but Jesus is not. His rule has no expiration date, and His promises do not change with our circumstances. Because Jesus is our everlasting King, we can trust Him with both today and the future. We belong to a kingdom that will never end, led by a King who will never leave His throne.

God promised David that his throne would be established forever, pointing ahead to Jesus—the everlasting King whose kingdom will never end.

As God's story continues, we will see this promise become clearer as He prepares His people for the King who is coming. We wait with anticipation. How does knowing that Jesus is our everlasting King change the way you face uncertainty today?

Prayer
God, thank You for keeping Your promise to David by sending Jesus, our everlasting King. Help me trust His rule, follow Him faithfully, and remember that His kingdom will never end.

Jana Gorz

December 11
The Shepherd King
Psalm 23

When David wrote the 23rd Psalm he started with the words, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." David thought of God as a shepherd because He leads people, provides for them, protects them, and never leaves them.

David knew sheep because at one time he was also a shepherd. He knew sheep needed someone to watch over them.

He knew God was a good shepherd because He stayed close to His people, He guided them, protected them, and would never leave them.

The Bible tells us we are just like sheep. We lose our way, make choices that hurt us and the people who love us. We do not always do the right thing. We need a good shepherd to guide us, forgive us, and lead us home.

In the book of John, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus told his disciples and the others who followed Him that He was there to care for them, guide them, and lead them home.

At Christmas time, we remember why Jesus came. God sent His Son to find us, rescue us, and care for us. He is the Good Shepherd who searches for us, draws us close, and brings us back to God.

What aspect of Jesus as shepherd do you need most today? Do you need His guidance, His protection, or His compassionate care?

Prayer
Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to us. Thank You Father because Jesus knows us, loves us, and gave His life to save us. Help us share Your love with everyone around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Johnny Gonzales

December 12
A Light for the Nations
Isaiah 49:5-6

Isaiah 49 reveals that God's plan extends beyond Israel to ALL people, all countries, languages, and cultures. No border can block His love. When He called Abraham, He promised "all the families of the earth" would be blessed. Jesus fulfills this promise by bringing God's light to everyone.

During Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birth as part of God's eternal plan. John 1:9 calls Jesus "the true light that gives light to everyone." He entered a world filled with sin, fear, and pain, bringing hope where there's despair and truth where confusion reigns.

His arrival wasn't accidental, it was God's promise fulfilled. Jesus came to save people from EVERY nation, speaking every language, looking different, and living everywhere.

When we understand what Jesus did, we should share Him with others. Church isn't just a building where we meet. It's also people who are SENT out. We gather to worship God, learn from the Bible, and encourage each other. Then, we go out to share His love with family, neighbors, our community, and the world.

You don't need to travel the world to show God's love; you can be light at school, work, and home.

• Pray for those who have never heard about Jesus.

• Support missionaries financially.

• Serve locally and globally.

• Share the good news when people need hope.

• Welcome diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Prayer:
Thank You for sending Jesus as the Light of the World. Help us care about people who don't know You yet. Let Your light shine through us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Johnny Gonzales

December 13
Hope Draws Near
Isaiah 9:2-9

The hope for the people of God could be found in and fulfilled by only one person: Jesus.

The promise of a Messiah demonstrates God's faithfulness to see us through the darkest nights.

The story of Isaiah provides tremendous hope and insight into the importance of the coming of Christ that we see in the Gospels.

Hope is Believing in…

1. _____ _____ Not _____.

The promise of Christ, foretold in verses 6–7 of Isaiah 9, demonstrates God's perfect timing and the complete fruition of God's word to His people.

There is great value in looking forward to something.

It might not always feel like it in life, but hope is closer than you think.

Reflection Question
How can you trust in God's faithfulness and hope in His timing/plans and avoid being trapped by your circumstances?

Prayer
Father, thank You for sending the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We trust that the darkness will not win and that You have not forgotten us. Help us to remain vigilant and hopeful while we wait for Your return.

