

Advent

· A Time of Preparation ·

Join us this Advent season as we prepare for Christmas together with daily devotions from December first through Christmas Eve.

WEEK 1 ~ HOPE

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." ~ Isaiah 9:2

Week 2 ~ PEACE

"He shall be called Prince of Peace." ~ Isaiah 9:6

Week 3 ~ JOY

"I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people." ~ Luke 2:10

WEEK 4 ~ LOVE

"For God so loved the world..." ~ John 3:16

Central United Methodist Church Rogers www.centralrogers.com (479) 636–1630

~ WELCOME ~

Dear Congregation Members, Guests and Visitors:

Welcome to Advent! Each year builds new memories we bring into the Advent season. Some of the memories of this past year have brought us joy while other memories have added sadness and sorrow. I know each of you reading this devotional find yourself in different moods, situations, and challenges.

This devotional is based on the Advent candle themes – Hope, Peace, Joy, Love – with six devotions for each theme during the twenty-four days of advent. This follows Central United Methodist Church Rogers' order of Advent candle lighting for this year's Christmas services. This devotional has been prayed over in hope you will be inspired to grow deeper in your faith and love for Christ.

The season of Advent is all about anticipation. Advent's true meaning is not found in the anticipation of the gifts around our Christmas trees, but in the light that shines forth in the darkness of life's situations. Just as it is the season of light, I hope you find the meaning of the True Light in each of these devotions. The anticipation of the Christ child is to remind us of His bringing eternal Hope, Peace, Joy, Love to each of us.

Blessings,

Kerry L Turnbow, D. Min.

Associate Pastor of Congregational Care

WEEK ONE ~ HOPE

DECEMBER 1: A HOPE THAT WILL NOT CRUMBLE



SCRIPTURE

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." – Hebrews 6:19

Hope is something everyone talks about, but few truly possess. We often place our hope in things that shift beneath our feet – jobs, relationships, finances, routines, or our own abilities. These can carry us for a time, but when storms come, they prove too weak to hold us steady.

A line from a well-known hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness" is one that always comes to mind when I think of hope.

The hymn writer declares a different kind of hope – one not built on changing circumstances but on the unchanging person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' blood reminds us that our sins, every one of them, are covered. We don't have to stand before God on our own merit.

Jesus' righteousness clothes us so that even when our feelings wobble or our strength fails, our standing with God does not. When the waves of life rise, when the winds howl, when the ground feels shaky, our hope rests not in what we can do, but in what Christ has already done. The cross is our firm foundation. The empty tomb is our assurance. Christ's intercession is our continual anchor.

REFLECTION

- Where have you been placing your hope lately your performance, your plans, your emotions?
- What would it look like today to rest your confidence fully in Christ's finished work?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, remind me today that my hope is not in myself, my accomplishments, or my circumstances, but in Your unfailing love. Thank You that Your blood covers me, Your righteousness clothes me, and Your presence anchors me. Help me stand on You – the solid rock – when everything around me feels like sinking sand. Amen.

DECEMBER 2: THE HOPE THAT CAME NEAR

SCRIPTURE

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." – Isaiah 9:2

As Christmas approaches, the world around us glows with lights, carols, and celebration. Yet for many, this season can also highlight places of uncertainty, longing, or quiet ache. The beauty of Christmas is that it speaks directly to those spaces. The story of Jesus is a story of hope stepping into darkness, not avoiding it.

Isaiah's words were spoken to a people who felt surrounded by gloom and fear. They were waiting, aching, for God to move. And then, in the most unexpected way, God answered: a baby, born in humility, carrying the weight of heaven's promise.

Jesus is not simply a symbol of hope; He is Hope Himself, wrapped in swaddling cloth and laid in a manger. His birth declares that God has not forgotten us, that the silence will not last forever, and that His light always breaks through.

Christmas reminds us that:

- Hope is not fragile it is anchored in a Savior who came near.
- Hope is not wishful thinking it is confident expectation in God's faithfulness.
- Hope is not passive it invites us to trust God's timing and goodness even when the night feels long.

REFLECTION

Where do you need the hope of Christ this season? Whether you are waiting for healing, restoration, direction, or peace, remember that the same God who fulfilled His promise in Bethlehem is still at work today. The dawn is coming. His light is already shining.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for being our living hope. In the moments that feel dark or uncertain, remind us that Your light has come, and Your promises stand firm. Fill our hearts with renewed confidence, peace, and expectation as we celebrate Your birth. Amen.

