

A 25 Day Advent Devotional Guide



A JOURNEY TO CHRISTMAS



FRIENDSHIP
BAPTIST CHURCH

How to Use This Devotional Guide

You hold in your hand the first Advent Devotional we have put together as a faith family since I have been your pastor at Friendship. This 25-day devotional guide is designed to move us into a spirit of waiting, reflection, and preparation this Christmas. Each day includes a Scripture reading, a reflection, and a prayer designed to help us fix our eyes on Jesus. As you journey through these pages, you will be encouraged not only to remember the birth of Jesus, but also to anticipate the second coming of Jesus.

My prayer is that these daily devotions will guide you into moments of stillness and wonder. I want to encourage you to either start your morning in study, or gather around the table with family for study, or find time as you close out your day in study. Whenever and wherever you open it, open your heart as well. Ask the Lord to speak, to renew, and to prepare you for all He has prepared for you this Christmas.

May this Advent season fill you with hope for the future, peace in the present, joy in the waiting, and strengthen your love for those around you. As we walk day by day toward Christmas morning, may our hearts echo the final words from Revelation 22:20, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Participate in Acts of Kindness this Christmas

In addition to our Advent study for Christmas, we want to encourage you and your family to participate in random Acts of Kindness this Christmas.

Below are a few suggestions:

- Donate food to a local food bank
- Leave a generous tip and a gospel tract
- Call someone you normally would not and encourage them this Christmas
- Volunteer to serve at a foodbank, shelter, or your child or grandchild's school
- Clean out your closet and donate warm clothes to a local shelter
- Pay for someone's food or drink behind you at a drive through
- Take a homemade treat to a neighbor
- Invite someone to Church with you
- Bring breakfast to co-workers or bless them with lunch
- Give a Bible to someone that needs one
- Leave a positive note for someone
- Donate blood if you are able to

December 1st

By Bill And Shasta Claiborne

[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

(Genesis 3:15 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Satan, our enemy, is the “he” spoken of in this early passage from GOD’s Word. Satan will do whatever it takes to draw us to follow his path. This is a path that pulls us away from GOD and leads to destruction; however, there is a better way. From the beginning, GOD promised redemption. When sin entered the world, GOD immediately spoke hope. Advent starts with remembering that GOD did not leave us in darkness. His rescue plan for all of humanity began long before we were born. We have a promise that He will be with us. He will encourage us. He will comfort us. He will often carry us as we move through the challenges of life.

The Claibornes were following the call of GOD to a new field of ministry when He opened the door to serving at the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 2006. Even though we would spend six months managing a house payment in East Texas as well as McKinney He provided a way. When we were in a serious car accident in 2010 that resulted in months of recoup and surgeries, He brought family and Christian friends to support us. We can point to multiple examples of GOD’s provision and care.

“*You shall bruise his heel*” is a reference to Satan’s attempts to defeat Christ Jesus during His life on earth while “*He shall bruise your head*” gives us a look at Satan’s defeat at the resurrection of Jesus. A strike to the heel is not nearly as deadly as a strike to the head. The promise from the beginning to us is that in the end Satan is finally defeated and our victory is secure for all of eternity.

APPLICATION

As believers we have the promise that we need not live in fear. Even the early chapters of Genesis point us to Satan’s ultimate defeat and Christ’s victory. We are a chosen people. We live with the promise!

PRAYER

Father may our commitment to You grow each day realizing that You have promised victory for believers and defeat for Satan. Help us hold to the promise and not grow weary. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Day 2
By Barbara Jones

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
(Philippians 4:4 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

As we enter this Christmas season, some of us are full of excitement. But others' hearts are heavy. Some are grieving. Some are lonely. Some are facing changes they never expected this year. Some are trying hard to celebrate, but their hearts feel tired.

Today, I want to share a Christmas message for those who are hurting but want to find the joy that the songs keep singing about through the church choirs and shopping malls.

Paul's shocking command to rejoice always is impactful and confusing. Why? Our humanness says, "Okay, I guess I can obey those words from Paul if...", for example:

*"when life makes sense"

*"when everything feels good"

*"when the holidays go smoothly"

But wait, Paul tells us to REJOICE ALWAYS! And he is sharing these words with us from a dark, dingy, smelly, damp prison cell! He was chained. He had been beaten, stoned, mocked, rejected, chased, and betrayed. He had lost his status, his comfort, and the approval of his own people.

"Rejoice" Why? How could he rejoice in hardships? Because joy does not come from circumstances. Joy comes from Christ. The difference between happiness and joy: Joy depends on who is holding you.

APPLICATION

So this Christmas, if your heart feels bruised or broken, hear this: God is not asking you to pretend you're okay. He is inviting you to draw joy from a deeper well.

*A well that prison walls cannot block.

*A well that grief cannot empty.

*A well that loneliness cannot dry up.

Paul does not say "Rejoice in your situation." He says, "Rejoice in the Lord...meaning:

*When life is painful-God is still good

*When you feel alone-God is still with you

*When answers haven't come-God is still at work

*When memories bring tears-God still holds tomorrow

"I don't rejoice because life is perfect. I rejoice because God's love is."

Paul traded a life of prestige for a life of suffering all because he met his enemy, Jesus Christ, on the road to Damascus, to crucify followers of Christ, but instead, he surrendered his life joyfully to his Savior, Jesus Christ. He was never the same. May you rejoice in the Lord, this Christmas and may you never be the same.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, In this season of Christmas, we lift our hearts in joy and gratitude for the gift of Your Son. May we rejoice in Your love and share that joy with all those around us. Let our hearts be ever thankful and our spirits light as we celebrate Your presence. Amen

December 3rd

By Larry and Staci Sherman

[17] I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.

(Numbers 24:17 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Moab was a small kingdom located on a high geographical plateau east of the dead sea about 1400 square miles and its terrain consisted mostly of gently rolling hills separated by numerous ravines known for its rich pastureland for sheep and other livestock.

The Hebrews, after leaving Egypt camped at Mount Sinai. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38 years before arriving close to the promised land in the plains of Moab. Balak was the king of Moab but looked to Balaam to help him because he knew there were many people coming from Israel and he needed help to defeat them militarily. Balaam did not want to help but God told him to go help.

Balaam was a wicked prophet but although he was wicked, he had great communication with God! God gave him some true prophecies to speak. On the order from Balak, Balaam was to curse the Israelites but through God Balaam ended up confirming God's magnificent promise of blessing on His people and through them on the whole world.

APPLICATION

This story is another wonderful example of how the spirit of God can come on anyone at any time. The truth of God's word will be delivered no matter how or through whom it is delivered.

PERSONAL INSIGHT

The Lord's blessing on the Hebrew people from Abraham onward are irrevocable. His promises to His people today are unchangeable. We are to trust God in all circumstances to accomplish His purposes in this world.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Various scientific explanations have been offered to account for the star, but this was His star supernaturally placed in the heavens for the purpose of guiding. Biblical history tells us that God will always guide His people.

PRAYER

Father...Thank you for being the light of the world. The Lily of the Valley, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. You are our Star, our guide and certainly our purpose. Help us to share the light of the world with all we come in contact with.

December 4th
By Sue Lawson

[14] Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Immanuel. God with us. Not distant and not silent, but ever Present. In a time of fear and uncertainty, God gave His people a promise. King Ahaz faced enemies on every side, and instead of trusting God, He relied on human strength and alliances. Yet, in the middle of Ahaz's unbelief, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and declared Something far greater than a temporary rescue, He promised His Presence.

Immanuel - God with us. Not God above us, distant and watching. Not God against us, waiting for us to fall. But God with us - walking beside us, stepping into our world, taking on our flesh, and sharing our pain. The infinite became intimate. God did not send a messenger or a set of instructions; He came Himself.

APPLICATION

This truth still changes everything today. At this Christmas season, the same God who promised His Presence to Ahaz promises it to us.

There may be fear, uncertainty, doubt and confusion, but remember we are not alone.

He is with us in our waiting.
He is with us in our battles.
He is with us in our weakness.

And His presence is not just a comfort, it is POWER. His presence Transforms ordinary moments into holy ground and broken hearts Into testimonies of His grace.

Immanuel did not end with the manger. Jesus promised, "I am with You always, to the end of the age".
Immanuel – God with us is not just a name. It's a promise.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for being Immanuel – God with us. Help me to Rest in your presence and to trust that You are working, even when I Cannot see it. Fill my heart with peace, knowing that You are with me today and always. Amen.

December 5th

By Jay Vorderbruggen

[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

(Micah 5:2 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Here we see the prophecy of the birthplace of Christ, the foretold Messiah. Bethlehem was a small town in Judah that was always overshadowed by Jerusalem, the capital of Judah and a testament to its strength, just six miles away. For this reason, God used Bethlehem to weave a story of humility and God's power to use something small to bring something bigger than any person could imagine.

Micah uses the Hebrew words “qedem” and “owlam” to describe the origins of Christ. Qedem is translated here to “of old” which can also be translated to the front, before, past, and everlasting. This is pointing to the first time God used Bethlehem to bring a ruler over Israel, when He sent Samuel to anoint David. God called Samuel to go to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem and invited his household to a sacrifice so He could show Samuel who the next ruler would be. All of Jesse's sons that were present at the sacrifice passed by Samuel and God told him none of them were the one He had chosen. So, Samuel had to ask Jesse if he had another son to which Jesse said, “There remains the youngest, and there he is keeping the sheep” (1 Samuel 16:11). When David came the Lord told Samuel “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!” (1 Samuel 16:12). The youngest, and smallest of all his brothers, the one that even Jesse did not think was worthy of being called from his duties to come to see the prophet Samuel, was the one God chose as the king after his own heart. Towards the end of David's reign God promised “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). And this is what Micah is alluding to as well, the promised King from the line of David that God said would rule forever.

Owlam here is translated to “ancient times”, but it also means from the beginning, until the end, at any time, perpetual, and eternal. Here Micah is highlighting that this ruler, this promised King of old, has been ready for all time. This ruler was with God from the beginning of time (John 1:1), to the promise at the fall of man that Eve's seed would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15), to the promise to Abraham that his descendants would spread across nations and in his offspring all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:17-18), to the promise to David of his descendant that would sit as ruler over God's eternal kingdom (2 Samuel 7:16), and for all time and events to come, this ruler was and will always be. And this great ruler, the greatest King of all time, would come into this world, from a small, humble, seemingly insignificant town, in the lowliest of circumstances in a stable, born into a manger. So that no one, would doubt that only God could do that.

APPLICATION

This Christmas season let's reflect on how God continually uses those we least expect to have the greatest impact on His kingdom. That God even promised that would be the case with Christ and still people rejected His authority. So, let's never discount the little things in life that God can use to work in us and those around us. We are never too little to be used for God's glory, and no one around us is either. Christ throughout His ministry walked in a way to prove to us that only by His strength, could we do the same and do things even greater. As He said “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” John 14:12.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to reflect on how you use those we least expect to work for your glory. That you brought your Son into this world in the humblest of means so that your glory and power shines through forefront to everything else. Help us to trust that You are greater than anything in the world, so that we reflect your glory and power first in all that we do. Amen

December 6th

By Glen and Debbie Johnson

[2] 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.

(Isaiah 9:2 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Darkness is the absence of light. The coming of the Messiah is synonymous with the coming of light to remove the darkness. This verse speaks to a prophecy of Hope in the Darkness. A star shone in the darkness that led shepherds and wisemen to a Savior who would shine His light and grace in our hearts and bring us out of the darkness.

APPLICATION

Our world continues to suffer from conflicts and greed, from conquerors like the people of Galilee. The advent of Jesus' birth shined a light in the darkness. Christians around the world are still being persecuted, but by God's grace, the birth and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has given us the needed light to persevere.

In one of the countries that currently suffer from war and darkness, many of the people in Ukraine began celebrating the birth of Christ through Advent in 2022. In 2023 Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed into law changing Christmas day from January 7th to December 25th to align with the Western Christian tradition.

Whether it is suffering from sickness, suppression by conflict, addiction, depression, financial woes, or whatever your worry is, Jesus is the "Light of the World" and we only need to reflect on John 3:16 and continue to trust that His light will shine through the darkest of times. God shines Hope in real darkness.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for sending me the Light of Jesus Christ. Equip me with courage & compassion, help me to be bold, to step out, & to share His light with others who are still living in spiritual darkness. May my words & actions be a beacon of light & hope in a world that desperately needs You, so that others may see the hope and the light of salvation that Jesus brings shining from me. In the name of Jesus, the Light of the world...

December 7th

By Ronny and Cyndi McGuire

[6] 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 9:6 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Why did Jesus have to be born as a child? He had to be born as a child to come to us, but He is also the Pre-existent Son of God who was given to us.

The Child would be born in Bethlehem, but as the Son He has existed from all eternity and since the government will be on his shoulders *one name isn't enough*.

- Wonderful – The Glory of who He is and what He has done for us should fill us with wonder.
- Counselor – He is our principal and immediate resource.
- Mighty God – He is God of all creation and glory.
- Everlasting Father – He is our protector, and He cares for us.
- Prince of Peace – He makes peace especially between God and man.

APPLICATION

Only Jesus can cleanse us and make us right with God the Father and set our lives on the right Path. Let us give thanks to the Lord for this.

[18] “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.
(Isaiah 1:18 ESV)

PRAYER

In a world of disappointment, You are wonderful. In a time of anxiety, You are our Counselor. In a season of instability, You are our Mighty God. In a culture of great uncertainty, You are our Everlasting Father, and in a world of chaos You are our Prince of Peace, Immanuel. God be with us this Christmas.

December 8th

By Justin and Kacie Hughes

[3] A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Have you ever gotten into the month of December and had the question “Why doesn’t it feel like Christmas?”

Christmas time can be such a busy time. Between school winding down, family engagements and all the extracurricular activities of life; we can get so caught up in the flow of Christmas that we miss the mark on the true spirit of Christmas.

Growing up we would hear from parents, we need to get the house cleaned because company was coming over. We cleaned everything! You ask yourself “Why do I need to clean the shower for a birthday party? Who is going to take a shower then?” The reality is that our parents just wanted the house prepared for guests. In the same way, we need to prepare our hearts for God to work. In the dryness of our day to day walk through this world, we need to make room for God to move in and around us.

APPLICATION

Most of us probably struggle during this time with the business of Christmas. All the lights, decorations, gift giving, and the delicious cookies. If your family finds that you are so busy that you struggle to spend time with God, find a moment as a family to pray together. It’s amazing how God can soften hearts that pray for one another. Prayer has a way of slowing us down and yearning to hear the response from God. That is what this season is about.

Casting Crowns has a beautiful song called “While You Were Sleeping” and it speaks to the fact that the city of Bethlehem just didn’t realize what God did the night Jesus was born. They literally were a city that had no room for its King that night. Let us not be like that. Let us be the people that make room in our lives and hearts for Jesus. It starts with finding time to talk and commune with Him.

PRAAYER

God, help us focus on you during this season. Don’t let us get caught up in the business of the Christmas season and miss how you can speak to us and move through us during this time. Let us seek you more than anything this world has to offer. Amen

December 9th

By Joel and Jezabel Gilley

[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6–7 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Advent is a season built on waiting - posture we rarely enjoy. We wait for answers, for direction, for healing, for relief, for promises to unfold. As days lengthen and uncertainties stretch before us, our hearts can fill with anxiety instead of expectation.

Paul's words in Philippians remind us that *peace is not something we achieve when the waiting ends*—it is something God gives *in the midst of waiting*. The peace he offers is not logical or predictable. It isn't the peace that comes when circumstances finally work out.

It is **“the peace of God, which transcends understanding.”**

A peace that makes no sense except that Jesus Himself is guarding your heart.

We find this peace not by ignoring our fears, but by bringing them honestly to God—through prayer, through petition, and even through thanksgiving. Thanksgiving shifts our eyes from what we lack to what God has already done. Prayer reminds us we are not carrying the burden alone. Petition invites God into the very places we feel weak or afraid.

APPLICATION

As we wait for Christmas—celebrating the moment God stepped into our world—let this truth settle deep:

God's presence is your peace.

He doesn't ask you to pretend you're not anxious. He simply asks you to bring everything to Him, and in return, He wraps your heart in His calm, protective embrace.

