



In the *Waiting*

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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DAY 1

The Promise of a Messiah

Genesis 3:15

In the business world there is a phrase that states, “hope isn’t a strategy.” It’s meant to remind us that hope can’t replace planning, effort and execution. However, in the story of Scripture, hope is the strategy. This isn’t the kind of sentimental hope you have when you wish for something to happen before you blow out the candles on your birthday cake. It’s entirely different. Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. In other words, our hope is in the promises of God.

Genesis 3:15 is called by scholars the Protoevangelium - which means “the first gospel.” In the middle of Adam and Eve’s darkest moment, God spoke of His future redemption. He whispered His divine intention to send a Savior in the future who will make the world and everything in it whole. As one of my favorite authors NT Wright puts it, “He will bring the world to rights.” Adam and Eve’s sin set a trajectory of brokenness in the world and distance between man and God. And in the middle of this darkest hour, God whispers of a future hope.

It’s interesting to me that the Hebrew word for hope, “tikvah,” literally means a cord or tether. Hope keeps us tethered to God, His plans, and His purposes. Ultimately, when we have a biblical hope we are attaching ourselves to the promise of Jesus. The promise of his first advent as a baby born in Bethlehem, and the promise of the second advent as the King of Heaven to renew all things in the future. In this way, hope isn’t just “a” strategy, it is “the” strategy.

As we enter this Advent season, let’s together keep our hope focused on the person of Jesus Christ.

Aaron Hanson
Senior Pastor



Prayer Prompt: Day 1

Where in your life do you feel the weight of darkness right now?

Where has disappointment or fear tempted you to stop hoping?

Let today remind you: the first word God spoke after sin was not condemnation—it was promise.

Prayer

Lord, thank You that hope was born in the dark.
When I cannot see Your plan, help me trust Your promise.
Teach me to anchor my heart in the hope of Christ—the One who came, who conquered, and who is coming again.
Amen.

Hope isn't wishful thinking—it's waiting with confidence because God always keeps His word.

Notes:

DAY 2

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

Isaiah 9:6-7

There's something almost scandalous about Isaiah's prophecy. "A child is born to us, a son is given to us"—notice the careful distinction. The first speaks of a genuine human birth, the arrival of a new human life. The second suggests something—or someone—who already existed, now being presented as a gift. It's as if Isaiah is saying, "Pay attention, something mysterious is happening here."

We live in a world obsessed with power—military might, political influence, and economic leverage. Yet, God's solution to humanity's darkness arrives wrapped in swaddling clothes. The Most High God becomes a dependent infant. The Prince of Peace enters through a human womb. It's the kind of plot twist that no ancient Near Eastern prophet would dare invent, yet here it is, cryptically spoken of centuries before Bethlehem.

This ancient hope is different from wishful thinking. Isaiah speaks of the future with language of certainty, as though it is already accomplished fact—"his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God." In God's eyes, the future is already secure. This is not optimism; it's anchored reality because His plan cannot be thwarted.

Also, consider the scope of this peace that He will bring—it ranges from international global conflicts down to the civil war raging in individual's hearts. The child born in Bethlehem doesn't just negotiate treaties between nations; He also reconciles the divided self, the anxious mind, and the restless soul. He brings peace to marriages, to neighborhoods, even to the secret places where we're at war within ourselves.

C. S. Lewis reminds us that the Son of God became human so that humans might become sons and daughters of God. This is the great exchange—His throne for our manger, his glory for our shame, His peace for our anxiety, His death for our lives. The child born is the son given, and in receiving Him, we receive everything.

Isaiah looked ahead to both Christmas and the Second Coming—to the baby and the King. We live between them, in the "already but not yet," tasting now what will be fully realized then. This is where our hope lives: not in the denial of darkness, but in the certainty that light has come and will come again.

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." (John 1:9).

Brent Cunningham
Spiritual Formation Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 2

Where in your life do you most need the Prince of Peace today?

What would it look like to really trust that God speaks of your future with the certainty of accomplished fact?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are both the child born and the son given—fully human, fully divine, fully ours. Come into the dark places we hide, the anxious thoughts we nurse, the broken relationships we've given up on. Be our Wonderful Counselor when we don't know the way forward. Be our Mighty God when we feel powerless. Be our Prince of Peace when chaos reigns. We wait for your full kingdom even as we taste it now. Amen.

Song

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

Notes:

DAY 3

THE ROOT OF JESSE

Isaiah 11:1-10

When I read this future presented by Isaiah, it's almost too beautiful for me to begin comprehending. A King who has the Spirit of the Lord covering him so obviously? A King who delights in obeying the Lord? His character is so obvious that it clothes him—a belt of righteousness and a belt of faithfulness. It's so good that the predator and prey live together, the child is safe near the cobras. The nations look to him—God recovers the remnants that have been lost.

The promise from God here is too good for my little brain. I want to see it, to know it. I'm impatient for it. The Jewish people who received this prophecy were waiting in what felt like a completely barren landscape. I imagine how impossible these promises would have felt to them. How desperate they were to see them. Me too, me too! I am just like them. I tend to place my hope in things I can see, things I can predict, things that feel much more immediate. This is a long-haul promise—it's one the first hearers waited on, and it's one that we wait for the fullness of.

This Advent, I want to look at these words and feel hope—the goodness of God's Kingdom is coming. I want to cling to this vision of the future. I want to place my hope in this—not in anything else. My hope can sit here, as impatient as it is: Jesus's Kingdom is in motion, and the fullness of it is on its way.

Miranda McCasland
TSM High School Director



Prayer Prompt: Day 3

What promise from Isaiah 11:1-10 gets your hopes up the most? Why?

Is there somewhere you place your hopes? How could you look at these promises and place your hope in Jesus?

Prayer

Ask God to help you place your hopes in his promises. Pray God would help you to see the goodness and sweetness of placing your hopes in Him.