DECEMBER 3: A LIVING HOPE

SCRIPTURE

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... Though you have not seen him, you love him... and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." – 1 Peter 1:3–9

Christmas is the season when hope entered the world wrapped in swaddling clothes. Long before the angels filled the night sky with their song, God had already been weaving His promise through generations – whispers of a Savior, hints of redemption, signs that darkness would not have the final word. And then, in Bethlehem, hope took on flesh.

Peter calls this hope a "living hope." It is not wishful thinking or sentimental optimism. It is alive because Jesus is alive. The baby born in a manger grew to bear a cross and rise from the grave. The hope we celebrate at Christmas is anchored not in circumstances but in Christ Himself.

Peter reminds believers that this hope:

- Begins with God's mercy We didn't earn it, and we couldn't create
 it. Hope was God's initiative. His great mercy toward us caused new
 birth new life, new identity, new future.
- Is secured by Christ's resurrection The manger points toward the empty tomb. Our living hope is guaranteed by a living Savior.
- Sustains us through trials Peter writes to people facing hardship.
 Hope does not erase suffering, but it transforms it. Trials refine our faith, proving it genuine and precious.
- Leads to inexpressible joy Even though we cannot yet see Jesus, we love Him. Even though the world feels heavy, we are held by a joy that cannot be explained – only experienced.

REFLECTION

This Christmas, we remember that hope isn't fragile; it's eternal. It isn't fading; it's secured in heaven. It isn't distant; it is present with us through the Holy Spirit. The Christ child is the assurance that God keeps His promises.

PRAYER

Father, thank You! You give us living hope through Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith through every emotion and experience we have. Let our hope shine brightly in a world longing for Your light. Amen.

DECEMBER 4: THE HOPE THAT BROKE INTO OUR WAITING

SCRIPTURE

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." – Luke 2:11

As we move through the Christmas season, our hearts are drawn again to the radiant hope that first broke into the world on a quiet night in Bethlehem. Long before shepherds heard angels sing or wise men saw the star arise, God's people clung to a promise – hope whispered through prophets and carried through generations. Darkness had lingered over Israel for centuries, yet God had not forgotten. Into their waiting, God spoke of a coming Light – a child, a King, a Savior.

This is the very hope that still meets us today. When our own seasons feel long and uncertain – when shadows stretch, and answers seem delayed – we remember that God's silence is never God's absence. Just as He broke through Israel's darkness with the birth of Jesus, He breaks through ours with His presence, His peace, and His unfailing love. Christmas is a reminder that God steps into human history and into our personal story, not with fanfare, but with faithfulness.

REFLECTION

The world Jesus entered was weary. So is ours. But the hope He brought then is the hope He brings now – a hope that anchors the soul, steady and radiant, even when we cannot yet see the fullness of His plan. In Bethlehem, God proved that His promises are certain, and His timing is perfect. The Light that dawned in that tiny town still shines, calling us to trust again, to lift our eyes, and to believe that God is at work in the waiting.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as we journey through this Christmas season, let Your light rise again in our hearts. Remind us that hope is not wishful thinking, but the certainty of Your promises fulfilled. Shine into our waiting, our questions, and our weariness. Help us trust that the same God who came near in Bethlehem is near to us now. Amen.

DECEMBER 5: THE GOD OF HOPE

SCRIPTURE

"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

As Christmas approaches, our hearts turn again to the manger – where heaven stooped low, and hope took on flesh. In a world weary with burdens, divided by fears, and often dimmed by uncertainty, Paul's words in Romans 15:13 shine like a lantern in the night: God Himself is the source of hope. Not an idea, not a feeling, not a season – God.

At Christmas, we remember that God's hope didn't come wrapped in comfort or crowned with earthly glory. It came crying in a stable, in the vulnerability of a newborn King. Jesus' arrival reminds us that hope is not fragile – it is divine. It is God stepping into our darkness with unshakeable light.

Paul prays that we would be filled with joy and peace as we trust Him. Trust is the doorway through which God pours His hope into our lives. When we trust Him with our fears, He fills us with peace. When we trust Him with our questions, He fills us with joy. And when we trust Him with our future, the Holy Spirit causes hope to overflow – so much that it spills into the lives of those around us.

REFLECTION

This Christmas may your heart find rest not in perfect plans, quiet days, or completed lists, but in the God who keeps His promises. The same God who sent His Son into the world is still drawing near, still filling, still restoring, still giving joy, peace, and an overflowing hope that cannot run dry.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, may Your hope rise fresh in my heart today. Fill me with Your joy and peace as I trust You in every area of need, longing, and uncertainty. Let Your Spirit cause hope to overflow in my life, blessing those around me with Your light and Your love. Thank You for sending Jesus – my Savior, my peace, and my unfailing hope. Amen.