Questions for Meditation

- What anxiety am I carrying into this Advent season?
- What would it look like to bring this to God with honesty and thanksgiving?
- Where have I already seen God's faithfulness in my waiting?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you know the places where my heart feels restless and uncertain. Today I bring every worry to you—every unanswered prayer, every hope that feels slow in coming.

December 10th

By Phil and Michelle Boettcher

[29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

(Luke 1:29–33 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Do you remember the first time your heart nudged you to help someone?

I wish I could say I remember mine clearly. But truthfully, what stands out more vividly are the moments I chose not to help. One in particular still echoes in my memory—a Saturday afternoon, football season in full swing, and my father preparing to lead a church service at a local nursing home. He invited me to come along. I wasn’t thrilled. The game was on, and I had other plans.

Reluctantly, I went.

I didn’t feel transformed in that moment. But what stayed with me—far longer than the score of that football game—were the smiles. The gentle joy of elderly residents who lit up simply because someone took time to share God’s Word with them. Their gratitude wasn’t loud, but it was deep. And it stirred something in me.

It reminded me of Mary.

In Luke 1:30–33, the angel tells her...“Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest... and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Can you imagine the surprise? The shift in her plans? Mary was young, likely with dreams of a quiet life. But in a moment, everything changed. She didn’t have to be perfect. She simply had to be willing.

And so do we.

APPLICATION

God doesn’t wait for us to be flawless. He meets us in our hesitation, our distractions, even our reluctance. He uses us not because we are ready, but because He is.

As we enter this Christmas season, let’s keep our hearts open. Let’s not let busyness, pride, or comfort stand in the way of a greater moment—one where we serve our King by serving others.

May God bless you richly, encourage your spirit, and shine His light upon you this holiday season.

PRAYER

Holy Father, I pray this season, remind us that Your call often comes softly—through nudges, interruptions, and unexpected invitations. Like Mary, may we respond not with perfection, but with willingness.

December 11th
By Kathy Gonzales

[46] And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

(Luke 1:46–47 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

These words are the beginning of “Mary’s song,” known as the Magnificat. Mary pours out a song of praise; her entire being glorifies and magnifies God, and her spirit rejoices in God her savior. She expresses profound worship and exaltation to God for using her to accomplish His purposes, while recognizing His greatness and her humble state.

So much we don’t know about Mary! God sent His angel to her just three months earlier with astounding news; news that would forever change her life. We are never told whether her parents are alive or how they reacted to the shocking news of their daughter’s pregnancy before being wed to Joseph. We don’t know anything about her extended family, except her cousin Elizabeth. We do know both Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were descendants of Aaron and that they were righteous in the sight of God. Perhaps He used Elizabeth to confirm the details of Mary’s pregnancy to her parents.

We can assume her parents taught Mary the scriptures since she obviously drank deeply from God’s Word. She was highly favored by God; the Lord was with her. She believed the angel, only asking for clarification as to how she would conceive the Son of God.

APPLICATION

Worship rises naturally from hearts yielded to Christ. We should seek to recognize and articulate God’s power and goodness in our own lives and His praise should ever be on our lips. Take some time to reflect on crisis situations God has brought you through;

while we might not know this side of Heaven why they happened, we can be confident God had a purpose in allowing them and praise Him for His love and care.

Look up the word “praise” in your Bible’s Concordance, then spend some time reading some of the many verses on praise that fill the scriptures:

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me...

Let the Heaven and Earth praise Him...

I will praise you more and more.

Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song...

The Lord is our all powerful God who holds this universe together. We can trust Him!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, your name is holy, and your mercy is for those who fear you. You have shown strength with your right arm; you have exalted the humble and filled the hungry with good things. Thank you for giving us every good thing in Jesus. Let me not forget that I am meant to praise your Holy name. May my mouth be filled with your praise all day long! In Jesus’ name, amen.

December 12th

By Tom and Suzie Griffin

[20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

(Matthew 1:20–21 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Can you imagine what Joseph must’ve been thinking when he received this news from the angel Gabriel? How shocked he must have been. And yet, he followed through and did all he was instructed to do. He took Mary privately and treated her with love and respect. And when it came time for her to deliver baby Jesus, Joseph took Him and raised Him as his own. Even bringing Jesus up to be a carpenter like himself. But surely the road to Bethlehem was not the plan he had envisioned for himself and Mary.

Sometimes God’s plan for us isn’t what we imagined it to be. Sometimes He takes us to unexpected places. After Tom was diagnosed with cancer, and we moved back to Allen, God gave us this peaceful thought...there will always be bumps in the road, but if we commit to Him whatever we do, and He wants us to do something differently, He will lovingly guide us to that something else. And He will lift in us a desire to do that something else. The comforting aspect of this thought is that our plans will succeed because eventually He will make our plans the same as His. God’s plan is far greater and more perfect than any human plan.

APPLICATION

Do you find yourself struggling in making decisions, big and small, near and long-term? Do you struggle to know whether something in your life is God’s guidance or simply the hard knocks

of life? If you take the time each morning to commit to God everything you do that day, you can rest in His promise. Your plans may change, or they may not unfold exactly as you expected...But if they line up with His plan, they will most definitely succeed.

PRAYER

Lord, we know You love us. Help us to honor Your love by remembering to follow the plans you have for us during our time on Earth, and to commit to You whatever we do, every day, and then to watch for Your loving guidance. Amen.

December 13th

By Trevor and Traci Rigby

[5] to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. [6] And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. [7] And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

(Luke 2:5–7 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Have you ever tried to be really quiet? Maybe you were hiding in a game of hide-and-seek, or trying to listen for footsteps on Christmas morning. Or, have you ever been forced into quietness or stillness? It is hard to be still and silent. We usually think the most important things in the world are grand and boisterous. But, in truth, it is in the quiet and stillness that God most often reveals Himself, speaks to us, engages with us, and shows us His presence.

But on that first holy night, the most important event in the history of the world, did not showcase neon letters with fireworks. The night of Jesus' birth, there was no Air Force jet flyover, there were no high school bands marching with dancers, no parade, no 21-gun salute. There was a tiny barn; probably the smell surrounding Mary was of putrid hay mixed with the scent of live animals nearby, not the lovely cinnamon and spice we associate with Christmas today. She had no nurses, no family, only her, Joseph, the animals, and God watching over her as she quietly, carefully and lovingly "wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger." It was ordinary. It was humble. It was mundane.

The Bible tells us that when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, "there was no place for them in the inn." There was no spotlight, no royal party, no fancy, prepared room. The Savior entered our world not with a spectacle, but in a space defined by **humility and necessity**—a simple stable.

In that quiet, everyday place, the full glory of God was resting. Mary and Joseph were simply being obedient to God's plan, and right there—in a stable, in a manger, in the middle of the night—God was doing His greatest work.

APPLICATION

God showed us that He doesn't just work in the big or loud moments. He enters our world, and our lives, in the quiet, simple, everyday places. In this humble, obedient, simple few moments were actually the greatest moments, for the birth of the Savior of all the world occurred. On this ordinary night, Jesus came. Jesus, who would save the world from sin.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for simply, quietly and humbly sending Jesus into the world. Thank you for showing us that your most extraordinary work often happens in the smallest, humblest and perhaps even messiest of places.

Help us to quiet our hearts this Advent season, to be still, to listen for your voice, and to look for your work in the simple moments. Give us hearts that are obedient in the mundane, just like Mary and Joseph. Help us see your glory in the people and places we might normally overlook. Amen.

December 14th

By Roy Joe and Lydia Ham

[10] And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

(Luke 2:10–11 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

The angels appeared to the shepherds in the darkness of night, to the least of these, in many ways the outcast, with their only devotion in life to the sheep and their owner, to the most unlikely...and who would not have been afraid? How many shepherds would have anticipated an angel appearing in great light? Why not make a bold announcement in the City of David? In that busy season of the census, could it have been that those shepherds would have been the only ones quiet enough to listen? Could it have been they would have been the only one's brave enough to leave their post to go see this announcement of a Messiah? Could it have been the need for them to hear this message was to be for all people, even an outcast shepherd?

APPLICATION

As we enter the busyness of the season of Advent, where do we find ourselves? Are we so caught up in the bright lights of the world, the noise and hurriedness of the season that we miss the announcement of the Good News of Great Joy. Has that message of Good News of Great Joy become our reality, or will we go through this season missing the real reason to celebrate? We encourage you to find a quiet place to allow God to speak to you and fully experience this Good News and find the great Joy it speaks of in a world where it is difficult to hear good news, but the Joy of this news can overcome these worldly things we experience daily. As the angels said...we have **GOOD NEWS OF GREAT**

JOY WHICH WILL BE FOR ALL PEOPLE! Have you opened this great gift?

PRAYER

Father God, we seek your face and new understanding of this Good News that brings great joy to all who accept it. Forgive us in the times we ignore, deny or abuse the gift. Bless us with a renewed season of Great Joy! Amen

December 15th

By Terry and Debbie Russell

[14] “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

(Luke 2:14 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Imagine being one of the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night and an angel of the Lord appeared to them. He said, “Fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy for all people”. Suddenly a great company of heavenly host praising God for the birth of Jesus Christ. Recognizing the glory and majesty of God by giving praise to him as they lift their voices to heaven where God dwells, what a sight to behold!

“Peace to all” on whom “his favor rest”. Peace is not assured to all but only to those pleasing to God. But the angels proclaim in a deeper more lasting peace a peace of mind and soul made possible only by our savior Jesus Christ. Peace with God is received by faith in Jesus Christ the son of God and it is on believers that his “favor rest.”

[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)

APPLICATION

Peace with God is a gift to believers. His “favor rest” on those that believe.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise be to you, for sending your Son Jesus Christ to earth to take away our sins. I believe in Him. I have faith in Him. Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us great joy and peace for all those of us that believe. Thank you for your peace and favor. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

December 16th

By Mike and Julie Hill

**[17] And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. [18] And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.
(Luke 2:17–18 ESV)**

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Imagine the shepherds traveling to see the precious son of God, giving witness to what they saw on that glorious night. How excited they must have been when they came upon Him in that lowly stable and worshiped. They spread the word about the newborn King and bore witness to what they saw. People who heard the news were amazed and word began to spread. The impact the shepherds had on others was powerful! The shepherds had a firsthand encounter with the Newborn King and went with haste to spread the word. They made known all they had been told about the child and that confirmed Gabriel's message to Mary. Seeing the child took them from becoming simply observers to becoming witnesses. A Savior who is the Messiah and Lord has been born in Bethlehem. The low status of the shepherds combined with the message of the Messiah, born in a humble manger, made their testimony even more astonishing. The shepherds were the first messengers of Christ.

APPLICATION

Ultimately, "The goal of making the Savior Known", is to help others establish their own relationship with Jesus Christ enabling them to find peace, joy, and the path to eternal life. As Christians we are witnesses to share the message of Christ's life, death, and resurrection so others may come to a personal relationship with Him and have eternal life. Because we know Christ, like the shepherds did on that night, we have the opportunity to tell everyone about Him. What better way than at Christmas to share the gospel. God actually gave us the first Christmas gift. Ask God

to give you the kind of joy and excitement the shepherds had and spread the Good News of Jesus' birth to everyone. Live your life as a reflection of His Light and rely on the Holy Spirit to guide you. Be willing and available, and He will use you.

PRAYER

Thank you for your miraculous birth long ago and for the ultimate sacrifice you paid for all on the cross. Place in me the desire to share boldly and witness for you so others may come to know you and accept your free gift of eternal life. Give me the courage and the right words to share my faith as well as strength and guidance to be a powerful witness for you.

December 17th

By Chris and Cassie Bunts

**[30] for my eyes have seen your salvation [31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”
(Luke 2:30–32 ESV)**

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

As a child, do you remember when the family Christmas tree was put up? You all went around the tree, decorating with all the lights and ornaments. You began to get excited for the season. You didn't know what this year would bring. As presents began to show up under the tree, you didn't know what was in them. Your anticipation and excitement grew as the days passed by, and you could not wait until Christmas day to open them.

This excitement was apparent in Simeon as he entered the temple. He was full of the holy spirit, and he knew immediately that Jesus was the Christ. The gift that had been promised to him. A promise fulfilled by God.

That day what Simeon declared in the temple notified us that a present has been put under our “trees” as Christians. A huge, beautifully wrapped gift, with a big bow, with the tag addressed to “you” and “from” God.

APPLICATION

We all know what is inside and waiting for God to open it. Our anticipation and knowledge of what that gift is should lay the foundations for our worship during this advent season. It is the only gift we need.

PRAYER

Father God, this Christmas season may we stay focused on the amazing, everlasting gift that You gave to us - Your Son, Jesus and not get distracted by all the worldly things that come this time of year. Lord, we pray that we will celebrate with the same sense of wonder and thankfulness shown by Simeon as we worship our Savior this Christmas. Amen

Day 18th

By John and Julie Anschutz

[10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. [12] And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

(Matthew 2:10–12 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

This passage is referring to the wise men who followed the star to find the King of the Jews as foretold by Micah the prophet in Micah 5:2.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

They followed the star from the East to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem where it stood over the house. They "rejoiced with exceeding great joy" when the star was over the house....they had not gone in yet. They knew that God had guided and directed them to the King of the Jews as foretold. God was faithful to His Word.

When they entered the house, they saw the young child, Jesus, and fell down to worship Him. They knew that if God brought them to this house, that this child must be the one. They must have been overcome with joy and excitement to see this promised King. They fell down in reverence and awe.

They brought gifts which God must have guided them to prepare. They gave this young child such precious and valuable, yet

prophetically significant gifts. The gold signified his kingship, frankincense signified his divinity and priestly role, and myrrh, a burial spice, foretold of his death.

APPLICATION

This story is an example in the Bible of God's faithfulness to His Word. What He says will happen, will come to pass. When it does happen, we are excited and exceedingly joyful. We want to worship Him and proclaim His goodness. Worship takes many forms. Worship is defined as Worth - ship. It can be singing, but it can also be showing respect and honor for something valuable. It can be spending quiet time in the Word because you value God and what He wants to teach you. It can be using the talents He has given you for His glory and honor. It can be using your resources and money to build the Kingdom of God through the local church or other ministries proclaiming God's name.

PERSONAL INSIGHT

It is such a joy to use our talents for outreach ministries in our church home. God gives us freely the ability to pray, serve, teach, cook, and tithe. We thoroughly enjoy doing these activities for the Lord and watching Him bless others through it and bring them to the Lord.

CLOSING REFLECTION

True worship brings joy and generous hearts.

PRAYER

Dear God, Thank you for sending Jesus to earth to live a sinless life and follow your guidance perfectly. Thank you that Jesus died to take the punishment for our sins so we can live with you forever in Heaven if we believe this. Because of this, we rejoice greatly as the wise men every day. Help us to boldly proclaim your goodness with generosity of spirit and offerings. In Jesus' precious name. Amen

December 19th

By Mark and Somer Love

[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:14 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“And the Word become flesh...”, the Word was there in the beginning, was with God, is God...in him is life and light, light that shines in darkness giving light to everyone...the light came into the world and the world did not know him...and there in lies a part for us to play, a space where we can be obedient, we can tell the world about Him...we were not there in the beginning, we are not God, we are the *“light of the world,”* Matthew 5:14a only because of Him, and He commanded us with a purpose...*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”* Matthew 28:19

APPLICATION

So this Christmas Season we can be obedient to this command, and begin the process of making disciples by telling other about Jesus...and we can begin with this verse John 1:14...*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”*...we can explain that Jesus was there in the beginning, was with God, is God, is life, is light that shines in the darkness...and that in order to reconcile us to God he came and dwelt among us...*“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us)”* Matthew 1:23. It is an amazing and humbling realization in a world which makes a big deal about man, that the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, infinitely holy Son of God took on a human nature and lived among humanity as one who was both God and man at the same time, in one person...may

we give glory to God the Father for sending Jesus Christ His Son into the world.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this day, thank you for the Christmas season, thank you for sending your Son to dwell among us so that we might know Him. We pray Heavenly Father that everyday you would give us the words to say to those we come in contact with to allow us to tell others about Jesus, about the saving grace that comes with knowing and having a relationship with Him. Be with us as we go out each day and thank you for loving us and for Jesus. Amen.

December 20th

By Chris and Becky Reeves

[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3:16 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

This verse is familiar to most if not all of us! We may have memorized it, or it is familiar because we see it everywhere. We see it on TV, at sporting events, on posters, along a road, or written on walls in churches. But what does it really mean and why is it so popular?