Song

“Unexpected King” by Temitope

Notes:

DAY 4

Micah's Prophecy

Micah 5:2

I love the name Micah. It means “Who is like God” and tucked into that tiny little book of minor prophets in the Bible is one of Christianity’s favorite phrases we like to throw around like confetti and slap it on every Stanley cup we own. In Micah 6:8, we get this sweet prophet dropping the mic with this platinum record, “And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”. Boom!! I have that verse marked and highlighted in every version ready for Gospel gold. Yet, there is so much more to this man, this prophet, Micah who truly lives up to his name. Micah comes in at a time of complete chaos. God’s laws appear to be “suggestions” that His people only give lip service to, social injustices are the rampant headlines, there’s corruption in politics, Israel is on the brink of collapse, and disaster is brimming on the horizon. It sounds like a headline ripped from today’s newspapers, right? Anyway, he comes in bringing words of caution and warning, trying to urge God’s people to repent and to turn back to their first love. Then, in the middle of all of the doom and gloom and correction, he offers pure hope. Hope found in the form of a God who came to earth by the humblest of means and the smallest of men.

Hope in a God who took on flesh, so he could be present in the chaos and all of the injustice this world throws at us. Hope that the prophecies of old will still hold true even in the direst of circumstances. Hope in Jesus that one day all things will be made right again. Sweet friends, whatever chaos your Advent season looks like, I pray you can grab onto a glimmer of this kind of hope that Micah refers to, the humble hope that enters into the fray and doesn’t shy away from it. The only real hope that doesn’t shift with the circumstances and that comes to set you free. Jesus is this hope, and He is right here, ready for you.

Lindsay Bryant
Spiritual Formation Admin



Prayer Prompt: Day 4

Prayer

Jesus, we praise You and thank You that You are the God of hope. Thank You for humbly stepping into our everyday ordinary to meet us where we are. I pray that in this Advent season, You will remind us that there is still hope to come as we wait here in the not yet. Bring us peace in the waiting. In Your powerful name, may it be so.

Song

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"
by Celtic Worship

Notes:



DAY 5

The Voice in the Wilderness

Isaiah 40:1-5

Our passage today is a prophecy out of Isaiah. The second half of our verses are most famous for being quoted by John the Baptist right before Jesus began his ministry. In that story, John lays claim to these verses as his life's work as, "A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord."

The big themes of this prophecy are comfort and hope. I love the tone of verses 1-2. To me they show a God who leans down and reaches out a hand to let His people know that everything is going to be okay. We see His assurances that He will end what is plaguing Israel, and that He'll forgive and pay for their sins completely.

In verse 3, the tone of the passage shifts. Instead of comfort and promises from God, we hear about, "a voice in the wilderness" which is calling God's people to, "make straight" the way of the Lord. The people who originally heard the words of Isaiah wouldn't know that these same words were used to foretell the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, in the very first season of Advent.

It can seem like a complete change in theme to go from words of comfort straight to a call for action, but when we look a little deeper we see that God's comfort, even all the way back in Isaiah, is made possible by Jesus coming down and being born into our world. When He comes back again, our comfort will be complete. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Jesus' presence makes all comfort possible. The hope of His coming is the source of ALL hope for us. And it comes with a calling from a lonely voice in the wilderness. "Prepare the way of the Lord."

Sami Gutierrez
Windsor Student Ministries Director

Prayer Prompt: Day 5

Is it easy or difficult to see God as a God of comfort? Why?

In this season of anticipation, how can you prepare the soil of your heart to receive the Lord?

What's a practical way you can do the work of making a straight path for Jesus to walk into the lives of the people around you?

Spend some time in silence, dwelling on our God of comforting.

Song

"Seasons" by Hillsong Worship

Notes:



DAY 6

The Virgin Birth Foretold

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah makes this prophecy about Jesus being born to Mary around 700 years before it occurred. The prophecy was made to Ahaz, King of Judah during a difficult time when the Davidic line (the line God promised the Messiah Jesus would come from) was under threat from Rezin the King of Aram and Pekah the King of the northern ten tribes of Israel. These two kings were headed toward Ahaz with the intent of overthrowing the king and placing someone else on the throne.

Isaiah was sent by God to invite King Ahaz to request any “sign” (miracle) he wished with the result that Rezin and Pekah would not have their way. God was asking Ahaz to trust in Him and not in Ahaz’s own power to solve the situation. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign saying that it would be wrong to test God. Isaiah explained, however, that this was not a test but an invitation from God (1 John 5:14-15). Ahaz again refused, instead deciding to trust in himself and tried to bribe his way into safety with the King of Assyria.

This is when Isaiah makes the prophecy about a virgin giving birth, and He will be called Immanuel. For Ahaz, this prophecy had the immediate fulfillment in his son Hezekiah being born which would continue the line of David that would lead to Jesus, but it also points to the birth of Jesus. The one true King. Jesus, the one whose kingdom will last forever.

Now, I do not know what would have happened if Ahaz would have agreed and asked God for a miracle, but I can safely guess that things would have gone differently. Ahaz chose to rely on himself instead of God and that did not work out well for him. In our own life it is easy to rely on ourselves instead of God. We think to ourselves, “I’ve got this,” but God is faithful. Even when we try to work in our own strength, He does not leave us on our own. God keeps His promises and through Jesus has fulfilled His promises, like the one given by Isaiah of being with us and never leaving us, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Micah Strouse
Care Director

Prayer Prompt: Day 6

What can we learn from the choices of Ahaz?

Where have you tried in your life to accomplish things in your own power instead of relying on God?

Where do you see God keeping His promises in your life?

Prayer

Give to God any of the fears or worries that you have. Give Him any scary situations like the one Ahaz faced with armies marching on his throne.

Pray that God will show you where He is keeping His promises in your life and for the strength to trust in Him.

“But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not faint.”
(Isaiah 40:31)

Song

“Immanuel” by Joshua Aaron

Notes:

DAY 7

Preparing Our Hearts

Malachi 3:1-4

What if the very trial you're asking God to remove is the very answer to a prayer you prayed long ago to be made more like Him?

Are you familiar with the process of a refiner's fire? A refiner's fire melts down a metal, such as gold or silver, for purification purposes. Once a metal is in its liquid state, the dross in the metal rises to the top and is then removed from the metal before it cools. A refiner's fire does not destroy the metal, rather it allows the impurities within to come up so that it can be removed. A refiner's fire does not consume; it makes the metal better and more valuable.