Pastor Jason

December 13
Hope Draws Near
Isaiah 9:2-9
Sermon Notes

December 14
Immanuel
Isaiah 7:14

There are few words in Scripture more comforting than these: "God with us." Think about what that means. The holy God we saw in Genesis (the God who takes sin seriously and judges wickedness) doesn't simply remain distant from His broken creation. Instead, He comes near.

Isaiah 7:14 gives us a promise that would have seemed almost impossible: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Immanuel means "God with us." God wasn't going to leave humanity to find its own way back to Him. He was coming to us.

We could never fulfill God's law on our own. Our sin runs too deep, and our righteousness is never enough. So, God did what we could never do. Jesus would be born miraculously, live the perfectly righteous life we could not live, fulfill the law, and ultimately die the death we deserved. The Creator stepped into His creation. The holy God came to live among unrighteous people like us.

And God's desire to be with us didn't end in Bethlehem. Jesus died, rose again, and ascended to the Father, but He did not leave us alone. He gave us the Holy Spirit, who now lives within those who belong to Christ.

God. With. Us.

The God who is holy enough to judge sin is also loving enough to come near sinners. In Jesus, we discover that God's answer to our sin wasn't to abandon us, but to redeem us.

The God who created us did not leave us separated from Him. In Jesus, God came to us, lived among us, and made the way for us to be with Him forever.

What does it mean to you personally that the holy God who knows your sin completely has chosen to come near to you through Jesus?

Prayer
Father, thank You that You did not leave us separated from You. Thank You for sending Jesus to be Immanuel, God with us, and for giving us Your Spirit to live within us. Help me live today with the awareness that You are near. Amen.

Bo Faulkner

December 15
Born in Bethlehem
Micah 5:2-5

Sometimes the smallest details are the easiest to overlook. A name, a place, or one seemingly insignificant piece of a bigger plan may not seem important at the time. But God never overlooks the details. Long before Jesus was born, God named the small town where His promised King would enter the world.

Bethlehem was not an impressive or powerful city. Micah even describes it as "small among the clans of Judah." Yet God chose this humble town as the birthplace of the One who would rule His people. Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, God revealed this detail of His plan through the prophet Micah.

This was no coincidence. God was showing His people that He was in complete control of His plan to send a Savior. The promised King would come from Bethlehem, the hometown of King David, and He would shepherd His people in the strength of the Lord. Even while God's people waited, He was working toward the fulfillment of every promise He had made. Nothing—not even the town where Jesus would be born—was outside His sovereign plan.

Micah reminds us that God can be trusted with every detail. We may not always understand what He is doing or how His promises will unfold, but God sees the entire story. The same God who chose Bethlehem generations before Jesus was born is still faithfully working out His purposes today. We can trust Him even when we are still waiting to see what He will do.

God even revealed the humble town where His King would be born. Before the Messiah appeared, however, God would first prepare His people through a faithful messenger.

As we continue looking forward to Jesus' arrival, we will see that God was carefully preparing every detail—just as He had promised.

Where in your life do you need to trust that God is working in the details, even when you cannot yet see how everything will come together?

Prayer
God, thank You that You are faithful in every detail and always keep Your promises. Help me trust You when I cannot see the whole plan. Remind me that You are always working and that Your plans are good. Amen.

Jana Gorz

December 16
Prepare the Way
Malachi 3:1; 4:5–6

The entire Bible is God's love story to us. From the very beginning, we see His desire to draw us into a relationship with Him and make a way for us to be with Him forever. Throughout Scripture, God faithfully prepares and provides the way for His promises to be fulfilled.

In Malachi, God promises to send a messenger who will prepare the way before Him. This messenger would call God's people to turn their hearts toward the Lord and prepare them for the coming King. Malachi 4:5–6 points to Elijah, whose ministry would help turn hearts back to God and restore relationships.

