My Soul Cries Out With a Joyful Shout



Advent Devotional 2026

First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa

“My Soul Cries Out With a Joyful Shout”

Hymn #100 - Glory to God Hymnal

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the one who waits.
You fixed your sight on the servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.
Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me.
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and those who would for you yearn,
You will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn.
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.

From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
every tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
These are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn.
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.
Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forbears heard
is the promise that holds us bound,
'Til the spear and rod be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around.
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
For the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.

HOPE



<u>We wait with Hope</u>

God of hope, you promise
wondrous things and I trust that you will fulfill your promises
to the whole world. Help me to live in hope this week
as I look to your promise of our coming savior. Amen.

November 29, 2026
Matthew 25:1-13
Jana Henry

Having Sally and Thomas has given me a whole new appreciation for the anticipation of Christmas. They notice every decoration, count down the days, and somehow manage to ask "How much longer until Christmas?" more times than I can count. Their excitement reminds me that there can actually be joy in waiting when we know something wonderful is coming. In Matthew 25, the wise bridesmaids didn't know exactly when the bridegroom would arrive, but they kept their lamps ready and trusted that he would come. I want our family to approach Advent with that same kind of expectant faith, not rushing through the season, but watching for God in the ordinary moments and preparing our hearts for Jesus.

My prayer is that, like children waiting excitedly for Christmas morning, our souls would be so full of hope for Christ that they can't help but cry out with a joyful shout.

November 30, 2026
Luke 20:1-8
Danny Potts

October is my favorite month for many reasons,
including its "bright blue weather" that my grandmother
used to speak about. But none is more important than the
anticipation of glorious fall colors breaking forth
in our Alabama woods.

This weekend, I was blessed to behold some of these brilliant hues
while hiking at Living River: a Retreat on the Cahaba,
and I wrote this devotional from there.
Truly—in the words of Canticle of the Turning—"my soul cries out
with a joyful shout" at such wonders, as I try to wait patiently
for the full revelation. The mysterious authority to offer
such a lavish gift can only come from the creator of the universe,
the master artist of our lives.

Perhaps we can view this blessed coming of autumnal colors
in light of our advent hope: seasons change and life's challenges
can be great and long. But we wait patiently, prayerfully,
for the breaking forth of salvation and healing in our midst,
painting our lives in the vibrant colors of Love from the inside out,
so that the whole world may know God's beautiful blessing.

December 1, 2026
Luke 20: 9-18
George and Bess Miller

During Advent we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ,
the beloved Son of God whom God sent into the world to redeem us.
In the parable of the Vineyard, the tenets reject the messengers and ultimately even kill the owner's beloved son, reminding us that God's gift of love is not always welcomed by the world.
Yet even in the face of rejection, God's purpose of salvation prevails through Jesus Christ.
Jesus becomes the rejected stone that becomes the Cornerstone,
the foundation upon which our faith and hope are built.
As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, may we examine whether we are truly welcoming Christ into our lives or resisting His call to obedience and faithfulness.
This Advent, may we receive God's beloved Son with grace,
that grace which He offers to all of us.

December 2, 2026
Luke 20:19-26
Jaqueline and Robert Morgan

What do you think of when you hear the words the heavenly host?
Perhaps something angelic, peaceful, calming, and reassuring.
But the Greek word for host actually means an army –
– a mighty army of angels suddenly appearing in the sky!
No wonder the shepherds were terrified. And yet, this heavenly army came not to wage war, but to announce a message of peace and love: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." What extraordinary good news!
The shepherds were so moved by what they heard that they hurried to Bethlehem to see for themselves, then went out sharing the news with everyone they encountered.
May we, too, be so moved by the good news of Christ's coming that our hearts overflow with joy, and we become messengers of the peace and love we have received.

December 3, 2026

Luke 20: 27-40

James Tucker

The Resurrection and Marriage

Today's lesson poses a scenario we encounter regularly in the New Testament: Cross-examination of Jesus by a group of religious leaders. Similar to the universal truths found in the poetic language of our shared seasonal hymn, Jesus shifts his response from the common and everyday to a very different subject. Rather than answer a question of the day about marriage between siblings, widows, and widowers, Jesus asserts, "[t]he people of this age... are like the angels." Indeed!

The Jesus of Luke's Gospel lifts each of us up as a Child of God. That can be hard to appreciate as family bills mount, work responsibilities expand, and years of adulthood accumulate. Let us pause each day this Advent Season to remember as children of God we listen, watch, and wait for extraordinary possibilities. Extraordinary possibilities like the hymn's turnings in God's world, each person an angel, even a King born in a manger!