We see here in Malachi that a refiner's fire is a powerful picture of when God's people encounter His transformative power. Refinement isn't about punishment, rather it's about transformation. God knows our sins, and He knows our needs. We are not left to save ourselves. He meets us where we're at and cares deeply about the condition of our hearts.

We are precious to Him.

When we embrace the trials in our lives and turn our hearts to Him, He will make us pure, righteous, and spare us the pain of separation from Him.

May this give you hope and courage to face any hardship that comes because God will strengthen your faith and purify your heart.

Rachel McGinley
Student Ministries Assistant



Prayer Prompt: Day 7

What if that fire was meant to reveal the strength within you?

What is God teaching you, or has taught you about who He is?

What 'dross' or impurities - like pride, doubt, fear, or bitterness - do you feel the heat of your current hardship is bringing to the surface?

See if you can find other Scriptures where you can find "refining fire" imagery elsewhere in the Old/or New Testament? Then memorize the one that stands out to you!

Prayer

Breath prayer:

(Breathe in)

Life is hard.

(Breathe out)

But God is _____ (fill in the blank).

Song

"Refiner's Fire" by Brian Doerksen

Notes:

DAY 8

The Angel Appears to Zechariah



Luke 1:5-25

Zechariah and Elizabeth are two characters from the Advent narrative who found themselves in what I call a long-haul wait. In Luke 1, we witness them receiving the long-awaited gift and miracle they thought had been taken off the table for them. They were well past the window of when having a child was physically 'normal.' They likely carried the identity of barren and scorned. It was no small thing at this time to be childless. But we know they were faithful. Scripture describes them as, "righteous in the sight of God" (Luke 1:6).

We can imagine what they might have been thinking or feeling in these iconic moments in Scripture, when they respond to this miraculous news. But we have to fill in the lines of the years before and after. There is so much to the story that built up to this moment. I can't help but wonder how they remained righteous and observant in the face of their disappointment. Then there is the classic proverb, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick..." (Proverbs 13:12). I call it classic because I have found it to be so true in my own life and story. Heart sick from long-haul waiting.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were forced to be patient. In our culture, we are terrible at patience! Mostly because we rarely have to be patient. We live in a world where everything comes quickly and on demand. We get accustomed to what we want, how we want it, when we want it. But we also don't have control. There are moments we are thrust into this truth. Whether we are waiting for relationships to be reconciled, test results, a house to sell, a loved one to go be with Jesus, a baby to join a family. We do not have control of so much. And that can cause incredible discomfort, impatience, frustration and disappointment.

Often those feelings get directed to God. We might callous or harden ourselves from encountering God in an honest place. We might get mad at what seems like God's lack of care or response- frustrated and broken-hearted. Or we might give up on Him and go into overdrive to try to "make-it-happen" through our own abilities.

Mackenzie Matthews
Connections Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 8

What might we learn from the righteousness of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Where have you experienced “hope deferred makes the heart sick”?

What do you tend to do when you feel impatient or frustrated with God's lack of movement in your timing?

Place before God any disappointment or impatience you are experiencing right now.

On behalf of yourself or others, Pray God would give you patience and strength for this specific circumstance.

Prayer

“I am utterly yours, O Christ.
In the midst of this uncertainty,
I abandon myself again to you, the Author
and the object of all my truest hopes”

-Excerpt from A Liturgy for Seasons of
Uncertainty from Every Moment Holy
Volume 2

Song

“O Come, All You Unfaithful” by Sovereign Grace Music

Notes:

DAY 9

The Annunciation to Mary



Luke 1:26-38

Mary—a beautiful force in the Advent story—embodies quiet strength and unwavering faith. Her journey began with a divine interruption from the angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary, not in a moment of grandeur or ceremony— but in the quiet of her ordinary life. He delivered to her the news that she would conceive the Son of God (Luke 1:30-31).

Mary had a plan. She was young, a virgin, and engaged to Joseph. She had her life mapped out, upholding her righteous values. Yet, God showed up and changed the plan with the unimaginable. This would change the course of her life forever. And her response?

“I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38).

Two aspects of Mary's posture in this moment continue to inspire me: her obedience and her surrender.

She was obedient because she trusted God's omniscience.

She surrendered because she believed in His sovereignty.

Even in her questioning, Mary anchored herself in the truth of who God is—mighty, faithful, and a keeper of promises. She didn't just accept the miraculous conception; she embraced it with peace that surpassed understanding. Her “yes” became an integral part of God's redemptive plan.

We know Mary didn't lack fear or uncertainty. But she held the key to true peace: intimacy with the Prince of Peace.

I long for a heart that responds like Mary's.

In our own lives, we face divine interruptions—moments when God's direction feels unexpected or impossible. Like Mary, we may feel troubled or afraid. But peace doesn't come from knowing every detail. It comes from knowing the One who does.

Chloe Brunelle
Connections Admin

Prayer Prompt: Day 9

Where is God inviting you to trust Him more deeply today?

Write it down. Then, like Mary, offer your surrender:

"I am the Lord's servant. May Your word to me be fulfilled."

Prayer

Lord, when Your plans interrupt mine, help me respond like Mary — with faith, not fear. Teach me to trust Your heart even when I don't understand. Let Your presence be my peace, and Your promises my anchor. Amen.

Song

"Light of the World" by Lauren Daigle

Notes:



DAY 10

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-45

On the heels of hearing, “Nothing is impossible with God” from Gabriel, Mary in haste travels to her cousin Elizabeth’s home. Both women are living in moments of awe—living the impossible. Elizabeth is pregnant with a promised son and Mary is too. One will be a prophetic messenger, preparing people for the other who will be their promised messianic king.

What makes this passage special is that these women get to share together in the beauty and awe of God’s promises. When Mary arrived, Scripture says: “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’” But Elizabeth continues: “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

In this blessing, we glimpse a profound source of peace: the peace that comes from believing God’s promises, even when circumstances seem impossible. Elizabeth names what sustains Mary—her faith, her trust that God will do what He said.

Sit with me for a moment in this scene.