When the time was right, God would fulfill His promise through Jesus Christ. Heaven itself would announce His coming, and the world would begin to see the arrival of the Savior.

Yet the way to God requires more than simply hearing a message or changing our outward behavior. We must be redeemed and made acceptable in His sight through the blood of Jesus Christ. He is the perfect Lamb who gave His life so that we could be reconciled to God and receive the promise of eternal life.

God has always used messengers to prepare hearts. He sent prophets in the Old Testament, and He continues to speak through pastors, godly church leaders, family members, and friends. Through their words, encouragement, and faithful example, God invites us to open our hearts and minds to Him.

We should also remember that we may be the messengers God uses in someone else's life. Our kindness, testimony, prayers, and willingness to share His truth can help prepare the way for another person to encounter the love of Christ.

God's messenger prepared hearts to receive the coming King. When the time was right, heaven itself would announce that God's promise was about to be fulfilled.

How is God using the people and circumstances in your life to prepare your heart to draw closer to Him, and how might He want to use you to help prepare someone else's heart for Jesus?

Prayer
Thank You, Father, for Your great love and for making a way for us to be with You forever through the blood of Jesus Christ. Prepare our hearts to receive our coming King. Help us recognize the messengers You send into our lives and use us to share Your love and truth with others. Keep our hearts faithful, humble, and ready for Your coming.

Carol Reynolds

December 17
Nothing Is Impossible
Luke 1:26–38

I was a teenager when doctors informed me that I had Leber's disease, a condition that would permanently affect my eyesight. I can still remember the shock of hearing the diagnosis and the disappointment that followed as I began to realize that my future would look very different from what I had imagined. There were questions I couldn't answer and circumstances I couldn't change.

Perhaps Mary felt something similar when Gabriel appeared with news that would forever change her own life. She was a young woman with plans for her future, and suddenly an angel was telling her that she would give birth to the promised Messiah. Her question was understandable: "How can this be?"

Gabriel's answer reminds us of something we sometimes forget: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

That doesn't mean God will always change our circumstances or give us the future we had imagined. It means that nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing what He has promised. The same God who fulfilled His promise through Mary is faithful to His promises today.

Mary didn't understand everything that lay ahead, but she trusted the One who did. Her response was simple: "I am the Lord's servant." In the years since my diagnosis, I've tried to respond that way, too. I am the Lord's servant.

Faith doesn't require us to understand everything God is doing. It calls us to trust Him even when we don't.

Gabriel's announcement reminds us that no promise of God is impossible for Him to accomplish. Mary's response shows what faithful trust looks like.

In what ways might God be calling you to trust His promises even though you cannot see what lies ahead?

Prayer
Father, help me trust Your promises even when life takes an unexpected turn. Give me the faith to say, like Mary, "I am Your servant." Amen.

Charlie Johnston

December 18
My Soul Magnifies the Lord
Luke 1:46-55

Excitement is contagious! Whether it's a new job, a baby, a milestone achievement, a wedding, or even a favorite team's victory, we enthusiastically celebrate with one another. Shared joy is multiplied joy. The same could be said of our worship: **shared worship is multiplied worship**.

In Luke 1, Mary, having received the astonishing news that the Messiah would be born through her, went to visit her relative Elizabeth. Scripture tells us that Mary simply greeted Elizabeth. Yet Elizabeth responded with great excitement, sharing that the child in her womb leaped for joy at the sound of Mary's greeting. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth recognized that her Lord was within Mary.

Mary's response was one of pure worship. Often called Mary's Song or The Magnificat, this hymn receives its title from its opening words: "My soul magnifies the Lord." Although surely uncertain about what lay ahead, this faithful young woman could not contain her joy and worship. She praised God, humbled and amazed that He would choose her to play a part in His redemptive plan.

Mary praised God for His holiness, mercy, and faithfulness. She recalled His mighty deeds and His faithfulness to generations past. Finally, she recognized that the child she carried was a promise kept.