DECEMBER 6: WHEN HOPE CAME DOWN (song title by Kari Jobe)

SCRIPTURE

"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to the people...while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." – Titus 2:11–13

On that holy night in Bethlehem, something breathtaking happened: Hope did not stay distant – Hope came down. His first coming, His birth, brings grace and salvation, His second coming is our blessed hope. The longing of humanity met the mercy of God when Christ stepped into our world. Kari Jobe's song paints that sacred moment as one where heaven touched earth with tenderness, humility, and unstoppable love.

Think of it, the Savior wrapped Himself not in royal robes but in humanity. The King of eternity came quietly, choosing a manger over a palace. The One who created stars lay beneath them as a baby. In the song, the story moves from the ache of humanity to the comfort of a God who draws near. It reflects the beautiful truth that Jesus came not in thunder, but in compassion – bringing peace to the broken, joy to the weary, and light to those walking in darkness.

Christmas reminds us that God does not ask us to climb up to Him – He comes down to us – into our mess, into our need, into our longing.

When Hope came down, love took on flesh and walked among us so we would never again wonder whether God sees us or cares. Christ's birth declares once and for all that God is not far away – He is Emmanuel, God with us.

REFLECTION

Whatever you're carrying this season – grief, exhaustion, uncertainty, or quiet joy – remember Hope has already come down. And Hope remains with you still.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming near – near to our hearts, near to our pain, near to our everyday lives. As we celebrate Your birth, fill us again with the wonder of Your love. Amen.

WEEK TWO ~ PEACE

DECEMBER 8: PEACE IN THE WAITING



SCRIPTURE

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you." – Isaiah 26:3

Advent is a season marked by anticipation. We wait for Christmas morning, for family gatherings, for traditions we cherish. But more deeply, Advent calls us to wait for God's promises with trust and hope. Isaiah reminds us that God offers perfect peace – not partial, not temporary, but whole and complete – to those who keep their minds fixed on Him.

Waiting can feel unsettling. We often want quick answers, immediate resolution, or instant comfort. Yet God invites us to discover peace in the waiting, not merely after it. The Hebrew word for "steadfast" means "to lean on" or "to rest upon." Peace is not found by controlling our circumstances – it is found by resting our weight on God.

As we journey through Advent, we are reminded that Christ Himself came into a world filled with uncertainty, political tension, and fear. The angels did not announce peace when things were peaceful – they declared peace into the chaos. God's peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of His unwavering love and sovereignty.

REFLECTION

This week, set aside moments to quiet your heart before God. When anxieties rise, take a breath and whisper a simple prayer: "Lord, my mind rests on You." Allow His presence to center you, steady you, and hold you.

Advent peace is not passive – it actively forms us into people who trust God more deeply. As you wait, may you experience the kind of peace that surpasses understanding and fills the deepest places of your soul with hope.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, as I live in this world filled with strife, conflict, and tension fill my life with your peace today. Amen.

DECEMBER 9: PEACE THAT BREAKS BARRIERS

SCRIPTURE

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." – Ephesians 2:14

Advent celebrates the coming of Jesus – the One who not only brings peace but is our peace. Paul writes that Christ destroys the dividing walls that separate people. His peace is active, reconciling, and healing.

In a world fractured by conflict, misunderstanding, and division, the message of Advent peace is revolutionary. Jesus didn't come simply to calm our emotions; He came to dismantle the hostility that separates us from God and from one another. Peace is not merely a feeling – It's a person. Christ Himself becomes the bridge that leads us back into relationship.

Advent reminds us that Jesus entered a world that had long been divided—by ethnicity, politics, religion, and Rome's oppressive rule. Yet He came with a message of restoration. Through His birth, life, death, and resurrection, Jesus forms a new community built on forgiveness, unity, and love.

Where do you need Christ's peace to tear down a wall in your life? A strained relationship? A wounded memory? A hardened perspective? The peace of Christ does not ignore brokenness; it steps into it with healing power.

REFLECTION

This Advent, ask God to soften your heart wherever division has taken root. Pray for the courage to pursue reconciliation and the humility to listen with compassion. Allow Christ's peace to flow through you and bring unity where disunity has lived too long.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I realize that worry doesn't come from you. When I am prone to worry about so many things in my life, teach me to trust you and allow your peace to fill my mind. Amen

DECEMBER 10: PEACE IN THE STORM

SCRIPTURE

"The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace." – Psalm 29:11

The scripture above is a dramatic picture of God's power – thunder, lightning, shaking deserts, and crashing waters. Yet it ends with these unexpected words: the Lord blesses His people with peace. Even when the world shakes, God speaks peace over His children.

