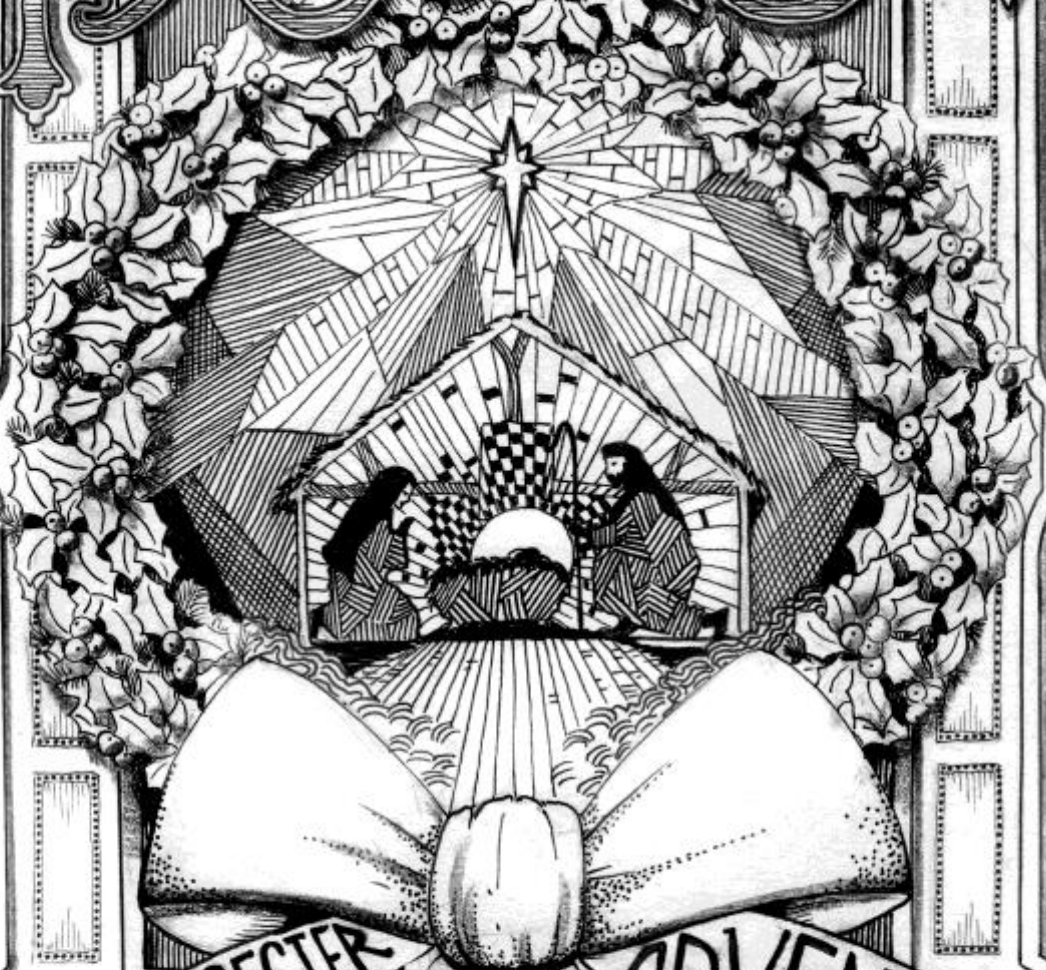


THY KINGDOM COME



GLOUCESTER
POINT BAPTIST
CHURCH

ADVENT
2017



Advent Devotionals:

Jesus Christ, was born on earth some 2000 years ago. The birth of Christ, the Messiah, revealed God's intentions for His creation – hope, peace, joy, and love.

We hope you find this devotional useful in preparing for the fulfilment of both Old Testament and New Testament prophecy – God's gift to the world.



"Thy Kingdom Come" Cover Art:

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Introduction to Advent

Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the Christmas season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in his First Advent. This leads to an anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2000 year old event in history. It is celebrating the revelation of God in Christ through which all of creation might be reconciled to Him!

Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, whereby we affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in majesty. This truth provides a basis for Kingdom living with our call to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. As we celebrate Christ's birth we honor Advent by loving God, loving others and serving Christ in the world!

Pastor Bud





HOPE

“Jesus said, I am the light of the world; ‘he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’ ” - John 8:12

The first candle lit on the Advent wreath reminds us of the light of HOPE that the prophets had in their expectation of a Messiah who would bring peace and love to the world.

Sunday, December 3

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. —Isaiah 7:14

HOPE

My devotional is to never give up HOPE; Have Faith in the Lord and he will guide you through it.

In August 2016 Bailey was scheduled to have surgery for a new hearing device. One week before the surgery date we get a phone call from the hospital scheduler that the insurance was denying coverage and we had to cancel the surgery. March prior I had already confirmed with insurance that the procedure was covered. The insurance failed to tell me that there was an age cutoff coverage for the procedure; Bailey passed that age by less than a month by the time she was due to have the surgery.

I knew from the beginning that no matter what we had to go through that GOD would help us make this surgery happen. We never gave up HOPE the entire time we were disputing and appealing with the insurance. GOD made us go through many doors and avenues during this time; I truly believe that He was testing my Faith to never give up, have HOPE in Him and put it in His hands. That's exactly what I did; I had HOPE that He would make this happen, put it in His hands and kept my Faith in Him the entire time. Several avenues we had to go down more than once but each time GOD directed us which one to go to next without any delay in between. I never had to second guess what to do next. Because I kept my Faith and HOPE in the LORD Bailey had her surgery May 2017, got her device in July and it was all 100% success. We had a lot of Family and Friends praying and supporting us and we can never thank them all enough. Our GPBC Family was so wonderful and supporting to us during this time. The LORD blessed us many times over when he made us a part of the GPBC Family.

I would like to think that because of our fight the company insurance policy has changed and now covers hearing devices for ALL ages.

Never give up HOPE and it will happen in due time. If it does not happen have Faith that it didn't because the LORD knew it wasn't the right thing for you.

God Bless.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Jamie, Bailey & Lee Moore

Monday, December 4

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

...

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

-Isaiah 9:2-7

The darkness mentioned in the first verse is referring to a time when King Ahaz chose to align himself with the Assyrians rather than God and to ignore the signs of God's presence. The foretold invasion of the Assyrians brought despair and oppression to the people. This is not so different from the world we live in today. People are aligning themselves with the ways of the world, taking matters into their own hands and looking to themselves instead of looking to God for guidance. Everyday our lives are filled with uncertainty and doubt. The news is filled with stories of social injustices, sin and deception. The world seems hopeless.

But God did not abandon us to the depths of oppression, depression, war and separation from God. While it may appear that the powers of this world have a firm hold, God's power has the final victory. His plan comes with the assurance of a future. Through the prophet Isaiah, God gives us a sign of hope and this gift in the form of a baby is for everyone. We deserved death, but a light has dawned on death. Our world continues to search for fulfillment when the answer is right in front of us. Jesus is the only Hope.

As a new year approaches we typically make resolutions to lose weight or get in shape. While those resolutions are good and positive, a truly successful life is one focused on God and spiritual growth. The promise of eternal life should light a fire inside all of us to live a life for God and to serve him by bringing others to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, I pray that the Holy Spirit sends revival in the hearts of all believers.

Merry Christmas,
Paige B. Townsend

Tuesday, December 5

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord ... and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. -Isaiah 11:1-9

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,” wrote Edward Mote in the familiar hymn we so often sing. These simple words express the wonderful Hope we all share.

God sent his son, Jesus, to Earth to live among everyday people. As Jesus grew, He lived a righteous, blameless life. As he worked and walked and talked with those around Him, He shared His Father’s message of Hope.

This Hope that God sent so many, many years ago is still alive today. Through His son, Jesus, we have the blessed Hope that one day soon God’s Kingdom will come to Earth and we will live with Him forever more.

Our lives are not blameless. We struggle daily with many things- family, work, and financial issues. The local, national, and world news reports are overwhelming. All of these things can make us feel hopeless.

As we enter this Advent season, let us not forget to show and share with those around us the Hope we have because God sent His only son to die for our sins. Jesus is our Hope!

Donna Phillips

Wednesday, December 6

Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. "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." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. - Micah 5:1-5a

“Theme of Small Beginnings”

Woven so intricately throughout God's Word is a theme that speaks to our hearts with gentle and warm encouragement. Prophesied by Micah in the verses referenced above, our Messiah was to be born in a very small and otherwise insignificant place—the little town of Bethlehem. And so He was, approximately seven centuries later. With complete humility and in the fullness of time, the Son of God left the realm of eternal glory to enter the time and space of our fallen world. It was the will of God for Him to do so.

Though paling in comparison to the foretelling of Messiah's birth, the prophet Zechariah was enabled by the Holy Spirit to give hope to the returning Jewish captives from Babylon. Facing opposition during the building of the second Temple, the word was given, “Who hath despised the day of small things?”—Zechariah 4:10. Thus they were encouraged to keep building.

Yet another illustration of this theme is culled from the Holy Scriptures. In Luke 13:18-19 we find an instructive parable that the Master used to talk about the Kingdom of God, and what it is like. He describes it in terms of a grain of mustard seed, which is the tiniest of seeds. Though it has remarkably humble beginnings, signified by its diminutive size, it grows into a very large tree and is very useful where it is planted.

If you have recently become dismayed by the enemy's chatter and have been hindered in your service to God, the Bible rings with clear tones of assurance. As you trust Jesus and persevere, His Kingdom will grow in your life, and others will be blessed as a result of your faith and humility. Grow where God has planted you, for it is the will of God.

David Crummett

Thursday, December 7

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.
In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteous Savior.” –*Jeremiah 23:5-6*

"The Prophecy of a Savior"

Knowing the excited anticipation over the arrival of beloved guests to our home and, especially, the impending birth of a child or grandchild, I often wonder about the people's reaction when they heard news of a savior. Jeremiah, in the midst of all his prophecies of defeat at the hands of Babylon, speaks of a Messiah who will come from David's line. The corrupt kings of Judah were not receptive to this prophecy but I think about what Jeremiah himself must have thought. In contrast to the dire predictions of doom if Israel did not turn from its evil ways, this prophecy is of hope and anticipation declaring the Lord will gather the remnants of His flock from all the countries: the days are coming.