Mary's song celebrates God's unwavering faithfulness across generations. Evidence that God would keep the promise He had made to her ancestors.

Elizabeth's greeting sparked a magnificent song of praise from Mary. May Mary's song mulitply praise in us as well! Just as Psalm 34:2 reminds us, "Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together."

What in your life is contagious to others? Is your joy in the Lord's faithfulness spreading to those around you?

Prayer
Holy God, I praise You for Your faithfulness, mercy, and power. Help me to worship You in ways that magnify You now and to future generations.

Teri Pittman

December 19
A Righteous Man
Matthew 1:18–25

When I think of quiet faith, I remember people whose steady service has shaped my life:

- a childhood Sunday School teacher who served faithfully for decades
- a retired missionary couple who took my family under their wing before I served overseas and stayed connected in the years that followed
- friends who have been blessed financially and give sacrificially to missions and nonprofit organizations with little fanfare

Their service looks different, but their hearts reflect the same devotion: quietly serving the Lord wherever He has placed them.

Mary and Joseph were much the same. They were quietly living their lives, betrothed to one another and waiting for the day they could marry and start a family. Then God intervened, and Mary became pregnant with the Christ Child. The scandal surrounding her pregnancy is easy to imagine, even 2,000 years later. Joseph had the legal right to end the engagement and walk away from Mary.

Before Joseph made his final decision, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and explained that the child was the one they had been waiting for—Immanuel, meaning "God with us." The angel addressed Joseph as "son of David," highlighting his connection to David's lineage. When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel had commanded: he took Mary as his wife and named the baby Jesus.

Joseph received God's plan with humble obedience, setting the stage for the birth of the Savior promised from the very beginning.

Today, more than ever, God is looking for people willing to serve Him with quiet, obedient faith—not those seeking to make themselves look greater or build a platform, but those who are willing to do what He has called them to do simply because He called them.

Where is God calling you to serve Him today with quiet, obedient faith?

Prayer
Father, thank You for Joseph's example of quiet, humble faith. Help me serve You and others with an obedient heart, without seeking attention or recognition. May You remain at the center of all I do in service to others. Amen.

Meredith Archer

December 20
The King Has Come
Luke 2:1-20

The manger points to a collision of two rival kings, two rival kingdoms, with each having their own versions of peace and justice.

Let the manger lead you like a signpost to the explosive truth of the Christmas story. The King has come.

The manger pointed to a Savior for…

1. _____ _____.

The manger, explains N.T. Wright, was not the point; it was just a signpost, proof that what the shepherds had seen and heard was real and true.

1 Corinthians 1:27, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world."

The shepherds were overlooked and looked down upon, yet they were the very ones God sent the angels to first and entrusted to tell others that a Savior had been born.

The garden promise, the plan to restore humanity, the one Abram was promised would come for all generations, the one Isaiah had prophesied about, has come as Matthew 1:21 says to "save his people, all people from their sins."

Reflection Question
How do you relate to the shepherds and how will you respond to the message that the King has come?

Prayer
Father, thank You for the manger. Thank You for coming for people like me. Thank You for the gift of salvation found in the Christ Child and received by way of the cross.

Pastor Jason

December 20
The King Has Come
Luke 2:1-20
Sermon Notes

December 21
God's Perfect Timing
Luke 2:1–5

Have you ever looked back on something that happened in your life and realized that, although you couldn't see it at the time, God was working through circumstances you didn't understand? Perhaps it was an unexpected move, a change in your career, or even a disappointment that eventually opened the door to something you never anticipated. What seemed like an interruption at the time turned out to be part of a much bigger story.

Keep that idea in mind as you read Luke's account of Jesus' birth.

Luke tells us that Caesar Augustus issued a decree requiring a census throughout the Roman Empire. As a result, Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the ancestral home of David. From Rome's perspective, this was simply an administrative decision made by the most powerful man in the world, but God was accomplishing something far greater.