There are no phones, no emails, no social media pregnancy announcements. Just a greeting, a leap for joy inside Elizabeth, and the faith of Mary who believed and obeyed. Two women, two miracles, two babies. The world would never be the same.

I love that God gave these women time together. Here God is knitting together the fulfillment of His promise made long ago. These awe moments—when we recognize God at work—aren’t reserved for biblical figures alone. The same God who orchestrated their meeting is still present, still working in our lives today.

Celebrating and praising the Lord in awe moments with others is faith building. This is the same posture Paul encourages (Philippians 4:4, 4:8): “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice... Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Jill Motley
Men’s and Women’s Admin

Prayer Prompt: Day 10

Do you have an awe moment you can reflect on?

I encourage you to find a quiet moment and ask God to bring to mind His work and presence in your life. Sit in awe, praise Him. For He is not finished with you yet (Philippians 1:6).

What are your awe moments?
Ask the Lord to show you.

Song

“The Goodness” by TobyMac

Notes:

DAY 11

The Magnificat

Luke 1:45-56

Mary's life changed in an instant. A young woman from Nazareth was told by an angel that she would carry God's Son. It was miraculous, yes, but also, I imagine, incredibly overwhelming. How could she, a simple girl, bear the Savior of the world? How would her family respond? How could she trust God with something so seemingly impossible?

As the story unfolds, we see that Mary didn't remain in fear. She responded with a song, the Magnificat, filled with praise, trust, and hope. She magnified the Lord, not because her circumstances were peaceful or easy, but because she recognized God's faithfulness and character. This is a beautiful picture of biblical peace. Even in uncertainty, she displayed deep confidence in God.

Too often, we mistake peace for the absence of difficulty. But true biblical peace is far deeper. It is an inner steadiness rooted in a clear understanding of God's character and unwavering trust in His promises, independent of what is happening around us. This kind of peace quiets fear and restlessness, opening our hearts to love, joy, and hope.

Like Mary, when we are grounded in God's peace, we can face uncertainty with trust, gratitude, and even awe at His goodness. This is the peace Advent points us toward: not a fleeting calm, but a transformative, life-giving peace that flows from God Himself. We, too, are invited to trust and rest in His faithfulness, to find wholeness in His presence, and to rejoice in the ways He is at work, even when it feels uncertain, and we cannot yet see the full picture.

Ally Beckner
Marketing Specialist



Prayer Prompt: Day 11

Invite God to help you see His faithfulness in the patterns of your life and in the moments you might overlook.

Ask Him to guide your heart in ways you can actively honor Him and magnify His goodness, even through ordinary or difficult circumstances.

Reflect on how God's mercy and justice might shape your relationships, your community, and your perspective, and pray for His Spirit to make that work visible in and through you.

Surrender your fears, your doubts, and your desires to God. Trust that His presence is enough, that His plans are faithful, and that His peace can root itself deep within you, even when life feels uncertain.

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47)

Song

"Peace be Still" by The Belonging Co

Notes:

DAY 12

The Birth of John the Baptist



Luke 1:57-80

The circumstances regarding the birth of John the Baptist caused quite a stir among the neighbors and relatives of Zechariah and Elizabeth. A long time coming, the angelic visits, and the silencing of the priest all came together to arouse much anticipation about the arrival of this child. With the prominence of Zechariah's role in the temple, the people would have understandably assumed that the baby would be named in accordance with tradition and probably attain a similar position. When his name was declared and the tongue of Zechariah was set free, the entire area was abuzz with great speculation. "What then will this child become?"

Zechariah proclaimed that John would go before the Lord to prepare the way. Then the Bible simply says that the child grew up and was in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to Israel.

Did the people have any idea that this would take three decades to come to fruition? Did the rejoicing that once surrounded Elizabeth die out in the following years? Were they expecting the Messiah to come soon?

We don't know the answers to those questions, but we do know that they were a bit confused about what had taken place. God's ways are often undiscernible. As humans, we have our own expectations. Yet in Isaiah 55, it says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways, declares the Lord".

Throughout Scripture and in our own lives, God sets forth His plans not understood by us, using the often unexpected, and His timing is known only to Him. Nothing happens by chance. God in His infinite wisdom is weaving all things together to accomplish His divine purpose. The challenge can be to simply trust Him when there is no clear understanding of what is taking place and to be at peace knowing that He is in control.

Carla Swihart
Primetimers Director

Prayer Prompt: Day 12

Are you wondering what God is doing in your circumstances?

How are His promises going to come to fulfillment in your life?

Prayer

Father, help us to be at peace and know that, just as John was born to prepare the way for Christ, You, through the birth of Jesus, have prepared the way for us to spend eternity with You. Be with us as we follow that path. Amen.

Notes:

DAY 13

Joseph's Dream

Dark Night Wakes | Glory Breaks

Matthew 1:18-25

One of my family's favorite Christmas songs is "O Little Town of Bethlehem." We find ourselves moved by the melody of this hymn, even more so by its lyrics. The first verse goes like this:

"O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by."

This song draws our imagination to a dark night of waiting, which is also where we find Joseph (the earthly father of Jesus) in Matthew 1. Are you familiar with the story? Joseph is engaged to Mary. Great news, right? Unfortunately, Mary is found to be pregnant before the wedding, which is not great news. Joseph is crushed, and to avoid her shame, he plans to quietly divorce her.

Imagine the weight of this scenario: the sorrow and grief, the racing thoughts, the uncertainty. What a seemingly dark moment in the midst of what should have been such a joyous time for Joseph and Mary.

Can you relate? Have you ever found yourself in the midst of great expectation only to be shocked and surprised by the unthinkable? Who can you trust?

Maybe you find yourself there now in this Advent season. Allow me to encourage you. God is present with you in this moment, and He is not just present--He is working. And you can trust Him.

You see, God was working in this debacle with Joseph and Mary. Verse 20 tells us an angel visits Joseph in a dream, and that the child Mary is bearing is the very Son of God!

The prophesied Messiah whom Isaiah 7 refers to as 'Immanuel,' which literally translates to 'God with us.' What great news for Joseph and Mary (and for us!) Psalm 56:3 says, "When I'm afraid, I put my trust in You."

