



MONDAY, DECEMBER 20 – CHRISTMAS, DECEMBER 25

MONDAY, DECEMBER 20

O Come, All Ye Faithful

*Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him*

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

Colossians 1:15–23 (NLT) [15] Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, [16] for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. [17] He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. [18] Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. [19] For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, [20] and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. [21] This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. [22] Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. [23] But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.

DEVOTIONAL:

Adoration is a word that we love to use during the Christmas season thanks largely to the classic carol O Come, All Ye Faithful as we sing, "O come, let us adore Him." Many of think more about Christ at Christmas than any other time of year. In fact, our entire nation seems to find a moment to acknowledge Christ and sing about Him for a few weeks every December.

Christmas is indeed a great time to adore Christ. Yet, as we consider Christ, His birth and our adoration of Him, we should also realize that we should adore Him all year long. Take a few minutes to read and meditate on Colossians 1:15-23. In this brief passage, the Apostle Paul sings his adoration of Christ. Allow the various descriptions, phrases, and ideas to heighten your adoration of Jesus. May this Christmas springboard you into a daily practice of adoring Christ.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*Mild He lays His glory by;
Born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth;
Born to give them second birth.*

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

1 Peter 1:3–9 (NLT) [3] All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, [4] and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. [5] And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. [6] So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. [7] These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. [8] You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. [9] The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

DEVOTIONAL:

It's fun to look at a tiny baby and imagine what he will grow up to become. It could be anything – a pilot, a policeman, a chef, an astronaut, a pastor, or a million other options. The future is wide open and full of possibilities. For Mary and Joseph, the dreams of what Jesus would grow up to be were full of promise and heartache.

Jesus was born with one purpose; to grow up as the Messiah who would die for the sins of humanity and rise from the dead to give life to those who would repent and yield to Him. As it says in the carol, he was “born that man no more may die.” His birth was all about our new birth. In 1 Peter 1:3, Peter praises God for the “new birth into a living hope” – and all that is possible because Jesus laid aside his glory and offered Himself in our place, taking the punishment of death we deserved for our sins. His death and resurrection gives us new life.

As you go about your business and your busyness of the season, intentionally take a few moments to slow down and remember that Jesus was born to give YOU a second birth. What a reason to praise Him!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22

The First Noel

*Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made Heaven and earth of naught
And with his blood mankind has bought.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!*

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

Matthew 2:9–11 (NLT) [9] After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! [11] They entered the house and saw

the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Psalm 95:6–7 (NLT) [6] Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, [7] for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care. If only you would listen to his voice today!

DEVOTIONAL:

The last stanza of The First Noel begins with the word “then”. The placement of that word at the beginning of the stanza refers to something that took place earlier in the song. What was it? Verses two through five describe the journey the wise men took, following the star until it came to rest where Jesus lived. When they found Him, they fell “reverently upon their knee” and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Both were acts of worship in honor of the newborn King.

In our stanza for today, the word “then” is being used as a transitional challenge, encouraging us do the same as the wise men. In recognition and honor of the one who created Heaven and earth from nothing (naught), and in thanksgiving and gratefulness to the One who shed His blood to purchase and redeem our soul, our response must be to fall to our knees and “sing praises to our heavenly Lord” with one unified voice.

Psalm 95:6,7 tells us, “Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

This Christmas, let us be keenly aware that the one lying in the manger is our “heavenly Lord.” A baby? Yes, but much, much more. As you celebrate the birth of Jesus, do not limit your thoughts only to the manger. Allow your heart and mind to be filled with wonder and worship as you think about the beauty of the birth, the cruelty of the cross, the reality of the resurrection and the supremacy of the Savior. That is why we bow before the manger and sing His praises.

The word, “Noel” is of French origin meaning, good news. Indeed, the birth of our Savior is good news for all mankind because the King has come to redeem us from our sin. With this in mind, let us all come to the manger in “one accord” to worship and “kneel before Lord, our Maker.”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23

We Three Kings of Orient Are
*O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.*

TODAY’S BIBLE READING:

Matthew 2:1–12 (NLT) [1] Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, [2] “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” [3] King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. [4] He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” [5] “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: [6] ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’ ” [7] Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. [8] Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” [9] After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. [10] When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! [11] They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. [12] When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

DEVOTIONAL:

It's often difficult for people to understand that Jesus was born just like us. He wasn't born in a luxurious palace or a fancy hospital. He was born outside, in a manger. He came into a world filled with sin, yet he lived an absolutely perfect life. He came to lead us and guide us into a loving relationship with God.

The wise men are a great example of what complete submission to God looks like. First, the moment they saw the star they dropped everything they were doing and embarked on a long journey that was most likely difficult at times. The men had some idea where they were going but placed their complete trust in a star to lead them. They devoted everything to seeking Him no matter the cost.

Second, when they finally arrived at their destination, the presence of Jesus, they demonstrate their submission: 'they fell down and worshiped him'. Is not that not the perfect response to being in the presence of Jesus.

We too would be wise by throwing off all that hinders us and diligently seeking Jesus. We too would demonstrate wisdom by falling down and worshiping Jesus. May this Christmas find you to be a wise person.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24

O Little Town of Bethlehem

*O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie...
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight.*

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

Micah 5:2 (NLT) [2] *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.*

John 1:4-5 (NLT) [4] *The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.* [5] *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

DEVOTIONAL:

To almost everyone in the town of Bethlehem, it was just another night. The verse from the carol paints the picture of a town that had turned in for the night. People were sleeping, probably exhausted from traveling or taking care of those who made their way into or through the town for the Roman census.

Look down the center street. The candles are snuffed out and the lamps turned down. Darkness has settled in, and the only source of light originates from the canopy of heaven where millions of stars, light years away, illuminate the sky.

Almost everyone was oblivious that the 700-year-old prophecy given by the prophet Micah, "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" (Micah 5:2). Only a courageous girl (Mary), an obedient man (Joseph) and curious shepherds were aware that on this night, the prophecy was fulfilled. No one else was aware of the Light lying in the stable. But can we blame them? Afterall, people have baby's every day.

To be fair, the Hebrews, for thousands of years, had been waiting for a Messiah, and in their minds, this baby's humble entrance onto earth's stage was not fitting for a Mighty King. We do not have such an excuse. We know that the Child in the hay is the King of Heaven.

Don't be like Bethlehem and miss the coming of the Savior. Jesus has come to awaken us from our "deep and dreamless sleep" and to illuminate the "dark streets" that exist in our lives. The Apostle John wrote, "In Him was life, and that life was the Light of all mankind. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4,5)

Bethlehem looked very dark the night Jesus was born. But, in reality, a brighter light had never shone in the sleepy little town. "The Light of all mankind" came to illuminate the darkness and eliminate the separation between God and man. On this night "the hopes and fears of all the years" were met in the gift that God gave to everyone.

Whatever you do this Christmas, don't allow yourself to miss the wonder of God sending His Son to earth to be born, live, die and rise from the dead for the salvation of mankind. Open your heart to Him and allow His Light to fill any dark corner of your world.

Go to the manger and worship the King. Bow before Him and give thanks to the Father for His indescribable gift.

CHRISTMAS, DECEMBER 25

Go Tell It On The Mountain

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Saviour's birth

TODAY'S BIBLE READING:

Isaiah 62:10–12 (NLT) [10] Go out through the gates! Prepare the highway for my people to return! Smooth out the road; pull out the boulders; raise a flag for all the nations to see. [11] The LORD has sent this message to every land: "Tell the people of Israel, 'Look, your Savior is coming. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.' " [12] They will be called "The Holy People" and "The People Redeemed by the LORD." And Jerusalem will be known as "The Desirable Place" and "The City No Longer Forsaken."

DEVOTIONAL:

Pregnancy reveal events are a popular thing to do these days. Couples plan elaborate and sometimes silly ways to let their families and friends know they are going to have a baby. Why? Because it is such good news. Then, when the baby arrives, social media explodes, texts fly and phone calls abound. Why? Because a baby has been born!

The birth of Jesus needed to be proclaimed. Good News had come. So, when God was ready to bring Jesus into flesh on earth, how did He bring the Good News? In the greatest spectacle, "a vast host" of angels appeared to seemingly random shepherds in a middle-of-nowhere field. Holy light shone down and their voices rang out - it's the sort of blockbuster, showstopper you would expect for the greatest event in history. The only odd thing is the audience ("lowly" shepherds), and how few of them were probably there. Maybe that goes to show that no stone should be left unturned when we are sharing news like this.

When Jesus began teaching, He did not spread the Good News by word alone. The blind received sight, the lame walked, and the dead were raised – all to communicate beyond words what the Good News meant.

Isaiah 62 shouts, "Behold, your salvation comes" Jesus commanded the disciples to go to the ends of the earth. And in the classic spiritual, we are implored to "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere! Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!"