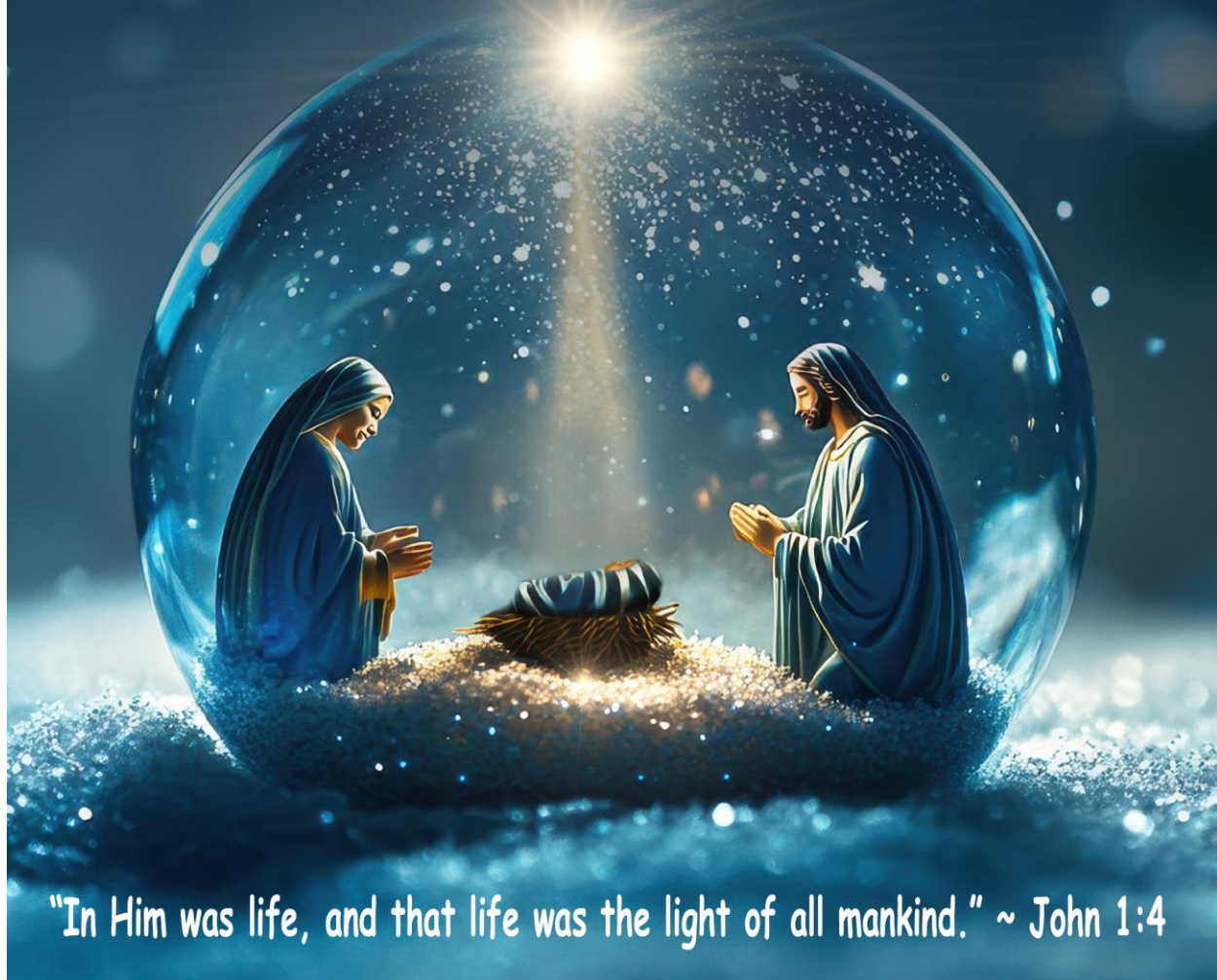


# *Light of the World*

## 2025 Advent Devotional



**November 30, 2025**

*Genesis 3:14–15*

I sometimes forget that the story of Christmas didn't start in Bethlehem ... it started in the garden of Eden. Right after sin entered the world, when shame and separation first broke the hearts of Adam and Eve, God made a promise. Instead of giving up on humanity, He whispered hope into a place of deep failure.

That means something to me, because I know what it feels like to fall short, to sit in the mess I've made, wondering if God could still love me. And yet, Genesis 3:15 reminds me that God's love runs deeper than my sin. From the very beginning, He planned redemption. He saw our brokenness, and even then, He was already preparing a Savior.

Advent is a season of waiting, but it's also a season of remembering that God *comes through* on His promises. The "offspring of the woman" was born in Bethlehem, just as God said. Jesus came quietly, not with judgment but with mercy. He came to crush the power of sin that holds us captive.

When I look at the manger, I see the fulfillment of a promise made thousands of years earlier—a promise that even my worst moments can't undo.

*Britt Scott*

**December 1, 2025**

*Romans 15:7-13*

Advent is a time of hope. It is a time when Christians look to be renewed in faith. Romans 15 asserts the need for unity among Jews and Gentiles in order to bring about hope through God's word. This passage shows us that it's God's intent to unite, not divide nations, cultures, and people. It shows us that Christianity was meant to unite, not divide.

At a time of unprecedented division in this country, this world, where wars and clashes of culture dominate global politics, we are called to remember that God's word calls us to unite in faith, not divide in self-righteousness and judgment. The message of Christ's coming is an invitation of hope and a promise of redemption for all people.

*Kat Sander*

**December 2, 2025**

*2 Corinthians 5:21*

As I read this text from God's Word, it is a blessing to think about the wonderful gift of Jesus sent for us. I can think about Jesus' birth and life and what that means for me and my family. I do have family members who do not realize how this very special Christmas gift is ... really the only gift we need. I am comforted by a great God and His love for me, knowing He loves them just as much.

We are all sinners in need of a savior! I remind myself that a sin is a sin. Sure, we think our little white lies are not as bad as stealing, for example. However, in God's eyes it's all sin. He loves us so much that He sent his Son as a baby for us to be loved. This baby Jesus had the weight of all our sin and shame on His shoulders, and He took it with an unjudging heart. I am so thankful that He is the judge of our transgressions and allows us to come to Him again and again for His cleansing forgiveness.

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, let us allow Him into our hearts and share that love with others who do not yet know Him. We are given His righteousness, and that is a perfect reason to celebrate!

*Maureen Brooks*

**December 3, 2025**

*Luke 1:26–35*

Christmas is a joyous time filled with decorations, lights, and the sounds of Christmas music. I have three favorite Christmas songs that were introduced to me throughout various stages of my life: “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” and “Mary, Did You Know?”

When I was a child in elementary school, we had a Christmas program every year. I remember standing on stage in a red velvet dress, singing “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” This took place during the 1970s, and I can still remember all the words.

At home, my family listened to Glen Campbell’s *That Christmas Feeling*. “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” was on the album, and Glen sang the song with such depth. My favorite lyric was, “From now on your troubles will be miles away,” because this is how I feel about Christmas.

After becoming a mother, I really started enjoying the song “Mary, Did You Know?” I sometimes wonder ... did Mary really know? The angel Gabriel appeared to this young, seemingly insignificant woman and told her that she would have a virgin birth and deliver the Son of God. Mary must have been astonished by this news. She watched her Son turn water into wine and ultimately suffer death on a cross. My three favorite lines in the song are “When you kiss your little baby, you’ve kissed the face of God,” “The sleeping child you’re holding is the great I Am,” and “The child that you delivered will soon deliver you.” What great joy to know that Mary nurtured baby Jesus into the Savior who saves His people from sin. He is the reason for Christmas, and our faith in Him is the gift of peace of salvation.

*Jennifer Dikes*

**December 4, 2025**

*Matthew 3:1–12*

*Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere  
Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born*

There's this old hymn and then there are Matt 3:1–12, Mark 1:2–8, Luke 3:2–9, and John 1:6–28 ... very similar references in all four gospels. It seems like this John person may be important to God's plan. All four gospels refer to the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3. This prophecy of Isaiah occurred some 700 years before John was born. We read the story of a wild man wearing camel skins and eating locusts and honey, and we tend to move on. I'm thinking we should slow down and really consider who this fellow John was. Somehow, I had always missed it, but Jesus tells us in Matt 11:11 that no man born of woman is greater than John the Baptist. His ministry was critical to the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

John's parents were quite old with no children when an angel spoke to John's father Zechariah and told him that his wife Elizabeth would bear a child. The child in her womb would be filled with the Holy Spirit. He would be great before the Lord. His name would be *John*. Seem's kind of ordinary, but God does things like that. The news was delivered to Zechariah by the angel Gabriel. Are you starting to get the sense that God has a plan that he is working on here? God considers all the little details. The meaning of the names of John's parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, are "God Remembers" (Zechariah) and "Pledged to God" (Elizabeth). A plan? Seems likely.

The Bible tells us that many people in the region were responding to John's call of a baptism of repentance. Historians tell us that John had a huge following. He was possibly one of the most well-known people of his time. John was bold in declaring the coming of God's chosen Messiah, He warned the leadership of the church not to miss out!