Advent reminds us that Jesus came during a time of political upheaval, poverty, and fear. Mary and Joseph faced uncertainty, the shepherds lived on the margins of society, and Herod's violence cast a dark shadow. Yet into this storm, God sent His Son as the Prince of Peace.

Peace does not mean we are shielded from storms; it means God strengthens us within them. Advent invites us to anchor ourselves not in stability around us but in the character of God within us. When life feels overwhelming, God offers a peace rooted in His strength, not ours.

REFLECTION

This season, take time to identify the storms swirling around your heart - a worry, a grief, a decision, or an unknown future. Bring these honestly before God. Instead of praying for every storm to disappear, pray for God's presence to steady you and His peace to settle your spirit.

God's peace is not fragile. It is strong, enduring, and unshakable because it flows from His power. You can face any storm with confidence because Christ is with you, speaking peace over your life.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I have faced many storms. I know that storms will come my way, but I pray you will help me to trust my future to you. Amen.

DECEMBER 11: PEACE THAT LEADS US FORWARD

SCRIPTURE

"The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day." – Proverbs 4:18

Advent is a journey toward the Light – toward Christ, who reveals God's heart to the world. As we walk with Him, His peace guides our steps and illuminates our path. The peace God gives is not static; it moves us forward, helping us grow in wisdom, love, and hope.

Sometimes we think of peace as stillness or escape. But biblical peace - shalom – means wholeness, harmony, flourishing. It is an active peace that transforms us and leads us into God's purposes. Proverbs reminds us that the path God sets before us grows brighter as we walk in righteousness, faith, and trust.

Advent calls us to follow the light of Christ step by step. We don't always see the whole road ahead, but God promises to reveal enough for today. His peace becomes a gentle guide, calming our fears and helping us discern His voice.

REFLECTION

Where do you need God's peace to give you direction? A decision you're facing. A place where you feel unsure or weary? Ask the Holy Spirit to shine Christ's light on your path and give you clarity rooted in His peace.

As you walk through this Advent season, remember peace is not only a gift; it is a guide. Let God's peace leads you into deeper faith, renewed trust, and joyful obedience.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I pray your peace will lead me into a deeper walk with you of faith, trust and joyful obedience. Amen.

DECEMBER 12: PRINCE OF PEACE

SCRIPTURE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." – Isaiah 9:6

Jesus brings true shalom. In Isaiah 9:6 Christ is called the *Prince of Peace*. The word shalom in the Bible has much more of a deeper meaning than just peace, or the absence of conflict. The word Shalom signifies a state of wholeness completeness well-being and prosperity that includes inner peace physical health and right relationships with God and others it represents a full harmonious life.

Living in full Shalom here on earth is a difficult if not impossible task. However, *living in Christ who is the Prince of Peace* is the one that brings restorative Shalom to our lives in the midst of the conflict and the many life difficulties that we experience from day-to-day.

In the New Testament Shalom is linked with Christ work of salvation and restoration. Jesus is the Messiah who brings us the restorative power of a right relationship with God and that's the true nature of Shalom Christ is our peace and brings us into that right relationship that we have lost through sin and rebellion.

REFLECTION

Christ's first words to his disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection was, "Peace (shalom) be with you." Christ's reflection was knowing, His disciples needed peace from all they had experienced. May you find Christ's peace throughout this Christmas season.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, during this season of advent help me to give thanks to You for the gift of Shalom which is in Jesus Christ our Prince of peace. Amen.

DECEMBER 13: PEACE IN THE STORM – HOW TO MOUNT A CAMEL

SCRIPTURE

"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this;" - Psalm 37:5

As we enter the Christmas season, I know that most of you have already decorated your home for the holidays. And somewhere may be a nativity scene. In your nativity scene I'm sure you have included a camel because according to scripture the three wise men that came to see Jesus we're riding on camels. Camels are a staple part of the nativity scene.

In Psalm 37 there is a wonderful analogy to the way that someone would mount a camel. I personally have never ridden a camel, but I have seen pictures of people mounting a camel. The way that it's done is the camel kneels its front legs forward and down and then kneels completely down to the ground so that the rider can mount the camel's back. Also, if you are packing a load on the camel's back the same procedure would be done. The camel would lower itself down to the ground so that the items could be loaded on to the back of the camel.

Psalm 37 gives us the same analogy when it comes to us committing our way to the Lord. The literal meaning of this Psalm is illustrated through the movement of a camel representing God coming down to our level so that when we have burdens of our own, we can literally roll them on to the back of the God who has come down to our level. This Psalm is not telling us we can have anything we want. What it is telling us is that if we trust in the Lord and roll all our ways and our plans on to the back of God that we can cease to fret and find rest and peace in God.