Joseph trusted God in the midst of what I imagine was a dark, fearful time, and I believe we are invited to do the same. Are you in the midst of a dark, fearful night?

I encourage you to trust in Jesus. Immanuel. God with us. Because He's present, and He's working.

I offer the two final lines from a forgotten stanza of "O Little Town of Bethlehem," followed by a prayer prompt

"Where charity stands watching
and faith holds wide the door;
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
and Christmas comes once more."

Tyler Saxton
Worship Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 13

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to be more aware that You are present and You are working in every season of life. I trust in You.

Song

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Notes:

DAY 14

The Journey to Bethlehem



Luke 2:1-5

The word “journey” springs forth a sense of excitement and adventure deep within me. When we plan a vacation, I plan as many details as possible in advance to ensure that we can do all the things we want to do. I browse through area hotels and Airbnb options that will make our time there comfortable. Every detail covered, right down to packing the best travel snacks (Cheez-Its and M&M's are my personal favorite).

Some journeys we prepare for with excitement and anticipation, and then some of our journeys happen to us, brought on by circumstances that we didn't plan and cannot control. They may include a diagnosis, a change in our job, or a severed relationship. These journeys include doing things we never thought would be part of our story.

As I think of Joseph and Mary finding out that they had to go to Bethlehem at the most inconvenient time possible, baby due any day, wanting to be near family when the time came for the baby to be born. It makes them very real to me. A decree went out that they had to obey.

We have a choice in how we respond to the “journeys” that we didn't plan. We can ignore them and hope that they go away, or we can ask God, “How would you have me respond right now?”

This past year a family member has faced a challenging medical diagnosis that required me to be present in ways that I didn't plan on. It required me to put many appointments on the calendar and rearrange my schedule.

I will admit that some of it was scary, and I didn't always see how God was going to provide. In those moments God reminded me that I didn't need to see the whole picture, just the next step. As we come to the end of the year, the medical challenge remains, appointments that require my presence are still on my calendar, but the peace that God has given me with every step this past year has been a gift and I have learned to trust Him with what I cannot control.

Kari Stewart
Missions and Prayer Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 14

Notes:

Have you been on an unplanned journey? If so, what has your response been?

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for the gift of peace. As I journey with you in this life, may I learn to trust you. May I learn to lean on you as I ask You to reveal the next step, knowing that your plans for me are good. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

The Journey

Lord,
Thank You for the journey before me.
It has been one that I didn't choose,
but I sense Your presence
and am grateful.
When anxiety and worry
begin to rise in my heart
and mind,
may gratitude quickly take
their place.
May the next step
be enough for me,
knowing that You, my Lord
are guiding every step.
I simply say;
I trust You
with what I cannot see
and with what I cannot control.
I love you, Lord.
Amen.

DAY 15

The Birth of Jesus



Matthew 1:18-25

JOY

“And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them” (Luke 2:6-7, NLT).

Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that a census be taken of the entire Roman world. That meant Joseph had to return to his hometown of Bethlehem to be counted. So, he and his young, very pregnant, wife Mary began the long, difficult journey from Nazareth—a four-day trek on foot. When they finally arrived, the town was overflowing with travelers. Every room was taken. And right then, Mary’s time came.

I doubt they were happy about the situation. Yet, I believe Mary still carried joy in her heart. Earlier, in Luke 1:30-33, an angel had told her, “Do not be afraid... you will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... His kingdom will never end.” Mary knew she was part of something divine—God’s promise fulfilled.

Happiness depends on our circumstances; it comes and goes with the ups and downs of life. But joy—true joy—comes from the Lord. Through my own walk with Jesus, I’ve faced struggles, troubles, and challenges that were far from happy. Yet, in those moments, my faith sustained me. As Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Mary and Joseph made it through that difficult night because the Lord was with them. I’m convinced they drew strength from the joy of the Lord—a joy deeper than comfort or ease.

Now, we sing “Joy to the World!” because our Savior, Christ Jesus, was born on that miraculous night.

Darell Hailey
Volunteer Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 15

This Advent season, let's pray that even when happiness fades, we can rest in the unshakable truth that we still—and always—have the joy of the Lord.

Notes:



DAY 16

The Shepherds Visit

Luke 2:8-20

What comes to mind when you think of the word 'shepherd'?

Most likely, the word brings a lovely image to mind. Maybe a shepherd in a beautiful field with the sun perfectly cascading onto their flock like a watercolor painting that came to life. Or potentially, 'shepherd' also brings up specific stories.

King David, a shepherd before any of his mighty accomplishments.

Jesus who calls himself the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11).

Or Psalm 23, which starts with "The LORD is my shepherd..."

Today, we have a beautiful connection with shepherds...however, that is not the image that would have come to mind for the original audience of Luke.

In the first century, shepherds were not associated with incredible watercolors adorning offices and nurseries alike. The opposite. Shepherding was considered a low and undesirable position. Some scholars at the time would go so far as to say shepherds were even despised and/or distrusted because of their traveling lifestyle and the inability to remain ritually clean.

To say the least: they were considered "outsiders" socially. Shepherds were the job people would crinkle their noses at. So now with our first-century noggins on, we begin Luke chapter 2...

WOW!

The messiah is born!

Jesus Christ!

THE SON OF GOD!

Here in the flesh!

And we read the next line....

Drumroll moment....

The king of kings is here...

And...Shepherds?!

THAT is who the LORD God decided to intimately reveal this grand moment all of creation had been leading up to?!

He decided to give a private concert of angels singing His heavenly glory...to smelly, lowly, "undesirable" shepherds?! Let's really let that sink in.

God decided to announce His Son...to one of the lowest worldly positions you could think of at the time.

The shepherds did not push back against God for choosing them. They did not "clean up" at any point in this angelic moment of glory. Further, when "...they spread the word..." (Luke 2:17) they did not change their occupation as "all...were amazed at what the shepherds said..." (Luke 2:18).

Because ultimately, this story has nothing to do with the shepherds.

Instead, it has everything to do with the God who sent His one and only Son.

It has everything to do with the God who decided the people most fit for this grand moment of celebration...were the shepherds.

Wow.

Praise and thanks be to God.