*Mark Tracht*

**December 5, 2025**

*Luke 1:46–56*

When Mary finds out she's going to be the mother of Jesus, she doesn't just sit quietly and think about it—she bursts into a song of praise.

Mindful, Merciful, Humble, and Blessed are the words that catch my attention from Mary's Song of Praise. These words tug at me, and I think I know why. Mary's Song feels like it could be *my* song.

Mary starts by saying that God has been *mindful* of her. That means He saw her, noticed her, and cared about her, even though she was just an ordinary young woman. That's a beautiful truth for us today: God notices us. He sees our worries and our hopes. God knows *my* story and is mindful of me.

Mary praises God for being *merciful*. She knows none of us are perfect, and God's mercy is bigger than our mistakes. God choosing to love and forgive us instead of turning away is another beautifully personal truth. Being a recipient of God's mercy is overwhelming to me. Mary also celebrates how God lifts the *humble*. Jesus came quietly, born in a stable, reminding us that God's power shows up in the most humble and simple places. Humbling ourselves before God creates space for the Spirit's work. It's me, simple me, that God lifts. Mary says that she is *blessed*. She's part of God's story—and that's the greatest blessing of all. As believers, we're blessed too. We're loved, known, and invited to be a blessing to others. I am blessed.

How has God been mindful and merciful to you/your family? How can you show humility and be a blessing to someone else this week? What might you include in *your* song of praise?

*Erica Barton*

**December 6, 2025**

*Isaiah 35:1–10*

Maybe you've seen it. I'm talking about a super-bloom in the desert Southwest. I haven't, but from what I can tell, those who have would describe it as magnificent, even glorious. No wonder that Isaiah's vision of Hope begins with a desert bloom—something that the Israelites could relate to possibly having witnessed it many times in their journeys. He also speaks of a time when everything will be restored. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk again. It is a time when God acts, as He promised, to restore His people and provide a way back to Him. It will be a time of great rejoicing. He will provide a way (a highway) or a path to righteousness that is secure and safe to travel. A road home for all who believe.

During this Advent season, if you are wandering through your own kind of wilderness, take Hope in knowing that the way has been made known through the birth of the babe in Bethlehem. Jesus, the Messiah, is the Way (highway, if you will). By walking in faith along His path, one will find peace, joy, and hope found only in Him. Isaiah envisioned it, Jesus lived it, and we can experience it today. Witnessing God's own "super-bloom" will be something else ... totally awesome!

Amen, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come."

*Rick Schroeder*



**December 7, 2025**

*Isaiah 7:10–17*

Have you ever had the opportunity to name someone? Or speak into the process? Many of us as parents get the chance to give our child a name ...

... before we know them and their personality,

... hoping that it will stand the test of time,

... praying that kids won't figure out a way to turn it into a mean nickname.

It's a lot of pressure.

God, via the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14), says a son will be born to a virgin and called Immanuel—God with us.

Now you might say, “But His name is Jesus!?” Which is very true and that name literally means “the Lord saves” or “Yahweh is salvation.” The angel gives this name to Joseph in a dream, fulfilling what the prophet had said (Matthew 1:21–23).

Jesus left His heavenly home to be with us here on earth to save us. He could not fulfill the name Jesus without fulfilling the name Immanuel. He chose to dwell among us.

And Jesus, the One who saves, is still with us. In the ups and the downs. In the chaos and in the calm. In the good and the bad. He is with us, “to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Talk about living up to a name. What an amazing and loving God we have!

*Ashley (“ash tree meadow”) Bayless*

**December 8, 2025**

*Isaiah 9:2–7*

My 8-year-old daughter loves to see what's under the tree at Christmas time—especially when she knows there is the promise of a *really* exciting gift under the tree. Sometimes her dad and I mention how great and how wonderful this gift will be, building the excitement and anticipation even more! She can see the sparkle of the wrapping paper reflecting the light of the tree lights, and a large, beautiful bow on top! Oh, the anticipation and excitement every time she catches a glimpse of this special gift, wondering what it could be and just how great it might be!

Now imagine the promise of a most wonderful gift whispered over hundreds of years but still having to wait, generations coming and going, waiting in anticipation! Can you believe that Isaiah was giving us a hint—dare I say, a *really* good description—of the gift that was to come!

*“For a child has been born for us. A son given for us. Authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6)

This year as you marvel at the gifts under the tree with a childlike spirit, remember the beautiful promise of God's gift of a savior—a most wonderful gift that was made and fulfilled! Remember the subtle promises of a small babe who would come not wrapped in shiny paper with a bow but instead wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger where animals fed ... a long-ago promise that was fulfilled in the most humble and spectacular way! As we wait expectantly in this season of advent, let us reflect on the many ways God has already fulfilled his promises in our lives.

*Erin Young*

**December 9, 2025**

*Isaiah 62:10-12*

Have you ever waited for a special guest to come visit? Perhaps right now you are expecting friends or family to come visit for the holidays. Filled with anticipation and excitement, do you sit around only looking out the window, waiting? No! Most likely, you prepare. Maybe you are planning meals, grocery shopping, cooking. Maybe pulling out special dishes. Maybe you are cleaning and tidying up. At the very least, you might be clearing the entryway and turning on lights to create a welcoming entrance.

How much does your excitement grow if you know the guest will be bringing you a gift? God's people were promised that their Savior was coming. But they needed to prepare for His coming. They needed to make a way for the rest of His people to be with Him. Their Savior, our Savior, has come. He is Jesus the Christ. We also need to prepare the way for others, because not only has Jesus come ... He has come to bring all of us the gifts of salvation, freedom, and victory.

What enemies are you battling today? Jesus already came. He already won the victory over your enemies. As we celebrate the advent of our Savior, we can freely celebrate because He has already won the battle over our enemies. We can now be called the People the Lord Set Free.

*Heather Porter*

**December 10, 2025**

*Isaiah 52:7–10*

### The Proclamation of Good News

No other Old Testament prophet is quoted as much in the New Testament as the prophet Isaiah. This is because of his frequent descriptions of the coming of the Messiah and the gift of finding fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not only did Isaiah prophesy those things, but he foretold the virgin birth of the Lord (Isaiah 7:14).

When I first read Isaiah 52:7–10, I was sure it was a prophesy of the coming of Jesus Christ. Then I dug a little deeper and began to believe that there was more to it.

The people of Israel were long suffering and enslaved for ages. At this time, the Assyrians, at the hands of their king, Sennacherib, were subduing the kingdom of Israel and inflicting terror and mayhem upon the entire kingdom of Judah. However, God had made a promise. He told the people of Israel, “The captives will be released. Imprisonment, starvation, and death will not be your fate” (Isaiah 51:14). Chapter 52 of Isaiah tells of when the Kingdom of Israel is given the good news that peace and salvation are coming, that the God of Israel reigns, and that they will see before their very eyes the Lord returning to Jerusalem.

As I pondered those verses, I realized that they could have a double meaning: First is the immediate salvation of those who are suffering, and second is the foretelling of the coming of the Lord some 800 years in the future.

When these verses are read without context, it’s easy to see why one’s first thought is that they speak only of the prophesy of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. What was your first thought when you read those verses?

There are so many predictions in the Old Testament that come to truth in the New Testament. These things could not be a coincidence. Knowing this gives me comfort in the fact that Jesus is alive, and His truth will endure forever!

*Josh Williams*

**December 11, 2025**

*Isaiah 30:18–20*

“Ah, stubborn children.”

Maybe you’ve said that about your kids. Maybe your parents said it about you. This is how Isaiah chapter 30 starts. God is frustrated with his stubborn and rebellious children. The children referred to in Isaiah 30 are the people of Israel, but God has likely said it about you and me.

In this chapter, God is frustrated that His people are trusting in a foreign army to protect them rather than turning to him for protection. We, too, often put our trust in things other than God.

Chapter 30 then takes a sharp turn in verse 18 where it says, “The Lord waits to be gracious to you.” The mighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe *waits* for *us* to turn to *Him*. He first draws his children to Him, but we wander away so easily. Then He waits for us.

What does He give his people when we turn to Him? He gives us mercy and justice. We will weep no more. Our eyes will see Him as our teacher. He will tell us the way we should go. It’s hard for us to trust God like this, because we don’t always see those blessings in this world. There is injustice. We cry. We can’t see Him with our physical eyes or hear Him with our physical ears.

The Bible ends with all His children resurrected to live with Him in a new heaven and earth, where there will be no “mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.”

This is the ultimate hope that the coming Christ will bring into this world. For now, however, we are like the people of Isaiah 30 who must trust God in a world where that hope has not fully appeared to us. God give us faith to always turn to him.

*Rob Stephens*

**December 12, 2025**

*Matthew 11:2–15*

**Are You the One?** *(A song inspired by Matthew 11:2–15)*

**Verse 1**

In the silence of the cell,  
John was waiting, time would tell.  
“Is He the One, or must we find  
Another hope to ease our mind?”

**Chorus**

The blind now see, the lame now run,  
The poor are loved, the lost are won.  
No crown of gold, no royal throne,  
But grace that makes the heart His home.