December 4, 2026
Luke 20: 41-21: 4
Elizabeth Jernigan

There is something beautiful about seeing joy spill over into worship.
As our congregation sings the Gloria Patri each Sunday,
I am reminded that worship is not just something we say;
it is something we feel. The smiles, voices, and movement around the sanctuary are a joyful expression of hearts celebrating Christ.
Watching those around me fully worship
makes my soul cry out with a joyful shout!

December 5, 2026
Luke 21: 5-19
Susan Campbell

I think about the beautiful story of Jesus' birth.
Our King was born in a stable. The angels sang and a bright star was shining proclaiming his birth. Let us not ever forget that we are in God's care. He knows everything about us.
Stay with him always and you will be saved.

PEACE



We wait with Peace

God of peace, you give me peace through your presence and I know that you are with me always. You also promise to work great things in me. Help me to live with peace this week as I recognize your presence in and around me. Amen.

December 6, 2026
Luke 7: 28-35
Kristi Thomson

Luke 7: 35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children.
As a volunteer tutor for Reading Allies, I am reminded of a quote from my mother, " Your eyes are the windows to your soul." I look into my students' eyes, and I see trust, hope, and belief that I will love and encourage them to be the best that they can be in life. And my eyes reflect gratitude for the love and trust these children return to me.
My soul cries out with a joyful shout for children who remind us that life is about giving your heart.

December 7, 2026
Luke 21: 20-28
Clint Mountain

In Luke 21:20-28, Jesus speaks of troubling times, warning of destruction, fear, and uncertainty, but he also offers a powerful message of hope. When reflecting on this passage I am struck byvhow Jesus describes a world filled with fear, uncertainty, and turmoil. I know there are times in my life when I become overwhelmed with troubles and worries beyond my control. His words remind us that even when the world is chaotic and beyond our control, God's promises remain steadfast. Jesus offers a beautiful reminder: "Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

I don't always find it easy to let go of my worries and trust in God's plan, but this passage reminds me that hope rests in the promises of Christ. My prayer is that we can all face life's uncertainties with a little less fear, a little more faith, and the comforting knowledge that God is always with us.

December 8, 2026
Luke 21: 29-38
Marilyn Norris

In this passage, Jesus tells His disciples to keep constant watch for His return. He states that although persecutions will come, they are not to worry but be filled with JOY.
What wonderful news for us even today - Jesus will come again! JOY!

December 9, 2026
John 7: 53- 8:11
Craig Cilimberg

"My Soul Cries Out With a Joyful Shout" when I have been forgiven
by someone I have wronged. However, in these scripture verses,
I tend to focus on the accusers, not the accused.
As we celebrate the first coming of Christ, and prepare
for the second, let us unburden ourselves of the painful weight
of grievance and judgement towards a neighbor.
Let us free ourselves to experience the Hope, Peace, Joy,
and Love that the Advent season intends.

December 10, 2026
Luke 22:1-13
Brent Hardin

When I read the story of the widow who gave her last two coins,
I am reminded of something both simple and beautiful about our faith. God does not measure our lives by how much money we have, what we accomplish, or how others see us. Instead, God sees our hearts. He sees our generosity, our kindness,
and the love we share with others.
There is something incredibly freeing and joyful about that message.
We live in a world that so often measures success by wealth, possessions, recognition, and outward appearances.
Yet Jesus reminds us that the things that matter most
cannot be bought. My soul cries out with joy because
God's love is not something we have to earn through wealth, status, or success. It is a gift freely given to each of us.
And perhaps one of the greatest ways we can honor that gift
is to live with gratitude, give with generosity,
and love without condition.

December 11, 2026
Luke 22:14-30
Ellen Potts

"No night could be darker than this night, No cold so cold....
And the year seems defeated.... Yet here are lessons from
the final mile of pilgrim kings; The mile still left when
all have reached their tether's end: That mile where the child
lies hid.... For men with shepherd's eyes, there are signs in the dark....
Out of this utter death he's born again.... The Son of God."
— Excerpts from "Twelfth Night" by Laurie Lane

Sometimes our circumstances crowd out the joy of
Advent and Christmas, and the road ahead seems dark and
intimidating. However, the "mile still left when all have reached their
tether's end" is often the "mile where the child lies hid."
Lord, when the struggle is overwhelming, give us "shepherd's eyes"
to see where you meet us even in the bleakest of days.

December 12, 2026
Luke 22: 31-38
Charlotte Bowers

My soul cries out with a joyful shout since I just learned that Jesus prays for us. We hear Michael dismiss us each week with all the things Jesus does for us, but we can now add, "prays for us" to that list. Jesus knows that Peter will fail just as Jesus knows we will fail. However, instead of chastising or abandoning Peter, Jesus simply tells his disciples to be prepared for when He will no longer be with them. Jesus ends the passage by assuring his disciples that He knows His sacrifice is needed for our salvation. What a gift it is to know we have such a loving God who desires to be with us and will pray for us!

JOY



We wait with Joy

God of joy, you bring joy to my life
through Jesus. As I wait for the ways Jesus will bring justice
and provision, help me look for joy
amidst the chaos of this holiday season. Amen.

December 13, 2026

John 3: 22-30

Don Bailey & Brink Hutto

In this Scripture passage, we see Jesus moving from personal ministry to public ministry. In so doing, he spent time with his disciples who would later do the public ministry. We see that John the Baptist was questioned why the majority of his followers were now following and listening to Jesus. John answered that he was not the Messiah, but was joyful that he must decrease so that the Messiah would increase.

Written by Don Bailey

When I read this passage I think about how inevitably the season of Fall can become a big rush, and how Christmas is often no different. Yet here, John the Baptist provides a wonderful example. What's his response when his job, his life's work is beginning to change shape?

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

In life we build all kinds of expectations for what the outcome should be, especially around the holidays.

But I think what John would tell us is to keep our one expectation as Christ and his increase in our lives.

Everything else will work out fine.

Written by Brink Hutto

December 14, 2026
Luke 22: 39-53
Janet Crowder

Advent is the story of Jesus becoming human;
We shout "Joy to World" on Christmas Eve to celebrate the miracle of his humble birth in a manger. Treasured Bible stories teach us about Jesus from birth through death and resurrection.
In the story of his final days of life, Jesus was tired, anxious, and fearful – emotions we all know well. Jesus' example at the Mount of Olives teaches us to rely on prayer, submission to God's will, and strength from above when life is difficult... or anytime.
The joyful shouts of Christmas Eve should remain with us each day because "the God of my heart is great" and His "mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be."

December 15, 2026
Luke 22: 54-69
Tom and Suse Patton

Luke 2:19 says, “Mary treasured up all these things
and pondered them in her heart.”
The words “treasured” and “pondered” jumped out at me.
Because of Mary’s faith, she was able to accept without question
that she would be the mother of the holy one of God...the son of God
whose kingdom will never end.
May we all “treasure”and “ponder” the joy of Christmas.

December 16, 2026
Mark 1:1-8
Leanne Spencer

When I read about John the Baptist, I imagine him saying,
“Get ready, Jesus is coming!” His words remind me that Advent
is a time to pause and notice God's presence in my life.
Sometimes I get caught up in all the things I need to do,
but this passage invites me to make space for hope and joy.
My soul cries out with a joyful shout because
God keeps His promises and comes to meet us right where we are.
As I wait and prepare this Advent season,
I want to welcome Jesus with an open heart
and a spirit full of gratitude. And always choose JOY.

December 17, 2026
Matthew 3: 1-12
Emily Frandsen

John the Baptist's proclamations in the wilderness were
both a welcome and a warning. He welcomed all to repent
and prepare their lives for the coming savior, but he also gave
a harsh warning to the religious leaders who came to be baptized
out of fear. If it were not for Jesus opening the way for all people
to be included in God's family, we might all be living in that same fear.
My soul cries out with a joyful shout when I remember
that because of Jesus, all are welcomed into God's family.
Thanks be to God!

December 18, 2026
John 3:16-21
Janice Rosenfeld

"My soul cries out with a joyful shout" as the light of the world comes through Christmas. God, out of immense love, sent his son Jesus Christ as a shining light to save the world rather than to condemn it, bringing joy to those who choose eternal life through belief. Those who do not believe face condemnation by preferring dark and evil over the light.

December 19, 2026
John 5: 30-47
Allen Okine

"A Joyful Shout Rooted in the Truth of Christ"
In John 5:30-47, Jesus reminds us that our faith must be rooted in the truth of God's Word and a genuine relationship with Him. My soul cries out with a joyful shout because we know that our hope, strength, and salvation are found in Jesus Christ. Even when the world fails to recognize His truth, we can rejoice because God's Word bears witness to who He is. This passage challenges us to move beyond simply knowing Scripture to allowing it to transform our heart and guide our daily walk with God.
May our life be a testimony of His goodness, so that our joy is not merely heard in our words but seen in our actions. Amen.

LOVE



We wait with Love

God of love, your love knows no bounds. By coming into this
world as a baby, you show us
what you will do for us in the name of love.
Help me to hold fast to your love
as you hold fast to me. Amen.

December 20, 2026

Luke 1: 5-25

Travis Juneau

For four hundred years between the prophets, a heavy silence fell over the land of Israel, a silence in which the people wondered whether heaven had at last forgotten the words it had spoken to them in the past. Zechariah and Elizabeth embodied that silence: an old couple of the priestly line who were childless.
Their names were in fact the very gospel before it was ever spoken. Zechariah meant, “Yahweh remembers”, and Elizabeth meant, “God of the covenant.” When Gabriel came to the altar of incense, the long silence was broken and the announcement was made that both their personal prayers and the redemption of Israel were at hand. That moment on the other side of the veil proved beyond any doubt that God does remember. We stand on this side of the veil and we can rejoice in a God who cannot fail, who has the perfect timing, and who is faithful beyond all measure.
A God who remembers every word He has spoken to His people. Waiting becomes praise and my soul is singing with a shout of joy.

December 21, 2026
Luke 1: 26-38
Michael Bailey

Sometimes we receive confusing or even shocking news.
Just like Mary received from the angel Gabriel.
We often respond in dismay, “There is no way this is happening!”
Echoing Mary’s response, “How can this be?”
But before we start freaking out the next time we receive news
that throws us for a loop, let's pause and remember what Mary
learned from her angel visit: “Nothing is impossible with God.”
And let us seek to respond as she did with hopeful trust:
“Here I am, Lord. Let it be."
Tis the season for hopeful trust... always!

December 22, 2026
Luke 1: 39-48a (48b-56)
Sara Kaylor

After receiving life-changing news, Mary does not remain alone. She goes "with haste" to Elizabeth—someone who can understand both the wonder and uncertainty of what God is doing. When Mary arrives, Elizabeth recognizes and blesses the work of God within her. Only then does Mary lift her voice in praise. This exchange reminds us that Advent is not meant to be experienced alone. Sometimes faith grows because another person sees God at work in us before we can fully see it ourselves. Elizabeth offers Mary welcome, affirmation, and joy. In return, Mary proclaims a hope much larger than her own circumstances: God remembers the overlooked, lifts the lowly, fills the hungry, and remains faithful from generation to generation.

During a season that can feel rushed and demanding, we are invited to notice one another. Who might need our encouragement? Whose quiet faithfulness deserves to be named? And who has helped us recognize God's presence in our own lives? Advent hope often begins this way—not with certainty, but with companionship; not with all the answers, but with the gift of being seen and reminded that God is near.

December 23, 2026
Luke 1: 57-66
Lou Ann Sellers

Around birth, one of the most exciting moments is to hear the child's name. Although needing to name our daughter pre-birth for a transatlantic document, we did not announce her gender nor her name until she was born. There had been much anticipatory guesswork! The religious community in Luke's gospel certainly had their expectations for the name of Elizabeth and Zechariah's child – and the name "John" was not on their list. Yet, as he declared the child's God-chosen name, Zechariah's nine-month muteness ended, and he began praising God aloud. The people, filled with fear and awe, pondered, "What will become of this child?" Fear, joy and praise are always the appropriate reaction to God's mighty acts. May awe, joy and praise be our response to God's ongoing work among us!

December 24, 2026
Luke 1: 67-80
Mary Liz Curtner-Smith

I am sometimes asked, “What has been the happiest day of your life?”
For me, the answer is easy. The two happiest days of my life
were the days that each of my daughters were born.
On those days, Matt and I both cried out with joyful shouts
as we welcomed our babies into our arms.
This Christmas, may our souls cry out with joyful shouts
as we welcome Baby Jesus into our lives.

December 25, 2026
John 3: 31-36
Cal Holt

"For God gives the Spirit without limit"

Years of Christmas mornings awakened by my own childlike expectations, the dream of a delighted smile on my new bride's face, children's laughter, grandchildren's bright eyes and joyous reactions have created a deep-rooted desire for something more.
Even today, that heartfelt want to give lives deep within my soul.
Are there enough presents? Will all be happy?
Is there anyway they know the love that fills the air in our home?
There is never enough "stuff" to fill the space below the tree.
There are never enough gifts to give to show those you love
just how much you love them, how much you need them,
or how much they fill your heart. I wish I could wrap in a big box,
the Spirit God gives without limit. The only gift that keeps on giving.
Those I love need nothing more.

Merry Christmas!



Prayer

Sara Kaylor

God of hope, help us recognize your presence in one another.
Give us the courage to offer encouragement,
the humility to receive it, and the faith to trust
that you are still lifting, filling, and transforming the world.
Amen.