Bee Pettner
Care Ministry Intern

Notes:

Prayer Prompt: Day 16

Breathe; center yourself; and think, whisper, or shout into this time of prayer and reflection, “Come, Holy Spirit.”

Do you find yourself withholding anything (that could be your time, talents, treasure, your testimony, etc.) from situations and/or people that you deem to be lowly? How does the story of the shepherds challenge that notion?

Do you find yourself fighting against God in moments He has chosen in His glory and grace to reveal goodness to you because you are caught up in being “a shepherd” (what the world may think of as lowly, unclean, socially unliked, etc.)?

How does the story of the shepherds challenge that notion?
Read this passage again, out loud and slowly.

Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to go deeper?

Pray through the above with God and bring your community in to discuss what is uncovered during this time.

Song

“Jesus” by Jon Guerra

DAY 17

The Presentation in the Temple

Luke 2:22-35

Joy continues to be our focus this week. Today's reading presents an interesting scene. Imagine first-time parents traveling six miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem's Temple with their newborn son. Jewish law required every firstborn male be consecrated at the Temple. Mary, post-partum, likely walked or rode a donkey—neither choice, a pleasant one. As parents of the Christ child, were they overwhelmed, nervous, tired, hungry, and forced to purchase lowly birds? Did they feel shame bringing birds instead of a lamb for their offering? Do these facts present joy?

At the Temple, they meet Simeon, a man led by the Holy Spirit, who recognizes baby Jesus as the promised Messiah. He takes the baby from Mary and begins praising God! He declares he can now die in peace because God's promise has been fulfilled: to meet the Messiah before his death. Simeon is joyful. He experienced God's faithfulness! Simeon then prophesies—Jesus is our salvation and a light to the Gentiles. The parents were amazed! But Simeon continues, addressing Mary directly. He predicts the child will cause many in Israel to fall. Jesus will be opposed. Simeon concludes: a sword will pierce your very soul.

Again, these facts don't present joy! The point is that many of us walk through life this way. When we focus on ourselves or life's hardships, joy diminishes. Happiness differs from joy—happiness is circumstance-driven and fleeting. Joy remains constant because it comes from our relationship with Christ, not our circumstances.

Simeon knew this. He experienced joy, sustained through God's promise of the Messiah bringing salvation to all nations. He witnessed God's faithfulness and found complete joy through the Holy Spirit.

We don't know what Mary and Joseph felt that day, but they weren't clueless about Jesus' identity. They had witnessed God's presence and faithfulness repeatedly. Although they didn't know everything that would transpire, they knew Jesus' purpose. Their joy was complete in being chosen by God, and they trusted His plan. God is our Creator, Lord, Savior, and Deliverer. He never changes, and if we trust Him, we don't face life's valleys with despair. We can claim confident hope that Jesus will deliver us, even from the deepest valley. Our strength, contentment, and joy come through Him.

Psalm 33:20-22 and Romans 15:13 are my favorite verses that bring joy in uncertain circumstances. I pray you experience the joy of the season by claiming confident hope in Christ.

Leigh Ann Dilley
Women's Director

Prayer Prompt: Day 17

How about Mary and Joseph's trust in the Lord?

Can you stand firm and confidently in the unknown?

What or who gives you strength?

What previous experiences have you had that required a period of waiting but ended with delighting in the Lord?

If you have not done so, write these memories down to remember how God was faithful.

Prayer

Lord, waiting on You seems to be a theme in your Word. Help us develop confidence and trust in You. May we have faith like Simeon and stand firm on Your promises, especially when the timing of Your fulfillment does not match up with our own.

Help us to experience the joy we have in You whenever our circumstances appear "less than." Bless us with joy this season as we remember Your son, Jesus, who was the fulfillment to many promises.

Song

"Now That I've Held Him in My Arms"
by Michael Card

Notes:

DAY 18

Simeon's Song

Luke 2.29-32

There are many songs throughout Scripture, and all of them, in one way or another, exalt God's character, faithfulness, holiness, and sovereignty. The Song of Simeon, known in Latin as the Nunc Dimittis ("Now you let your servant go"), is no different.

This brief but powerful song flowed from the heart of an old man who had waited his entire life for one sacred moment: to see the Lord's promised Messiah before he died. As Simeon held the infant Jesus in his arms, he knew that God had kept His word. The long-awaited Savior had come and with Him came peace.

Simeon's declaration is the Gospel in miniature. He proclaims that he has seen salvation itself, not as an idea or a doctrine, but as a person, Jesus Christ. The baby he cradled was God's rescue plan wrapped in human flesh.

And this salvation, Simeon sings, is for all people. The good news of Jesus is not hidden or reserved for a select few, but instead it is open, visible, and available to everyone who believes. In Christ, the light of heaven pierces the darkness of the world. He reveals God to those who never knew Him and fulfills the ancient hope of Israel. Jesus is both the Light of the world and the Glory of God's people.

Donny Abbott
Senior Executive Pastor



Prayer Prompt: Day 18

For centuries, believers have recited Simeon's song during evening prayers; a reminder that just as each day ends in peace, so too will our lives, when we rest in Christ. The Nunc Dimittis invites us this Advent season to find that same peace; the deep, unshakable peace that comes from seeing and knowing Jesus, God's salvation made flesh.

Take a moment to pray Simeon's song yourself today.

Notes:

DAY 19

Anna the Prophetess

Luke 2:36-38

Anna, a prophetess, is mentioned in only three verses of Scripture. Yet, her life was an example of devotion, perseverance, and joy in the midst of sorrow.

Unfortunately, she was widowed after seven years of marriage and stayed single for the next 84 years of her life. Although Scripture doesn't outline what she did right after her husband's passing, we can assume she went to the Temple straightaway. Instead of letting grief overtake her, she spent decades dedicated to the Lord. Through her sorrow, she chose JOY.

Perhaps we could learn a lesson or two from Anna. I wonder what our life would be like if we chose JOY in the midst of our grief, sadness, or in the waiting. Sometimes we have to initially choose joy even when we don't necessarily feel like it.