**Verse 2**

Not dressed in silk, not palace-born,  
But in the wild, through wind and thorn.  
A voice that cried, “Prepare the way!”  
The prophet burned for truth that day.

**Chorus**

The blind now see, the lame now run,  
The poor are loved, the lost are won.  
No crown of gold, no royal throne,  
But grace that makes the heart His home.

**Bridge**

Oh, blessed are the ones who trust,  
Though answers come in humble dust.  
The least shall rise, the proud shall fall,  
The kingdom waits for hearts that call.

**Final Chorus**

The blind now see, the lame now run,  
The poor are loved, the lost are won.  
No crown of gold, no royal throne,  
But grace that makes the heart His home.

You can LISTEN to our song using this link: <https://suno.com/s/4XiZGIJ8ldQZgyXI>  
Or a second version here: <https://suno.com/s/gqwiuSXvuJ3s4dPJ>

We hope you liked our song and that you will find yourself singing it throughout the day! Can you imagine what it was like to be John the Baptist? His whole life was about pointing to the coming of Christ the Savior, and Here He Was! The One that he was sent to prophesy about was truly here on Earth, performing miracles and proclaiming the Good News! John was locked away in prison, yet his concern was not about his own life and instead focused on whether this Jesus was the One! Lord, as we prepare this advent season for the birth of the Christ Child, may our hearts and minds be fully focused on Him. We know that we are easily distracted by so many things, but we pray that we can be more like John the Baptist, expectant and hopeful as we wait for our coming Lord Jesus.

*Written & composed by John & Julie Blyckert, with the help of AI*

**December 13, 2025**

*Matthew 1:18–25*

I don't know about you, but I love Christmas shopping, getting the perfect gifts under the tree for the people you love. And then planning and going to fun events with friends and family. It seems like the best season ever! But then reality hits. The flu goes around, your car gets stuck in the snow, money is tight this year, or maybe it's the first Christmas without a loved one. The picture-perfect Christmas we imagined isn't going as planned. God often has a different idea for us.

In Matthew, we see the story of Jesus' birth through Joseph's eyes, and his plan was very different from God's. Mary was betrothed to Joseph when he found out that she was pregnant. Joseph was considered a righteous, just man. He wanted to quietly divorce Mary and uphold his reputation ... until an angel of the Lord came to him saying, *“Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matt 1:20–21). After Joseph woke up, he obeyed, and Jesus was born.

Joseph was planning a normal wedding and a normal life. When his plans weren't going how he envisioned, he wanted to take a U-turn out of there. But God steered him back, and he became part of something far greater—the birth of the Messiah, fulfilling a long-awaited prophecy.

Just because your plans don't go the way you imagined doesn't mean God's won't. God works in mysterious ways. I'm sure you can think of something right now that isn't going your way, especially during Christmas. Trust God's plans this holiday season and remember His promises to Joseph.

*Katherine (Kate) McKanna*

**December 14, 2025**

*Zechariah 9:9-10*

I can't speak for y'all, but if I'm honest about me ...

I truly want to live the simple life, but I fill my life with so many complications.

I want to live at peace, but I'm quick to talk badly about others.

I want to give to the poor and needy, but I'm going to make sure that I have more than enough for myself first.

I want to walk in faith, but I'll do my best to figure it out on my own first.

Too often I ride my warhorse triumphantly into the city through the main celebration gate instead of riding on the lowly donkey through the side gate.

But ... I know a Guy.

And that Guy was born in a small barn and placed in a manger. The first people He was presented to were shepherds.

This Guy truly lived His life peacefully and directed everyone to look toward His Father.

And because of this Man and His Father, and Their amazing grace, all our sins can be forgiven, and we are given the gift of eternal life.

Amen for our coming Christ!

*Clay Nelson*



**December 15, 2025**

*Isaiah 11:1-10*

What a beautiful passage Isaiah writes of the coming Messiah, so full of peace and hope. He is the Son of God yet will be a shoot from the stump of Jesse, the son of a man who is a descendant of David. The Spirit of the Lord will be upon Him. He will rule righteously, equitably, and faithfully. He will be a glorious, wise, and just King veiled in the being of a humble servant. He will strike the wicked with His Word, the sword of His mouth. This prophecy was fulfilled with Jesus' coming, His first Advent, resulting in great benefits we all enjoy right now through His death and resurrection: forgiveness of our sins, eternal life we are already living, justification in our Heavenly Father's eyes. But He is also the promise of things yet to be fulfilled.