Jesus coming to this earth illustrates the same metaphoric way as the camel bends down to receive its load, Jesus came down to help us bare our burdens. He walked among us to understand our needs. Jesus understands all we go through so we can lay our burdens, all our trials, all our needs upon Him.

REFLECTION

During this holiday season when you place the camel in your nativity, think about this Psalm and what it means for us to roll all our burdens upon Jesus who has the capacity and power to be able to carry that load for us.

PRAYER

Father, no matter the valley I walk through, I am not alone. You are with me, holding me, carrying me, promising me a future filled with hope.

Amen

WEEK THREE ~ JOY

DECEMBER 15: JOY IN THE WAITING

SCRIPTURE

"...weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

- Psalm 30:5

Advent is a season of waiting, and waiting well is hard. We prefer resolutions, answers, and breakthroughs. But Scripture reminds us that God's joy is not cancelled during the night seasons—it is promised after them. Joy is coming. Not because circumstances magically improve, but because God is faithful.

Waiting does not mean God is absent. For Israel, four hundred years had passed without a prophet's voice, yet joy was already on the way in Mary's womb. God was working while His people were waiting. He still is.

When we look at our own lives, we often judge God's timing through the lens of our impatience. But Advent reframes waiting it is holy time, filled with expectation. Waiting trains the soul to trust what it cannot yet see. It stretches hope. It matures faith.

REFLECTION

Take time today to acknowledge whatever "night season" you may be enduring. Speak honestly with God. Then let the promise of Advent sit gently over your heart: joy comes in the morning. You may not feel it yet, but God is already moving toward you with light.

Hope is not naïve. It is anchored in a God who keeps promises. And because He is faithful, joy is not just a possibility—it is an inevitability for those who wait on Him.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I don't like to have to wait. Waiting requires patience. Teach me to trust your faithfulness in all areas of my life. Amen

DECEMBER 16: FULLNESS OF JOY

SCRIPTURE

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." – John 15:11

As Christmas draws near, we often associate the season with joy—joyful songs, joyful gatherings, joyful celebration. Yet many hearts quietly wonder: Where is this joy supposed to come from? Jesus answers that question tenderly in John 15:11. Joy is not something we manufacture. It is something He gives.

In this verse, Jesus is speaking to His disciples about abiding – remaining connected to Him like branches to a vine. He promises that if we stay close to Him, His own joy will flow into our lives. Not a shallow joy. Not a temporary joy. But a joy that is full, steady, and deeply rooted in Him.

At Christmas, we remember that Jesus came to dwell with us – Emmanuel, God with us. His birth was heaven's declaration that joy is not dependent on circumstances but on presence. The presence of Christ brings fullness of joy.

Think of the shepherds on the hillside. Life was ordinary, even difficult at times. Yet when they heard the angel's message, "I bring you good news of great joy" everything changed. The joy did not come because their problems disappeared, but because hope had arrived wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Today, Jesus still invites us to abide in Him. In the busyness of decorating, shopping, planning, and celebrating, He gently whispers, "Stay close to Me. Let My joy be in you." The more we turn our attention to Him—through prayer, Scripture, worship, and quiet moments—the more His joy fills every space in us that feels empty.

REFLECTION

This Christmas may your heart rest in the One who came so that His joy might be in you. Not the world's temporary cheer, but the lasting joy of being loved, known, and held by your Savior.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for coming to us and bringing everlasting joy. Help me to abide in You this Christmas season. Fill my heart with Your joy—joy that remains even in difficult moments. May Your presence be my peace, my strength, and my song. Amen

DECEMBER 17: JOY THAT STRENGTHENS US

SCRIPTURE

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." - Nehemiah 8:10

During Advent, we often picture joy as soft, gentle, and sentimental. But Scripture gives us a different perspective: joy is strength. It is fuel. It is God's empowering presence in the middle of life's demands.

Nehemiah spoke these words to a weary people who had returned from exile and were overwhelmed by the work ahead. Their hearts were heavy with discouragement. Yet God's instruction was not to collapse under the weight but to receive His joy—because His joy renews what weariness drains.

Joy does not mean constant happiness or surface-level cheerfulness. It is deeper than emotion. It is the settled confidence that God is with us, God is for us, and God is working through us. It is a spiritual resilience that helps us keep going when circumstances tell us to quit.

Advent joy strengthens us by reminding us that Christ did not simply come to comfort us; He came to empower us. He came to bring light that no darkness can overcome. He came to give us a joy that endures trials, lifts burdens, and keeps our hearts steady.

REFLECTION

Today, allow God's joy to become your strength. Invite Him to renew what feels worn out. Admit your weakness and let His joy steady your spirit. The Savior who came as a child still comes to infuse your life with holy strength.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I pray that you renew my spirit, mind, and body. I can get caught up in the business of the season and allow myself to get tired and weary. I might even get cranky when that happens. Let your strength be my strength and may I not grow weary in well doing. Amen.

DECEMBER 18: JOY IN GOD'S PRESENCE

SCRIPTURE

"In Your presence there is fullness of joy..." - Psalm 16:11

Advent invites us to slow down long enough to recognize the nearness of God. In a season filled with frantic schedules, crowded calendars, and endless noise, joy can feel elusive. But Scripture teaches us that joy is not found in the absence of busyness—it is found in the presence of God.

Joy is relational. It flows from closeness with the One who created us, loves us, and knows us. Mary experienced this when she carried Christ within her; her joy overflowed into a song of praise. The shepherds experienced it when they ran to the manger. The wise men felt it when they saw the star stop over Bethlehem. Joy always follows God's presence.

In this Advent season, God invites you to draw near. Not with perfection, but with sincerity. Find a quiet moment. Take a deep breath. Whisper a prayer. Read a verse of Scripture. Listen for His gentle voice.

REFLECTION

The good news of Advent is this: God is not far off. Emmanuel means "God with us." He is not waiting for you to fix yourself or earn His presence. He has already come close. And where He is, joy is.

Let your soul rest in the truth that joy is not something you must chase. It is something you receive when you remain in God's presence.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to sing, "Joy to The World the Lord Is Come" all year long! Amen.

DECEMBER 19: JOY BREAKS INTO THE WORLD

SCRIPTURE

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." – Luke 2:10

"Hark! The herald angels sing, 'Glory to the newborn King!" With these triumphant words, heaven's song breaks into earth's silence. On that first Christmas night, the angels didn't whisper—they proclaimed. They didn't simply announce news—they announced good news that would bring great joy to all people.

For centuries, God's people had waited in darkness – waiting for hope, waiting for deliverance, waiting for the promise of a Savior. And then, in a quiet Bethlehem stable, joy took on flesh. Joy was born. Joy had a name – Jesus.

The angels' song in the fields was not just a celebration; it was an invitation. An invitation to shepherds – ordinary, overlooked people – to come and see the One who would change everything. The One who would bring peace, restore hope, and light up the world with the joy of salvation.

Charles Wesley captured this wonder in the hymn:

"Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies." Joy is not reserved for a few – it is for all. For the weary. For the broken. For those who feel forgotten. For those who long for light to break through the shadows. Christmas reminds us that joy is not dependent on circumstances; it is anchored in a Person.

This joy is more than a holiday feeling. It is the deep assurance that God is near, God has come, and God will save. In Jesus, God stepped into our world so we could step into His joy—lasting, overflowing, redeeming joy.

REFLECTION

As you reflect on the words of Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, may your heart rise with the angels' song. May the joy of Christ fill your home, your worship, and your soul.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming into our world with joy that transforms our hearts and lives. Help us hear the angels' song again - clearly, deeply - and respond with worship. Fill us today with Your joy and let it shine through us to others. Amen.

DECEMBER 20: JOY TO THE WORLD

SCRIPTURE

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth... Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy." – Psalm 98:4, 8

The carol "Joy to the World" is one of the most exuberant songs of the season—yet surprisingly, it wasn't written specifically about the birth of Jesus. Isaac Watts penned it as a paraphrase of Psalm 98, celebrating the reign of the coming King. Over time, believers linked these triumphant words with Christ's first coming, because His entrance into the world truly is the good news that brings great joy for all people.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, joy broke into a weary world. The angels declared it. The shepherds experienced it. The wise men sought it. This joy wasn't rooted in circumstances—Rome still ruled, hardship still existed, and life was still uncertain. But Joy Himself had arrived.

The words of the carol echo the hope of that moment:

"Let every heart prepare Him room." Joy begins where we make space for Jesus - when we quiet the noise, surrender our fears, and welcome Him into our daily lives.

"The Lord is come!" Not a distant deity. Not a silent observer. But Godwith-us (Emmanuel) stepping into human history to redeem, restore, and renew.

"He rules the world with truth and grace." The baby in the manger is the King on the throne. His rule isn't harsh or oppressive but marked by mercy, justice, and unshakable truth.

REFLECTION

Christmas joy doesn't deny the brokenness around us. Instead, it declares that Jesus enters the broken places with healing, light, and hope. The world may feel heavy, but the King has come—and He is still bringing joy to hearts that look to Him.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for bringing joy into our world and into our lives. As we celebrate Your birth, help us prepare room in our hearts for You. Renew our joy, strengthen our hope, and rule in us with truth and grace. May Your joy overflow through us to others this Christmas. Amen

WEEK FOUR ~ LOVE

DECEMBER 22: LOVE COME NEAR



"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" – John 1:14

Christmas is the story of love drawing close – of God stepping into our world, not with thunder or triumph, but with the soft cry of a newborn. In a season full of lights, music, and celebration, it's easy to forget that the heart of Christmas isn't found in what we give or receive, but in the love that came down from heaven to dwell among us.

From the beginning, God's rescue plan was rooted in love. John 3:16 tells us plainly, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..." Love moved God to give. Love compelled Christ to come. Love wrapped itself in flesh and laid in a manger so that we might know the heart of the Father.

When the angel announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds, it was not just the arrival of a baby—it was the arrival of God's love made visible. Jesus came to reveal a love that heals, restores, forgives, and pursues us relentlessly.

REFLECTION

As we celebrate this season, we remember that Christmas is not merely a story from the past—it is an invitation today. God's love is still drawing near, still bringing hope into dark places, still calling us to reflect His heart to the world. Jesus Himself said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). When we show kindness, extend mercy, or offer forgiveness, we participate in the very love that came down at Christmas.

May this season remind us that love is more than a feeling – it is God's nature, God's gift, and God's call to us.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible love revealed in the birth of Jesus. Help my heart remember that Christmas is all about Your love coming close. Teach me to reflect that love to others – through my words, actions, and attitudes. Let the love of Christ shine through me this season and always. Amen.

DECEMBER 23: PERFECT LOVE CAST OUT FEAR

SCRIPTURE

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." – 1 John 4:18

Are you searching for the "perfect" gift for someone for Christmas? That special something that will bring joy and elation and a smile to the face of the person who receives and opens the gift.

I struggle with Christmas shopping! I often enter the Christmas gift-giving season drawing a blank as to what to buy for family members. It causes me anxiety just thinking about the Christmas season coming and having to buy that "perfect" gift or gifts for people.

This passage in John is not talking about the "perfect" gift for Christmas, but the writer of John is giving us insight into receiving God's gift of deep abiding love for us.

John is telling us that God's "perfect" gift of Jesus is the "perfect" gift demonstrating God's genuine love for us! The Greek word the writer of John uses here for "perfect" does not mean flawless but rather refers to a love that is complete, mature, and has achieved its purpose. Jesus demonstrated God's perfect love for us so that we, by accepting that love can live without fear of judgment, guilt, shame, and the reproach of past sins.

REFLECTION

During this season of Advent, let Christ's perfect gift of love infiltrate your heart and mind so that you live in the joy of salvation, not in the fear of condemnation! In the full knowledge of God's gift of salvation, anxiety is dispelled through the assurance of Jesus' gift of salvation.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, may I demonstrate Christ's love in this season of business. Help me not to get so caught up in gift-giving that I overlook the real needs of those in my family and friends. Amen.

DECEMBER 24: KNOWN BY LOVE

SCRIPTURE

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." – John 13:35

As Christmas approaches, lights glow and candles flicker reminding us of the Light, Jesus Christ, that entered the world. The most radiant light we can show is not found in decorations or music – it is found in love.

The song "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love" echoes the very heartbeat of the gospel. It is a simple yet profound declaration reminding us that the world does not recognize Christ in us by our words alone, nor by our church attendance or our holiday traditions, but by the way we love.

At Christmas, we celebrate that God's love became flesh. Jesus stepped into a broken and divided world bringing a love so deep, so sacrificial, that it changed the course of history. His birth was the beginning of the greatest act of love ever displayed.

This season calls us to reflect His love in tangible ways – through compassion, forgiveness, generosity, patience, and kindness. The carols we sing and the gifts we give are made meaningful when they are wrapped in love.

REFLECTION

"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." – 1 John 4:9-11

The scripture above reminds us, to love like Christ is to shine His light into the weary and hurting places around us. It is the most authentic form of worship we can offer. When we choose love, we testify to the Savior who came for us.

This Christmas may those around us know we follow Him—not just because we celebrate His birth, but because His love is alive in us.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the love that came down at Christmas. Help me reflect Your love in everything I do and say. Let Your love shine through me so others may know You through my life. Let the hope You brought into the world fill every corner of our lives with Your hope, peace, joy, and love above all – Your presence. Amen.