Leading up to this moment, Jesus has just been born. Anna arrived just in time to witness Simeon's blessing of baby Jesus (verses 25-35). What a holy moment that must have been. Scripture tells us that Anna's first reaction was to thank God because Jesus was the One she had been waiting for. Then she went to share it with everyone. She recognized the miracle she had just witnessed and couldn't keep it to herself.

After a lifetime of waiting, Anna was able to experience the truest form of JOY by meeting her Savior in the flesh. The one she had worshipped in the Temple for years prior, she now saw face to face. Getting to spread the good news of Immanuel, the Messiah, the Redeemer, and the One who would fulfill all the prophecies – Anna was truly blessed. Now, that is a Christmas miracle!

Kaylee Strouse
Missions and Prayer Admin



Prayer Prompt: Day 19

How can you find joy in the midst of sorrow? How can you focus on the Lord during those times like Anna did?

What part of Anna's story can you relate to most?

During this holiday season, how can you cultivate a heart devoted to the Lord?

Song

"He Shall Reign Forevermore" by Chris Tomlin

Notes:



DAY 20

The Visit of the Magi

Matthew 2:1-12

When the Lord comes, will you be ready?

In Matthew 2, we read of King Herod, the Israelites, and the Magi's reactions to the birth of Jesus - his first arrival. In verse 3, the Magi - highly respected astronomers in their time - immediately share this good news with King Herod, expecting him to share in their excitement. This is not what we read. Not only is Herod terrified, but most of Jerusalem is as well. While King Herod's response makes sense given the threat to his power and reigning authority, the Israelites' disposition is puzzling. Why, after all this time waiting for the Messiah, aren't they compelled to celebrate their King has finally come?

From the Magi, we see a radically different response, one that's joyful and filled with hope. In verse 11, the Magi arrive to the house where Jesus is, and overcome, they kneel and worship Him. After the hundreds of years God's people were waiting for the Messiah, this seems like the proper response. From the moment the star appeared, to when they finally see Jesus, the Magi are spurred on by joy to meet their long-awaited King.

In our hearts, we hope to be like the Magi, yet we often struggle to get there. It's easy sometimes to criticize the Israelites for their fear, but if we're honest, we can be just like them. The difference between the Israelites and the Magi wasn't belief, but readiness. The Magi traveled hundreds of miles with expectant and joyful hearts, ready to worship and receive their King.

In our own waiting, we're graciously invited to remember God's promise to His people - fulfilled by the arrival of his son, Jesus, into the world. We're reminded our joy comes from God's character of faithfulness. That because of His faithfulness, we can have joy that leads to worship, like we see through the story of the Magi. Let us be expectantly joyful while we wait for our King's second arrival, and may we be a people who are ready to receive Him when He does.

Ana Dean
Digital Content Specialist

Prayer Prompt: Day 20

Where is an area of your life where God is gently reminding you of his faithfulness?

How is God inviting you into joy and worship?

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his
pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love
endures forever; his faithfulness
continues through all generations. “
(Psalm 100)

Song

“I’ll Be Ready” by Tiffany Hudson

Notes:



DAY 21

The Gifts of the Wise Men

Matthew 2:11

Like every year, you are buying presents for loved ones you will gather with at Christmas. You put thought into what to get, personalizing every gift as a way of acknowledging who the recipient is and honoring your relationship with that person.

Matthew chapter 2 tells of wise men who followed a star to Bethlehem. They asked around where they could find Jesus. In Matthew 2:11, we read that when they found Him, they offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Even more than what you will place around the tree this year, these three gifts to Jesus were intentional and rich with meaning, they were symbols of (1) who Jesus was, and (2) what He would accomplish.

Gold was a gift for royalty, and in presenting it the wise men acknowledged that Jesus was a King. Frankincense was a gift for deity, and the wise men recognized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Myrrh was a spice used to anoint a body for a funeral, and the wise men foreshadowed the death of Jesus.

These three gifts ask three profound questions, ones you and I, and every living person, must answer in our time on earth. The gold asks if we believe that Jesus is indeed a King, that He rules over every part of creation. The frankincense asks if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the one true God, sent from Heaven. The myrrh asks if we believe in the death of Jesus and the reason for it- that He died for our sins, so that in believing in Him we can be reconciled to God.

Jon Rorvik
Windsor Hospitality Director

Prayer Prompt: Day 21

Meditate on what these three gifts from the wise men meant.

Do you truly believe that Jesus is King over everything, including your life? That there are no other gods but Him? And that you needed Jesus to come die for you because your sin separated you from Him?

Think about when you have spent a lot of time planning a gift for a loved one.

Ask God to help you be as intentional in offering gifts to Him as the wise men were, thus showing Him that He rules over your life and thanking Him for offering a way to be reconciled with God.

Notes:

DAY 22

The Light of the World

John 1:1-14

I sit here clinging to my warm cup of coffee, daydreaming about those long, warm summer nights that have never ending light. As the winter solstice just happened yesterday and we experienced the shortest day of the year, you cannot help but feel the weight of darkness and long for brighter days.

This longing for light is not just seasonal—it's spiritual. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in Genesis, sin entered and spiritual darkness began. Throughout the Old Testament, we witnessed this darkness unfold. The days of Noah—dark. The days of Moses—dark. While God manifested His presence in a pillar of fire, the Israelites repeatedly disobeyed and allowed sin, idol worship, and darkness to rule. The people of Israel went on to experience dark times during the period of the judges and even more so, under the rule of their corrupt kings.

Would the darkness ever end? The people waited. They hoped. Waiting for the light of salvation to come as it grew only darker. Longing for a light to break the darkness. O come, O come, Emmanuel! Jesus. God with us.

As our sun gives daylight to the world and dispels darkness, Jesus arrived to bring light to the whole world and light to our dark and broken hearts. Only Jesus—fully man and fully God—could save us from darkness.

Isaiah prophesied this hope: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone...For to us a child is born, to 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” (Isaiah 9:2, 9:6).

Our church will hold its annual Christmas Eve service in two days, and we will get to tangibly see light overcome the darkness! Hundreds of people will light candles, illuminating the room and declare that Jesus is the light of the world. Darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. Light rules over darkness. Jesus declares in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

May we walk in the light of Christ this Advent season and carry the light with us everywhere we go. May the Prince of Peace rule and reign in our hearts as we face this season and all it may bring. Finally, I pray for joy and laughter to fill your home as you are illuminated by the hope of Christ.