During this time, let us be focused on those unimaginable, not yet fulfilled, parts of Isaiah's prophecy: things to come at His second Advent. We at last will see Him. We will see the wounds that prove His great love for us. We will, on the great and awesome Day of the Lord, be united with all those who went before us. We will no longer be troubled by the things of this world. We will see sin, death, and the devil finally and fully destroyed. We will experience, with every sense, the fullness and unobscured glory of His Kingdom, ruled by that same righteous, equitable, and faithful King, whose glory will no longer be veiled. We will live in the perfection of His renewed creation, everything in harmony, the lion lying with the lamb, as it was in the beginning and forever shall be.

*Rick & Jill Fiedler*

**December 16, 2025**

*Micah 5:2*

Every year it happens. December arrives and suddenly everyone says, *“How is it already December? Where did the year go?”* I find myself saying it too, as we stand just weeks from 2026, still trying to remember last spring. Time seems to slip through our fingers faster each year. The days crawl, but the years sprint. And before we know it, the calendar tells us we’ve reached Advent again.

In a season that feels hurried, Advent invites us to pause and remember something astonishing: The God we worship is not bound by time. Micah 5:2 whispers this truth:

*“O, Bethlehem Ephrathah... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be rule in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”*

The child born in Bethlehem was not beginning His story there. His “coming forth” stretches back to Genesis 1:1, to creation itself. Jesus didn’t *begin* in the manger; He entered it. As He declares in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am.” The same Jesus who was present at the beginning of all things entered our world as a baby over 2,000 years ago, and today, He is still with us until He returns to bring us home.

Micah’s prophecy reminds us that while we feel time racing past, Christ stands outside of it, unhurried and eternal. The One who holds all human history—past, present, and future—chose to enter a specific moment in a small town, at just the right time, to step into our fleeting world into His everlasting one.

So, when we ask, “Where did the year go?” we can also remember: The eternal King is not lost in our rush. He steps into our fast-moving days to anchor us in something unchanging, steady, and eternal.

*Lindsey Ohling*

**December 17, 2025**

*1 John 1:5–9*

When John says that “God is light,” he points us to what advent is all about: the coming of Jesus, who is the Light of the World, breaking through the darkness. Advent reminds us that God didn’t stay distant; He entered our world to bring hope, purity, and truth. In Jesus, there is no darkness at all, only everlasting love. Therefore we can’t say we walk with God and still cling to the shadows. Advent calls us to step into His light, to let Him uncover what’s hidden and renew what’s broken. Walking in the light doesn’t mean being perfect; it means having honesty before God, letting His grace transform us from day to day.

Verse 7 gives us hope: “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.” Jesus came not just to show us the light, but to make a way for us to live in it through His birth, life, and sacrifice, bringing rejoicing and connection to God. In verse 9, we find the meaning of advent: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and willing to forgive us.” God’s forgiveness is steady, certain, and completely fulfilling. As we wait for Christ’s coming, both in memory and hope, we are reminded that His light still shines into every dark part of ourselves that we hide from even our closest friends, family members, and sometimes ourselves. No shadow is too deep for His light to reach, and no sin is too hidden for His Grace to cleanse.

To reflect on everything this Advent, take time to let God’s light search your heart. Confess and receive His eternal forgiveness and walk renewed. The same light that shone in Bethlehem still shines for us today, inviting us out of darkness and into peace.

*Kaden Harwood*

**December 18, 2025**

*Philippians 2:1-11*

Being humble is not in our nature. My sinful desires push me to be proud and arrogant. I want to show the world that I can do anything. If I work hard and push myself, I will be admired. Jesus comes along and says that is not His way. In our reading, Paul says that Jesus “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant ... he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.”

I fight this desire to be someone, and will until I am called home, but I know a peace that comes from swallowing my pride and arrogance. From catechism class, I remember the third article of the Apostle’s Creed speaking of sanctification:

“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and keeps me in the true faith.”

I cannot believe on my own; it is all about Jesus. Every morning, I wake up and renew my baptismal vows to not make the day about me but to walk humbly. There is a song sung at Camp Lutherhaven (in Idaho) based on Micah 6:8:

“He has shown thee, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.”

To walk humbly and have a reverent relationship with God is what we are called to do. My prayer is that as we look at celebrating the coming of Christ, we examine our hearts to work hard not for ourselves and our pride but for Jesus and the saving grace He has given us.

*Tom Neidhold*

**December 19, 2025**

*John 1:1–9*

Each year, my cousins get together for a weekend away; however, this year's Leavenworth adventure became an impossibility when my grandmother was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer two weeks before our trip. Rather than gallivanting off for a fun-filled pretzel and beer-cheese vacation, I found myself composing a sorrowful message explaining the heartbreaking reality of my grandmother's imminent passing and why I couldn't make this year's Bavarian adventure. I was met with a simple response: "We are coming to Spokane." In an instant, without having to ask, my cousin, out of love, came to be with me. In a time that felt heavy and dark, she showed up. She closed the gap of distance between us. She met me where I was, and she sat with me.