It begins by saying “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son”. We picked this date because it is Becky’s mom’s birthday. As we think about how our parents loved us, or how we love our children, it helps set a standard for how this verse starts. But is that standard enough? Let me clarify. As a parent, could you say you would give your life for your child? I think for most of us, this is a resounding YES! But how many parents would give the life of their child for someone else? For a friend, a neighbor, or a stranger on the other side of the world. That is what God did! He gave his Son because He loves the world. An unconditional love. A love that doesn’t hinge on what we say, what we do, or what our status is. He just LOVES us.

“That whoever”. When John wrote this verse, he was contrasting what the Jews thought, that God’s love and redemption was only for them, to what God meant by whoever. It wasn’t just the Jews it was also the Gentiles! Whoever meant everyone. Those the world holds in high esteem and those the world doesn’t think much of. God loved them ALL, the whole world and gave His Son to be tortured and die for everyone: past, present, and future.

“Believes in Him”. What does it mean to believe in Him? Is it just saying, I believe, without any real feeling behind it, a simple mental agreement? No, it is a deep trust and reliance on Jesus. It is a belief that feeds on God! A belief that knows we need Him and are lost without Him.

“Should not perish but have everlasting life” – This could be confusing as we see people die all the time. But this is both the spiritual as well as the physical life that is being promised. Once we believe, our life is shared with God (physical when we are here on earth, and spiritual once we die) as opposed to perishing and being separated from him when we don’t believe.

APPLICATION

So, as we near the celebration of Jesus’s birth, we can reflect on the depth of God’s love for the whole world and what He was willing to do to reconcile all of us to Him. He gave his Son by nature and obedience so that we can be called His children by grace and adoption.

PRAYER

Dear heavenly father, we thank you for your love and sacrifice, that allows us to be called children of God. Because of this we can look forward to an eternity with you! Help our belief continue to grow every day.

December 21st

By Ken and Dionne Torre

[6] Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

(Philippians 2:6–7 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

This translation emphasizes both Christ's divine nature and His voluntary self-emptying. The phrase "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" highlights His refusal to cling to divine privilege, while "emptied himself" points to the radical humility of the incarnation. Jesus Christ, fully divine, chose not to cling to His heavenly status. Instead, He stepped down into humanity—not as a king, but as a servant. His descent wasn't a detour; it was the very path to our salvation. Through humility, He opened the door to eternal life to those who would also humble themselves to accept Him as their Lord and Savior.

In a world that celebrates power, status, and self-promotion, the humility of Christ stands as a radical reversal. Though He was fully God—entitled to glory, worship, and dominion—Jesus chose to descend. Not just into flesh, but into servanthood. Into obscurity. Into suffering. Therefore, our faith stands in direct contrast with the world and celebrates humility, selflessness, and willingness to put others first.

APPLICATION

Christ had every right to remain exalted, yet He chose to lower Himself.

- His humility wasn't weakness—it was love in action.
- By becoming "nothing," He made us something: redeemed, restored, and alive in Him.

This is the mystery of the Gospel: the highest became the lowest so the lost could be found. His incarnation wasn't just a historical event—it's a daily invitation to live differently.

His humility wasn't weakness—it was strength restrained for redemption.

Christ's descent was the pathway to our ascent. By stepping down, He lifted us up. By dying, He gave us life. His humility opened the door to reconciliation, healing, and eternal hope.

Application during this Christmas season:

1. **Reframe Christmas as a Descent, Not Just a Birth**
 - Jesus didn't just come to earth; He emptied Himself of divine privilege to enter our brokenness.
 - *Let this season be less about what we receive and more about what Christ gave up.*
2. **Practice Humble Presence Over Holiday Performance**
 - In a season filled with pressure to impress—through gifts, gatherings, or achievements—His example invites us to be present, not perform.
 - *Prioritize quiet acts of love, unseen service, and heartfelt connection.*
3. **Serve Like the Savior**
 - Jesus took "the very nature of a servant." Christmas is the perfect time to embody that posture.
 - Volunteer at a shelter or food bank, invite someone lonely into your home, or *forgive someone who doesn't deserve it—just as Christ forgave us.*
4. **Worship with Awe, Not Just Tradition**
 - The manger wasn't just a cradle—it was a throne of humility.
 - Let your worship this season be filled with awe for the God who chose weakness to rescue us. *Sing carols not just with joy, but with reverence.*
5. **Live the Incarnation Daily**
 - Christ's humility wasn't seasonal—it was His way of life.
 - Carry the spirit of Christmas into the new year. *Let humility, sacrifice, and love define your walk beyond December.*

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for humbling Yourself so that we might live. Help us to walk in Your footsteps—not seeking status but seeking to serve and to glorify your name among men. May Your example of love and sacrifice continue transform our hearts and relationships in the manner you intended it to be. Amen.

December 22nd

By Eli and Kari Love

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

(Galatians 4:4–5 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

I encourage you to take a moment to think about how incredible it is that we have a God who came into the world to be the perfect sacrifice. A God who laid himself down in order to clear our debt. A debt so crushing that we could never hope to repay it. And not only this, but through His sacrifice, He has made us His children, heirs to a gift we do not deserve, simply because He loves us.

APPLICATION

Just as the shepherds leave the manger “*glorifying and praising God (Luke 2:20)*,” let us celebrate that God sent his Son, Jesus, to redeem us, and make us His sons and daughters. Let us remember that with this adoption comes a divine purpose and responsibility. It should no longer be us that lives, but Christ that lives in us.

”For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (Galatians 2:19-21).

We no longer live for ourselves, but for our Holy Father. Let us go about our days seeing others, not as we see them, but as Christ sees them.

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36-20).

PRAYER

Lord, Words can not express our gratitude for your sacrifice. Please guide us in these final three days before Christmas, and let us see others as you see them. We love you and thank you for your gift. Amen.

December 23rd

By Jim and Debbie Clements

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3–5 (ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Tragedy touches every life, and in those moments we cling to hope. But so often, that hope is anchored in things that fade—jobs, money, relationships, even the dream of a better tomorrow. That kind of hope dies. Christians hold a different kind of hope—a living hope, rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's eternal. It's the promise of salvation, a hope that cannot be stolen or shaken. This hope isn't wishful thinking; it's a confident expectation of what God will do—not because of what we've done, but because of what He has already accomplished. This hope defines us. It steadies us when bad news strikes. It guides us when we don't know the next step. It moves us to share with those who desperately need it. It lives within us. Hope means knowing that even when life isn't okay, in Christ, it's going to be alright."

PERSONAL INSIGHT

I'll never forget the day our company announced a new CEO. For those of us with a decade or more under our belts—the so-called 'old timers'—it felt like the ground shifted beneath us. Whispers of layoffs turned into reality as familiar faces retired or were shown the door. I remember sitting there, heart pounding, thinking: What if I'm next? At my age, how do you start over? Who would even take a chance on me?

APPLICATION

My work situation had become a major distraction, narrowing my perspective and clouding my priorities. My focus was completely misplaced. As Christians, our hope must rest in Jesus Christ. When I finally surrendered and placed my trust in Him, everything came into alignment, my world felt right again.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We praise you for your mercy that has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank you for the inheritance you have prepared for us—imperishable, undefiled, and unfading—kept in heaven for all who believe. Lord, when life feels uncertain, remind us that our hope is secure in Christ. Strengthen our hearts to trust your promises and to live with joy and confidence, knowing that our future is safe in your hands. Help us to reflect this hope to others, so they too may find peace in your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

December 24th

By Chuck and Liz Rice

**[23] “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).
(Matthew 1:23 ESV)**

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Today’s passage is a quote from Isaiah 7:14, and it is the prophesy of the Messiah’s birth. There are a couple of takeaways from the passage that bring the significance of that first Christmas.

First, the prophet proclaimed that a virgin would give birth to the Messiah. Chuck Swindoll once said that God’s entry into the world had to be miraculous. It could not have been ordinary for Jesus was not an ordinary human being. He was divine, and his birth had to be supernatural.

Second, Matthew 1:23 proclaims that God came to us. Charles Spurgeon is quoted as having said that if God came to us, we can go to Him without a priest or intercessor. In that regard, consider what it means for God to be truly with us. God has stepped into our world. He took on human form to personally share in our joys and sorrows.

Through Jesus, God is not far away. He walks alongside us in our joys, struggles, and even in the mundane, ordinary moments. When doubts and uncertainty overwhelm our thoughts, Matthew 1:23 reassures us that we are not alone. God came to us to hold our hand and to be ever present in our lives.

On that first Christmas, God came into the world to have a personal relationship with each one of us. He loves and cares for us that much! It is now up to us to be obedient to Him so that we can follow that narrow path to His Glory!

APPLICATION

Please take some time today on Christmas Eve to acknowledge God’s nearness and thank Him for being our comforter, helper, and friend. Please look for opportunities to share with others that God is present and wants to have a personal relationship with each of us.

Finally, please remember that in the peaks and valleys of life, we are not alone; God came to us so that we can be with Him.

PRAYER

Lord God, thank You for coming to us on the first Christmas. Help me to never forget of your love and presence in our lives and that You walk beside us in each and every circumstance. In Christ’s name, amen.

December 25th

By Chad and Dani Womack

[9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [12] No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.
(1 John 4:9–12 ESV)

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Merry Christmas!

Certain words in scripture carry tremendous weight. One of those words appear in our focal passage today: propitiation. This is a big word, and it carries with it a big meaning. Propitiation means that Jesus didn't just cover our sin – He fully satisfied the righteous wrath of God towards our sin. It is the word that captures the full weight of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

- He bore the penalty our sin deserved
- He absorbed the judgement of God that should have fallen on us
- He secured peace between us and God

Out of a great love for us, God sent Jesus who was perfect, holy, and sinless to be a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is love. A love we are indebted to. A love worth celebrating this Christmas morning.

On this day we will gather around our tables with family and friends. We will gather around our trees and open gifts. We will laugh and we may even cry, especially if there is an empty chair around our table. But we gather knowing that **God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.**

APPLICATION

In light of Jesus' sacrifice, how do we live out and abide in His love? After all, He is the perfect GIFT.

Give your life to Jesus, surrendering everything. **So that we might live through Him.** Is there something you need to surrender to Jesus today?

Imagine how very much God loves YOU! **He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** Do you truly know how much you are loved by the Savior?

Follow Jesus' example of love. **If God so loved us, we also out to love one another.** How are you demonstrating the love of Christ?

Tell someone about the love of Jesus. **God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.** Who do you need to share Jesus with?

As we celebrate Jesus this Christmas Day, take a moment to reflect on your response to this amazing love and thank God for the perfect sacrifice.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, we come before you praising your holy name. We are so grateful for the gift you gave us in sending your son, Jesus, to be the ultimate sacrifice for each one of us. Thank you for making a way for us to be with you for eternity. We long to abide in you and your love. Help us to share that love with others so that they may come to know you and experience the greatest gift of all.