Kaila Saxton
Worship Ministry Assistant

Prayer Prompt: Day 22

Reflect on the contrast between the long, dark nights of winter and the bright, endless light of summer. Let this physical darkness remind you of the spiritual darkness that entered the world through sin—and the deep longing for light that followed.

Begin by thanking God for sending Jesus, the Light of the World, into our brokenness.

Reflect on what it means for Jesus to be your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Pray for areas in your life or in the world that feel dark right now. Ask Jesus to shine His light into those places.

Invite the Holy Spirit to help you walk in the light of Christ this Advent season. Ask for strength to carry His light into your home, workplace, and community.

Pray for Timberline's Christmas Eve service. Pray that every candle lit would be a symbol of hope, and that hearts would be drawn to the true Light: Jesus Christ.

Song

"How Long, How Long?" by Providence.

Notes:

DAY 23

God with Us -Emmanuel



Matthew 1:23

I just love the hauntingly, beautiful opening notes of the hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”. This song was taken straight from Scripture centuries ago prophesying Christ’s birth, and you can practically still hear the pining of Israel’s soul begging for God to draw near within the lyrics. As we head into the pinnacle of Advent, it sometimes feels like our souls are pining for more of the same. “Come, Come God! We still need you.” Now, amid the hustle and bustle, the presents and presence, we sometimes get caught up in doing all of the things and yet, we miss the key element of Immanuel. We pine for God with us. We are caught up in the joy of the moment of His glorious birth, and yet, we are also laboring in the waiting for His Presence yet to come when He returns and makes all of this chaotic world right. For some, this particular Advent season is heavy with loneliness, missing loved ones gone too soon, or the inescapable loneliness stemming from the cultural, digital superficial connection. Others are feeling the burden of prodigal loved ones that are walking in true darkness away from God.

Still, others are fighting through their own wildernesses of enduring pain and heartache that seem to have no end in sight. The spectrum is wide and deep, all of us pining for Emmanuel, to feel him, to see him come in mighty ways. We can be both, as He is also both. He is Emmanuel that has come and will be coming to be with us again. So today as we round the final turn into Advent, I challenge you to pause and sit with the One who is Emmanuel, who loved us enough to be “God with us”. Revel in the lyrics of the hymn and rejoice knowing He has already conquered the grave and is here to bring us hope, peace, and healing even amid the chaos. He is with us, and I pray you feel His presence with you today.

Lindsay Bryant
Spiritual Formation Admin

Prayer Prompt: Day 23

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Prayer

Father God, thank you for being Emmanuel, for being the God who loved us so much that You took on flesh to come and be with us. I pray that You will give us eyes to see You, and hearts to give You room this season. Wrap us in Your perfect peace as we lean in and wait for You to come again and make all things right. We love You and are so grateful that even now amid the chaos we can find joy and walk in hope knowing that You are working all things out for our good and Your glory. We pray all of these things in the powerful name of Jesus. May it be so.

Song

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”
by Sovereign Grace Music

Notes:

DAY 24

The Greatest Gift

2 Corinthians 9:15

In 2 Corinthians 9:10-15, Paul is writing about generosity. He's showing us what happens when God's love flows through His people. In verse 10, Paul says God is the One who "supplies seed to the sower." In other words, every good thing you give: your time, talents, and treasure, all start with God's provision.

When we reach verse 15, Paul can't hold it in anymore. He bursts out, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" It's the exclamation for us to realize that all generosity, all grace, all love we give is rooted in the greatest act of love ever given... Jesus Himself.

This Advent season, we celebrate the greatest love story made real in a Savior. Through Jesus, we see a love that could not be broken, and by His grace, we are all saved. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Alex Arellano
Elementary Pastor



Prayer Prompt: Day 24

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift beyond words; Jesus, Your Son. Help me see that every good thing in my life flows from Your generous heart. Teach me to live as a reflection of Your love, giving freely and loving deeply, just as You have done for me. Amen.

Song

"Defender" by Kings Kaleidoscope

Notes:



DAY 25

Christmas Day - Celebrating the Incarnation

John 1:14

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”(John 1:14, NIV).

This verse succinctly and perfectly describes for us the summit of Scripture regarding the incarnation of Jesus. All of who God is and wants to display to His people is made tangible by the person of Jesus Christ. All the glory of God is found in a baby born in a cave and laid in manger on one starry night.

The word “dwelling” has so much rich and theological depth to it. This moment fulfills a deep, ancient longing written into the very fabric of creation. In Genesis 1, God formed the heavens and the earth not simply as a universe of order and beauty, but as a cosmic temple — a sacred space where He would dwell with His image-bearers. The garden was meant to be a meeting place of heaven and earth, Creator and creation. But sin fractured that fellowship. Humanity left the garden; God’s presence became veiled behind the curtain of the temple.

Then came Jesus. The Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us — echoing the Old Testament tabernacle where God’s presence once rested in the midst of His people. Only this time, there was no tent or temple required. He Himself was the meeting place between heaven and earth. In Christ, the cosmic temple is restored. God’s glory once again fills the world through His presence — not in a building, but in a person.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s perfect love. This is the love of God made visible — love that doesn’t shout from afar, but steps close, takes on flesh, and moves into the neighborhood. Heaven has come home to earth.

Aaron Hanson
Senior Pastor

Prayer Prompt: Day 25

The incarnation is more than a miracle—it's an invitation. God did not wait for humanity to reach up to Him; He came down to us. The Word who once spoke creation into being now speaks love in the language of presence.

As you reflect on this truth, consider where God might be “moving into the neighborhood” of your own life. Where might He be inviting you to see His glory not in distant majesty, but in the nearness of His love?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for dwelling among us—for stepping into our world, our pain, and our story. May Your presence fill every space of my heart and home. Teach me to recognize Your glory in the ordinary, and to carry Your love into the world around me. Heavenly Father, let my life become a dwelling place for Your Spirit. Amen.

Notes:

