

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Monday December 21

*Listen*

**Isaiah 62:2**

**<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the Lord will give.**

Israel was judged by God. Their leaders had fallen away from following the Lord and the people followed their leaders. They had become like every other nation around them in worshipping other gods and mistreating one another in jealousy and violence. The beginning of Isaiah levels a judgement against the nation of Israel from the mouth of God, "Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." (Isaiah 1:2-3). They had forgotten their God and there were tragic consequences. But, by the end of the book of Isaiah, we hear words of mercy from our heavenly Father. God does not leave injustice unpunished, but at the same time, he is a God of good news and resurrection life. There new names help us understand what God is up to. Before, they were called "Forsaken" and "Desolate." Another nation had burned their city, the holy temple, and all of their homes to the ground. But God had a resurrection in mind. God gives the land new names in place of the old, "My Delight Is in Her" and "Married." Names that remind us of celebration, thanksgiving, and rejoicing. Hear these new names and realize that God gives us these names as well in Jesus Christ. Whatever terrible things we have been called over the years, God calls us things like "Beloved," "children of God," and "saints." These are the names that tell us who we are.

Take **2 minutes** to think about these verses in Isaiah. If it helps fill the time, answer these questions:

*What other names does God have for us in the Bible?*

*Has anyone ever called you a name that ruined your day, month, or maybe even your year?*

*Does God say anything about you that contradicts what someone else has said about you?*

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Tuesday, December 22

*Pray*

### **Psalm 148:13**

**<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.**

There are 150 Psalms in our Old Testament. Psalm 148 is one of the final Psalms that concludes this book of worship and prayer. These final psalms act as a grand finale to whole book. They are the final moments of the firework show. The worship and praise of God is louder, more explosive, and more frequent as we make a final crescendo to conclude the book. Psalm 148 sets up a worship service that includes all of creation. Everything in heaven and everything on earth. From angels, to the sun and moon, the stars, the clouds in the heavens to the creatures in the sea, snow and storms, mountains and hills, all the animals of the earth, kings and children and every one in between...all of these receive one command from the psalmist: Praise the Lord! As we go through who's invited to this worship service, we can't help but realize, all of these things, animals, and people were created by God. Yet, none of these things top God in any way. In the psalmist's words, "his glory is above earth and heaven." This is the God who has come to us in the manger. This is the God who reveals himself to us in Jesus Christ. This glorious God whose name alone is exalted. Let us praise him.

Take **2 minutes** to pray about what you have been learning from God. Remember:

*God gives us a new name, but his name alone is exalted above everything else.*

*God, the creator of all things, has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ.*

*God has given an invitation out to all creation for the worship service of a lifetime.*

Feel free to end your prayer in this way: *Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, you have created everything that exists. Things in heaven and things on earth have all been fashioned by the work of your hands. We join all of creation in worshipping you. We are amazed that you have chosen to make your home with us in Jesus Christ. And we worship you in his name, Amen*

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Wednesday, December 23

### Family Devotion Day

Last week we read about Jesus' birth and the shepherds who first heard the good news. Today we read and journal about the wise men and the departure of all from Bethlehem.

#### Matthew 2:1-15

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

<sup>3</sup>When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

<sup>5</sup>So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>'But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah,

Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;

For out of you shall come a Ruler

Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star

appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

<sup>9</sup>When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. <sup>11</sup>And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His

mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup>Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

<sup>13</sup>Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

<sup>14</sup>When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, <sup>15</sup>and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Write: I suggest writing the following verses in your Bible journal- little 'snippets' of the story to help us remember it. Please feel free to write out your favorite verses from these passages or the whole thing. Matthew 2:5-6 and/or Matthew 2:9-12

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Thursday, December 24

*Study*

**Luke 2:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.**

Christmas Eve, the night before Jesus was born. We don't know exactly what that night was like before Mary gave birth to Jesus, but we know about the trip that took place right before the birth of our Lord. It consisted of travel. They had to go to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus issued a census. It anchors the birth of Jesus in history at a particular time in a particular place. From last week's devotions, we know that Jesus fulfills the promise that was made to David that his kingdom would have no end. Luke tells us that Joseph was a descendant from the house and family of David. We can hear the point loud and clear. It might stand out to us this year more than years in the past that this census would have caused Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to be isolated away from the rest of their family. Just think of the nativity scenes that we decorate our homes with. Who is all there? Grandpa and Grandma? Uncle Zechariah and Aunt Elizabeth? No, it's just Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. Although many nativities have the wise men present, they actually wouldn't have arrived at the birth of Jesus. They could have gotten there as late as two years after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:16). We focus our minds on the pregnant Mary and the waiting Joseph and we realize that they were alone in a stable with a bunch of animals. We look to that miraculous scene and we realize we have something in common with that holy family, unique to this year. Many of us will be celebrating in smaller gatherings. Some of us won't be seeing our children and grandchildren, at least in person. But we can have hope in a new beginning knowing that Christ was born into a family that was isolated in Bethlehem, away from the rest of their relatives in Nazareth. This is where hope is born. This is where the gospel begins.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, Christmas is not like it has been in years past. It's not the way we would have planned it. But we see how you got Mary and Joseph away and off on their own the night before Jesus was born and we have faith knowing that our isolation doesn't stop you from bringing hope and salvation into the world. Help us to worship you in the midst of it all in Jesus' name we pray, Amen

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Friday, December 25

Devotion on Hymn: Hail to the Lord's Anointed by James Montgomery (1771-1854)

Scripture: Psalm 72:1: Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

James Montgomery (b. Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland, 1771; d. Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, 1854), the son of Moravian parents who died on a West Indies mission field while he was in boarding school, Montgomery inherited a strong religious bent, a passion for missions, and an independent mind. Associated with Christians of various persuasions, Montgomery supported missions and the British Bible Society. He published eleven volumes of poetry, mainly his own, and at least four hundred hymns. Some critics judge his hymn texts to be equal in quality to those of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley .[1]

1 Hail to the Lord's anointed,  
Great David's greater Son!  
Hail, in the time appointed,  
His reign on earth begun!  
He comes to break oppression,  
To set the captive free,  
To take away transgression  
And rule in equity.

2 He comes with rescue speedy  
To those who suffer wrong,  
To help the poor and needy,  
And bid the weak be strong;  
To give them songs for sighing,  
Their darkness turn to light,  
Whose souls, condemned and dying,  
Were precious in his sight.

3 He shall come down like showers  
Upon the fruitful earth;  
And Love, joy, hope, like flowers,  
Spring in his path to birth.  
Before him on the mountains  
Shall peace, the herald, go;  
And righteousness in fountains  
From hill to valley flow.

4 Kings shall fall down before him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore him,  
His praise all people sing.

To him shall prayer unceasing  
And daily vows ascend;  
His kingdom still increasing,  
A kingdom without end.

Merry Christmas and God's blessings to you all!!

The Advent season has been filled with hymns of anticipation, prophecy, and promise interspersed with Christmas hymns that proclaim the birth of the "Savior of the Nations." Today the world celebrates Christmas, the birthday of the promised Messiah. What a wonderful day!! But even before the twelve days of Christmas are over, new displays will point us to the next holiday. However, we must not overlook the Epiphany season. As we prepare for Epiphany, let us continue celebrating our Savior, proclaiming Jesus as the "morning star," "the Christ our Lord," the only Son from heaven," "the Son of God," and "the Lord's anointed!" What does it mean to be "anointed?" In 1 Samuel 16, we read of Samuel, the high priest, anointing Saul as the first king of Israel, and then David as the second king. In Exodus 30, God commands Aaron and all of his sons to be anointed before serving God as priests. In these instances, men, chosen by God, were anointed with fragrant oil poured upon their heads as a way of saying, "This is the one, the one who smells good. He's the new king," or "He's the new priest." When these chosen servants were anointed, they earned a new name, "christ", which is Greek for "anointed one". While the people looked for a glorious version of the old anointed one, through the prophets God continued His promise to send His Christ, anointed not with holy oil, but with the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the work of all the old kings and priests. So, at His baptism, God, in a voice from heaven, called Jesus his beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Christ, the servant of God, who will do God's work. By designating Jesus as the anointed one, His ministry is given ultimate authority. Jesus, "David's greater Son," came at the right time to "break oppression," "set the captive free," and "rule in equity." His ministry wasn't to the social or religious elite, but he came "to help the poor and needy." Doesn't that sound like us? Our souls, although "condemned and dying" ARE "precious in His sight." As Jesus rules as king upon the earth, he extends love, joy, and hope to all. Jesus' realm isn't only on earth, as recognized by the Magi, but extends to the kingdom without end. His ministry on earth was an expression of His great love for us. His covenant of LOVE is timeless and cannot be broken! So, as we prepare now for Epiphany, use this time as an opportunity to give thanks to God for the gift of His Son—the anointed One, our Savior! [2]

Prayer: Dear God. We waited with such anticipation for the Christmas season to arrive. Now that we have celebrated the birth of Jesus, help us to continue our focus on who this Baby really was and is. He is the anointed One, our Savior! We give You thanks for the "love, joy, and hope" that You bring. Help us to sing Your praise to all people and worship You not only at Christmastime but in ALL the days that follow. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Sources:

[1] History: Bert Polman [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org)

[2] Devotion by Irene Beethe <https://www.cuchicago.edu/academics/centers-of-excellence/center-for-church-music/devotions-on-the-hymn-of-the-day/>

## Saving Grace Daily Devotions

Saturday, December 26

### *Prepare for Worship*

***<sup>6</sup> And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6)***

**He is loving** – “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1)

**He is Compassionate** – “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Ps. 103:8)

**He is faithful** – “The Lord’s loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

**He is Strong** – “Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.” (Ps. 24:8)

**He is Merciful** – “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” (Eph. 2:4-5)

**He is Forgiving** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

**He is Shepherd** – “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” (Ps. 23:1-3)

**He is One Who Saves** – “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zeph. 3:17)

Our Heavenly Father Is all these things and so much more. We could never list all that God Is. Yet, we get a glimpse of who our Father in heaven is through our fathers on earth, but our Father in heaven is perfect. He is always there for you, understanding, loving, strong, there to help you in time of trouble, He brings healing, and is the one who makes all things new. (Rev. 21:5) He has done all this and still has given us His Holy Spirit that cries out to the Lord “abba, Father” which means “daddy, daddy,” in the Aramaic. All this so that we might know the “abundant life” that he has to give us through in Jesus Christ. (John 10:10)

***Heavenly Father, teach me to come to you as a child and not to be afraid to call you my daddy. Open my heart to see You at work in me and around me every day, that I may give you thanks and praise for all You are doing, have done and will do. Amen***

## **Saving Grace Daily Devotions**

Sunday, December 27

### ***Praise***

***<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,  
<sup>29</sup> "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word; (Luke 2:28-29)***

Imagine waiting your whole life to see the Messiah. It isn't like anything on this earth. Sometimes we look forward to meeting someone of importance in our lives. They may be famous, admired, talented, ahead of their time in their field, and phenomenal athlete, or just someone you admire. This is different than what Simeon encountered.

The Holy Spirit had told Simeon that he would not "see death" die until after He had seen the promised Messiah, Anointed One, Salvation of the World. He had a message to give to Mary and Joseph. "<sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."" (Luke 2:34-35) What did this mean to Mary and Joseph? Was Jesus, their child only 8 days old, going to be responsible for the "redemption of Jerusalem? That's what Anna proclaimed. (Luke 2:38) God was doing something amazing in their midst and the world would change forever.

Even today, God works in and through our lives through the Holy Spirit in us bringing about amazing change in our lives and others. It isn't us, it's the Holy Spirit at work. We look to the birth of Jesus with amazement and wonder as we contemplate that Emmanuel, "God with us," has been born and everything has changed.

***Almighty God, thank you for sending Your Son to us with those who witnessed to who He Is. Give us a peace that passes understanding as we walk with You day by day. Amen***