Jesus does this too. Jesus closes the gap.

In the opening of John's Gospel, we are reminded of the hypostatic union of Christ—wholly God and wholly man. The Word, who is Jesus, who is God, brought all things into existence. Jesus is the Light—the brightness and perfection of God's glory that is all powerful, omniscient, and cannot be diminished by darkness. Jesus is the almighty, exact imprint of God's nature in total divinity. Yet, Jesus is also man, in total human form. Born out of God's perfect love for us, Jesus bridges the gap of a sovereign God and lowly, meek man. He joins us, coming down from Heaven at His birth, as a Savior who understands and empathizes with our humanity. God uses John the Baptist to direct His people to see Jesus as the promised Light, made accessible so we could be pulled into a deep personal relationship with our Savior. Through Jesus' birth on Christmas Day, His life, crucifixion, and resurrection, Jesus invites us, "softly and tenderly" to "come home" and brings us into relationship with an up-close and personal God.

*Megan Van Cotthem*

**December 20, 2025**

*John 1:10–14*

In our household, when December hits, we go into full-speed Christmas mode. Our Alexa is set to Christmas carols playing louder than they should. We find a tree from the backyard to decorate and fill the base with presents. My personal highlight is the weekend we set aside for baking all the yummy Christmas goodies.

It's so easy to get distracted with the fun and the to-dos.

This is not a problem unique to our family or our country. As we read John 1:10–14, I wonder if this distraction is even unique to our era.

John points out, just a few years after Jesus's death, that the very reason for this season, the Word becoming flesh, often goes unnoticed. Jesus did not enter our world as one might expect from a King or a God. There were no decorations or treats. He came in humility and simplicity. He came to His own people, as a baby in a manger, and they did not recognize Him.

In the culture surrounding us, it's possible to celebrate the season without ever acknowledging this Savior who was born in a manger. Like the people of Israel who missed the Messiah, we too can overlook Him in the hustle and bustle.

The beauty of Advent is that it calls us to slow down, to quiet our hearts, and to recognize the miracle that took place over 2,000 years ago: The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

This Advent season, I hope that you and your family can pause and recognize Jesus in the manger, in your hearts, in your homes, and in our world.

*Beth Doohan*

**December 21, 2025**

*John 1:29–34*

*“I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.” (John 1:34)*

The only time I have been on a witness stand was when I was a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate—a volunteer who investigates a child’s situation and represents their best interest when there is abuse/neglect). I stayed up late writing the court report explaining my investigations, interview of the foster family, observation of mother-child visits, and reviewing social worker reports. Years later, I still remember the weight of testifying for the child’s best interest and the apprehension of having my evidence scrutinized.

I often feel uneasy when asked to “witness” for Christ, much like I did in my CASA role. In meditating on these verses, I contemplated John’s perspective as God’s chosen witness to Jesus’s arrival. Did the weight of responsibility ever feel heavy to him? What was it like to deeply grasp being chosen by God (“... to prepare the way of the Lord”; Luke 3:4)? How did it feel to boldly testify, as in John 1:29–31: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ ...” As I read this, I sense the words bursting out of John in exhilaration at the incredible message he gets to share!

I pray God instills in you and me the same excitement and expectation John must have felt as he bore witness to Jesus’s coming. Let this remind us to help prepare the way for Jesus in others’ lives, meeting their physical, emotional, or spiritual needs as opportunities arise. May we be encouraged to enthusiastically share our faith in the coming of “God’s Chosen One” by John’s example. Alleluia! Amen.

*Colleen McKanna*

**December 22, 2025**

*John 3:16–21*

When I was a puppy back in Chicago Land, the very first bible verse that my trainers taught me was John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

As I learned that verse, I just thought, “Wow! I can’t even begin to imagine the kind of love that God had for us ... to send His very own Son down to such an imperfect and sinful place as Earth!” If I were Jesus, I think I would have come into this world barking at all the people who wouldn’t give His parents a bed to sleep in, and at that bad Herod the King who already didn’t like baby Jesus before he was even born. I would have wanted to tell all those bad people that God was mad at them ... BUT the Bible says that Jesus did not come to condemn them. In fact, He came to SAVE all the people on Earth, despite the bad things they had said and done.