Centuries earlier, the prophet Micah had announced that Israel's promised ruler would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Now, through the decree of a Roman emperor who knew nothing of that prophecy, God was bringing Mary and Joseph to the very place where the Messiah was to be born.

Caesar thought he was directing the affairs of an empire, but God was directing the course of redemption.

We don't always understand what God is doing in the circumstances of our lives, and we certainly shouldn't assume that every inconvenience carries some hidden prophetic significance. But we can trust that the God who worked through the decisions of an emperor to fulfill His ancient promise is still sovereign over the world He created.

Even the decree of Caesar became part of God's sovereign plan to bring His Son to Bethlehem. The King would arrive in a way no one expected.

How does knowing that God was working through ordinary political events to fulfill His promises help you trust Him in circumstances you cannot control?

Prayer
Father, thank You that Your purposes are never threatened by the circumstances of this world. Help me to trust Your wisdom and timing, even when I cannot see what You are doing, and remind me that Your greatest promise has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Stuart Sumrall

December 22
No Room
Luke 2:6-7

"Unmet expectations" describes the gap between reality and what you thought or hoped would happen. At some point, this happens to all of us and can be followed by frustration or disappointment.

Perhaps it even happened to Mary and Joseph. Surely, they were weary from their long journey to Bethlehem, only to arrive and find no lodging. Scripture does not elaborate, but simply says there was no room for them in the inn.

About nine months had passed since the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and the angel spoke to Joseph in a dream. How they must have imagined the grand entrance the Messiah would make as a royal babe! And yet, we see the initial birth described in two short verses.

Scripture simply states that the baby was born, wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger because there was no room for the family at the inn. It certainly could not have been what Mary and Joseph expected. And yet, it was the story God had planned from before our understanding of time began. Before Mary ever held Jesus in her arms, God had already purposed the story of redemption.

The King, who would one day have every knee bow before Him, entered the world not surrounded by earthly splendor, but in humility. The One who created all things came as a helpless infant. The Son of God came not to be served, but to serve—and ultimately to give His life. Sometimes unmet expectations foreshadow an even greater reality.

The promised King entered the world in humility, identifying with the lowly from His very first breath. Heaven itself would soon announce the significance of His birth.

Consider the humility of Christ in both coming to earth as well as His humble entrance. How can we emulate His humility in our relationships?

Prayer
Thank You, Father, that Your plan is better than any of my human expectations. Help me to walk in humility and to trust in Your plan and purpose when things may not go as I have planned.

Teri Pittman

December 23
Good News of Great Joy
Luke 2:8-14

Have you ever had news so good that you couldn't wait to tell anyone who would listen? Maybe it was the birth of a new grandbaby, an "all clear" diagnosis from the doctor, getting accepted to the college of your dreams, or your child getting first place in the school spelling bee. Maybe it was something you heard that you knew would make someone else smile. Regardless of the news, good news has a way of making us want to share it. In Luke 2, we learn that the shepherds heard the best news of all and couldn't wait to share it.

Luke 2:8 tells us that the shepherds were out in the fields when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared before them. Understandably, they were terrified, but the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy for all people." A Savior had been born. Christ the Lord was in Bethlehem. Not only was one angel sent to share the good news, but a host of heavenly angels appeared, singing and worshiping God. Even the angels couldn't wait to share the news and rejoice in the announcement of the Messiah's birth!

Did you notice who this announcement was for? The angel said **all people**. Jesus wasn't sent to be the Savior for only the wealthy, the religious leaders, or the most important. God had promised a Savior, and He was finally here and was sent for everyone. Who wouldn't want to share that kind of news and excitement? The greatest part of this story is that it doesn't end with the shepherds. The gospel is still good news for all people today. We don't have to earn our way to Jesus or do good works to come to Him. He has already paid the price for us. He came into a broken world and paid the highest price to make a way for us. He still meets us where we are with infinite grace, hope, and forgiveness, and we should want to share that with anyone who will listen.

The angel came and proclaimed the good news of great joy for all people. The shepherds who heard the announcement could not keep it to themselves.

Just as they did so long ago, we should run to spread the good news of what the Savior has done in our lives.

Who in your life needs to be reminded of the Good News of Jesus this Christmas? Will you commit to seeking that person out and sharing the good news with them this week?

Prayer
God, we thank You for sending Your Son, who came into the world to bring hope and salvation for all people. Help me remember that the joy that comes from knowing and trusting in You isn't meant to be kept a secret. Give me the courage to share the good news with others. Bring someone into my life this season who needs to hear the good news and give me the courage to share the message of salvation with them. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Courtney Faulkner

December 24
Come and See
Luke 2:15–20

The Christmas season has a way of making us spectators. We watch Christmas movies, drive around looking at lights, listen to seasonal music and carols, and attend a candlelight service. We know how the story goes. We have seen and heard the Christmas story so many times that we can almost watch it unfold from a comfortable distance.

The shepherds didn't have that familiarity with the story!

After the angels announced the birth of the Savior, the shepherds didn't stay in the fields discussing what they had heard. They said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened." Luke tells us they hurried there and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

After encountering Him, the shepherds began telling others what they had been told about the child. Then they returned to their fields "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard."

The shepherds' spontaneous reaction is worth our consideration on this Christmas Eve. The Christmas story isn't something we're invited merely to observe. The shepherds heard the good news, came to Jesus, worshiped Him, and then told others what they had experienced.

We live on this side of the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. We know an entire, amazing story about which the shepherds knew only the beginning. We know who this child is and what He came to accomplish.

Has Christmas become so familiar that we simply observe it? Or does encountering Jesus still move us to worship and witness?

The shepherds hurried to see the newborn Savior and then shared what they had witnessed. On Christmas Day, we step back to see why this child changes everything.

Who in your life needs to hear the good news you have received about Jesus?

Prayer
Father, don't let the familiar story of Christmas become ordinary to me. Give me the wonder of the shepherds as I worship Your Son, and give me their eagerness to share the good news of Jesus with others. Amen.

Stuart Sumrall

December 25
As Many as Received
John 1:1-18

Merry Christmas, dear one! God gave you a gift. Have you received it?

The first chapter of John's gospel is like a symphony overture. Coming first in the concert, the overture introduces the melodies and themes to follow.

John does the same in his gospel. One of his themes (convictions) is that *the gift of God must be received*. God forces no one to believe. In Philippians 3:12, Paul spoke of "taking hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." People are not passively saved. Christ must be accepted, loved, followed.

Many do not! "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). This sad story continues today. The world rejects and/or ignores God and His holiness.

But many do! "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (v. 12). God's Son was born so that thousands might be reborn. If Jesus is the reason for the season, salvation is the reason for Jesus.

Forget Santa Claus! Your gift came from a God. Have you received Him?

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

"The thief had nails through both hands, so that he could not work; and a nail through each foot, so that he could not run errands for the Lord ... Christ offered him the gift of God, and he took it. Christ threw him a passport and took him to Paradise" (D. L. Moody).

Discuss as a family how each of us receives gifts. Do we express gratitude? Do we linger to think about the purpose of the giver? Or do we quickly set the gift aside, unchanged by its value? What about the best gift ever given ... how do we receive the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ?

Prayer: O Lord our God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, help my heart to be most grateful to You for Your gift of life through Jesus Christ, to find wonder in every single day You've given and to share the joy with others. May Your kingdom work be done throughout the world. Use me as a part of Your purpose. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Don and Holly Guthrie

Personal Reflections



Church Office
Holiday Schedule

OUR CHURCH OFFICE
WILL BE CLOSED FROM
NOON ON DECEMBER 23
THROUGH JANUARY 1.
OFFICE WILL REOPEN JANUARY 4.

CHRISTMAS EVE
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

5:30 PM