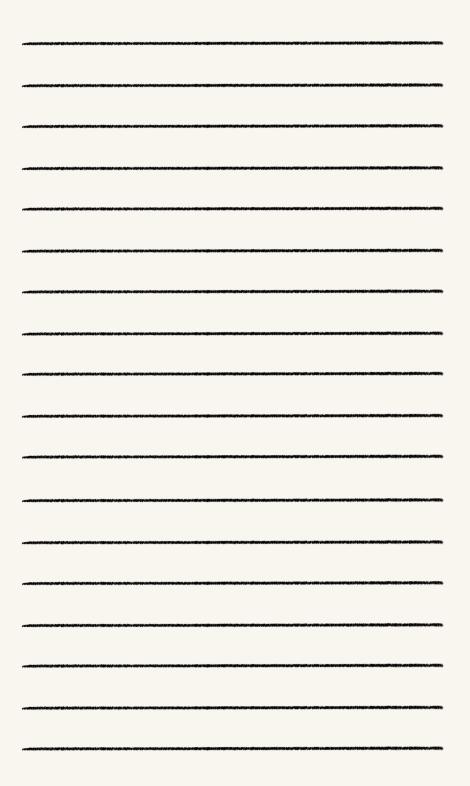
DECEMBER 25 ~ A CHRISTMAS BLESSING

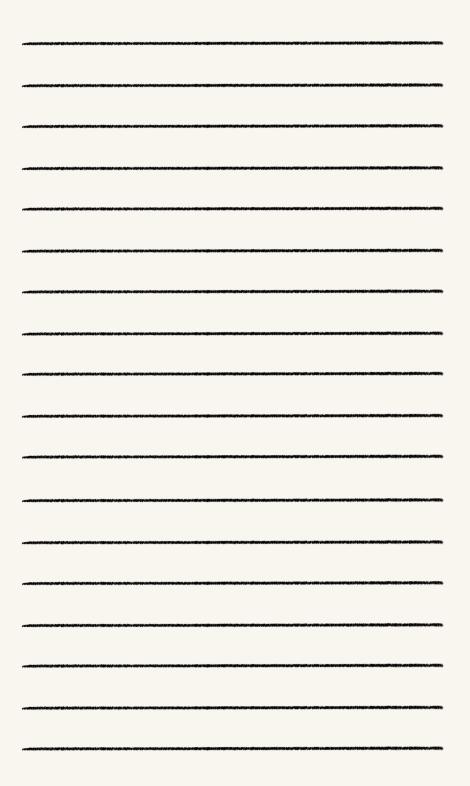
As we come to the close of this devotional journey, may your heart be filled with the peace of Christ, the hope of His promises, and the joy that only His presence can bring. May the light of His love guide your steps in the days ahead and may this Christmas day remind you again, that God is with us, now and always.

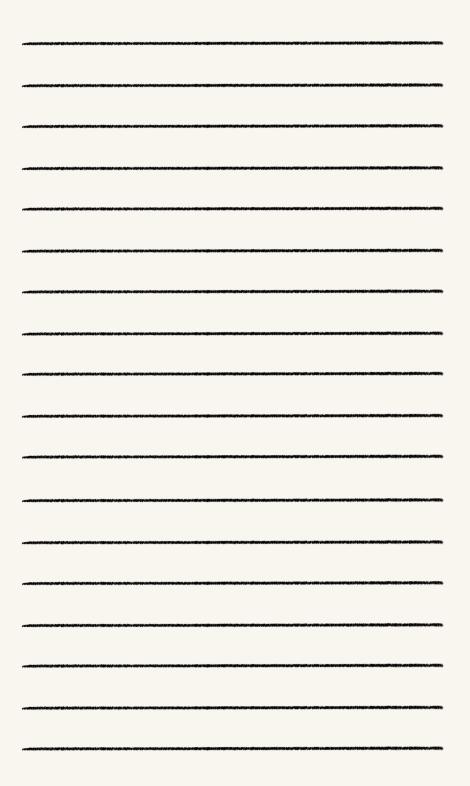
Merry Christmas!

May the love of Jesus surround you today and throughout the coming year.









Glorious and loving God,
as we enter this holy season of advent,
bless us with hearts that wait in hope,
minds that rest in Your peace,
and spirits that rejoice
in the promise of Your coming.

Kindle in us the light of your presence.

May each candle we light remind us
of the hope, peace, joy, love
you desire for all your children.

Bless our homes with gentleness, our conversations with kindness, and our steps with purpose.

As we prepare to welcome Christ, open our eyes to see your blessings, open our hands to share generously, and open our hearts to be transformed by Your grace.

May this advent season be a time of renewal, a path of holy waiting, as our hearts are filled with expectant joy!

Amen