As I lay here on my dog bed tonight, I am looking up at the beautiful twinkling lights on our Christmas tree. They shine into this otherwise very dark room, and it reminds me of the incredible love of God and how Jesus is the light sent into a world filled with darkness. When my handlers and I go to minister to places filled with sadness, they tell me that we are bringing the light of Jesus to those we meet. May we remember this Advent that Jesus was sent to save us and to show us by His example how to be a light in a world that is filled with darkness.

*Isaac the Comfort Dog*



**December 23, 2025**

*Galatians 4:4-7*

The Apostle Paul is writing to the Galatians at this time because they were being taught by false teachers known as Judaizers. They believed that adherence to the Mosaic Law was a prerequisite for salvation *in addition* to faith in Jesus.

These verses tell me I am an adopted family member to this coming child. Through Him I am a receiver of an inheritance like no other. What belongs to Him belongs to me as well. I need not worry or live in fear of following a set of rules or laws as the Judaizers were demanding of the Jewish people. This was so contradictory to what Paul had taught them.

In God's word, He tells me I am his own child. He adopted me. This adoption is permanent. His Holy Spirit dwells in me and assures me of this through faith. What belongs to Him also belongs to me unconditionally.

"The Adoption Song" by Brandon Lake is so meaningful to me:

*I am adopted,  
I am beloved.  
It's my inheritance,  
I am a child of God.  
So when the liar  
Starts mouthing off,  
I'll sing in confidence  
My adoption song*

During this time of Advent, as I look forward to Jesus coming, I can sing with confidence the second verse of this song:

*I rebuke any spirit  
That's tried to keep me bound  
As I plead the blood of Jesus  
The accuser has no ground  
And my future is given, name is written  
In His nail scarred hands  
And forevermore, I know whose I am*

Be blessed this holy season knowing you are His child.

*Nola McCallum*

**December 24, 2025**

*Luke 2:1-20*

Longing for the Past and the Future

When I hear the story of Jesus's birth as accounted by Luke, I long for Christmases past. I see my brother and I dressed in Christmas jammies with a bowl of hot buttered popcorn. I hear the voice of Linus reading the Christmas story in Charlie Brown's Christmas Special. I recall marking the Sears catalog with my Christmas wish list. I remember the fear of being discovered on our quest to find hidden Christmas gifts. I still recall the best present ever was a Big Burger Grill. At 5 and 6 years old, my brother and I were set free to cook burgers on a 100-watt light bulb surrounded by reflectors. What could possibly go wrong?

Sixty-six Christmases have come and gone, and I still long for the safety, smells, warmth, and joy of Christmases past. I may not be a child any longer, but I still have the same desire to recreate my wonderful memories of Christmases past for my family today.

This year I find myself longing for future Christmases. You see, my family has changed. My dear wife, Cindy, died pretty quickly this year. She is resting in the comforting, eternal arms of Jesus, waiting. Waiting like the world had waited for the birth of Jesus Christ. This year for me is looking forward to Christmases in the future, when I will join with the great company of heaven, the angels, and all creation who look forward to the next time that Jesus comes to Earth to carry us home.

*Pastor Dave Noll*

**December 25, 2025**

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

Merry Christmas!

Good news: Your poverty has been exchanged with abundant wealth!

You might be thinking, *“Poverty? I’m doing just fine financially, thank you very much.”* Or maybe you’re at a place where you could use a financial boost and you are thinking, *“Nice! How do I cash in?”*

Poverty comes in different forms. We may not often think of poverty with such nuance, yet each of us is likely closer to the poor than we may first think. Often, we consider *the poor* to be those in the lines of soup kitchens or who live in the slums *far from here*. Maybe we think of those lying in Medicaid-funded beds or those who reside in predominantly segregated urban neighborhoods as being *the poor*. Perhaps our picture of poverty is of those who sleep on the streets and wander those same streets by day.

Certainly, many of the aforementioned are poor; however, we may overpass the poor in our very own homes and in our own relationships. The impoverished include people who are quite near to us; perhaps even we ourselves may be *the poor*: those who feel unloved, lonely, ignored, rejected, misunderstood, and abused. In the dark places of our lives, our poverty confronts us.

The Good News that etches its way into our hearts and minds each Christmas is that God has shone His light into our poverty. Not only that, but God has refused to hoard the riches of Heaven all to Himself; instead, He willingly took off His Heavenly wealth, and He stepped into our impoverished situations that all led to certain separation and death. By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus the Savior *earned* the riches of Heaven *for us!* By His undeserved grace and through His lavish gift of faith, He has richly and freely given to us the abundant wealth of being His heirs (inheritors): sons and daughters of the *King of all kings*, in His life-giving Kingdom, always and forever.

*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

Merry Christmas, Friends!

*Pastor Drew Bayless*