I remember when we were expecting our first child and the preparations we made for his birth. We loved that baby from the moment we learned of his coming. All the plans we made to be prepared and loving parents: I think I read every baby book and breast feeding manual available. Being a nurse working in the Newborn Nursery at the time, I wasn't scared about caring for the child that would be our responsibility but he would be the first one I'd take home from the hospital. What would he be like? Would he look like me or Stewart? Would he be a fussy or content baby? How would we handle childcare? Since I was active duty Air Force, I was only allowed 4 weeks maternity leave; so young to leave with someone else. I remember the excitement and anticipation as well as the joy of each of our four little blessings. Being a grandparent is different but, still, the love that blossoms from our heart is overwhelming and I remember seeing that in the faces of my daughters and sons-in-law at the birth of their children.

God promised to raise up a wise King, to gather together the scattered remnants of His flock with a good shepherd with whom they would no longer be afraid. What a contrast this must have been for Jeremiah to consider in relation to the present oppression of the people under corrupt kings who ruled for their own selfish desires rather than the needs of the people. Especially at Christmas, though we now have the added benefit of knowing the Savior has come, the anticipation and excitement of the prophecy has special meaning. When we listen to God's commands, we can trust that he will provide.

Stewart & Debra Wood

Friday, December 8

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 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 1:1-5*

There are many special needs people in this world, the deaf, dumb, blind, physically, mentally and emotionally disabled. John 1:3 says *“All things were made by Him, and nothing was made without Him”*. I have always wanted to be a mother that was concerned, loving, encouraging and participated in her child’s life. I prayed and prayed bunches and took classes to become a Therapeutic foster mother and God provided immediately a 3-year-old boy to foster and adopt. God brought this child into my life and brought me to the child to be his mother. We both felt a bond to one another and we are bonded for life as if it had never been any different. Over the years my son received multiple diagnosis and I asked God, WHY? Why does my son have all these problems? Why could I not be the mother I wanted to be? Why were so many problems put on this child? I learned all I could about each diagnosis from books, classes, seminars, doctors and therapists. I read up on all state and educational laws about and for children with disabilities. I studied their rights, programs available and special accommodations available for special needs persons. I devoted myself 110% to making sure my son would receive all the opportunities he needed to assist him in learning how to be self-sufficient and independent. The role defined who I was, it effected my social life, took away many job opportunities and has been an exhausting often painful and difficult life. I am the mom my son needed me to be not the mom I wanted to be. When times are most difficult, I have had many questions and advice given to me that caused me pain and aggravation. I have become defensive and emotional when it comes to my son. I am now having to give the caring of my son’s daily needs to another and to take his toys and clothes to another home. I have had to recognize that I am no longer able to keep him or others safe anymore due to his behavioral issues, his age and his size. I am crying out again WHY LORD? Why was my son born to have all these problems? Then I read John 9:3 *“The man was born blind so that God’s power could be shown in him.”* The scriptures in John 1:3 and John 1:5 *“His light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overpowered it”* bring me comfort in knowing that my son was created for a purpose (just the way he is) and that God’s love and light are in him and therefor the demons he wrestles with will not overpower him. Right now, I am trying to put into action Philippians 4: 6-7 *“Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God’s peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Amen and may we all have the HOPE and PEACE Christ Jesus gives!
Sarah Saunders, Sean’s Mom

Saturday, December 9

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

- John 1:9-12

John is telling us that the True Light is coming into the world. The Light that would save us all. Jesus was in this world and he was not even recognized. Even the people chosen by God rejected Him. Today there are many people in our world who reject Him. The Old Testament tells us that He was coming. When we receive Him, and believe in Him we become Children of God. We receive so many blessings when we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us never reject Him and know that he is the True Light of the world.

I wish my church family a very Merry Christmas and a blessed and happy New Year.

God bless you,
Rachel Wells



Peace



“Jesus said, I am the light of the world; ‘he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’ ” - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of HOPE of the prophets. The second candle reminds us of the light of PEACE God offers us in Christ Jesus.

“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”- Romans 5:1

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” - Romans 4:25. “He is our peace.” - Ephesians 2:14

Sunday, December 10

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

*Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
...
and Jesse the father of King David.*

*...
and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus
who is called the Messiah.*

*Thus, there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David
to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. – Matthew 1:1-17*

Matthew 1:1-17 starts with the begats. This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendent of King David and of Abraham, starting with Abraham and ending with Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary was the Mother of Jesus, who is the Messiah.

As I started this, I was focusing on Mary and Joseph, thinking of them and the peace they must have felt knowing she was carrying the Son of God. “Peace” – that is a very important word. There are so many ways we can feel peace even in this day and time when there is so much turmoil all around us. I can feel peace in forgiveness. I like to feel happy and cheerful instead of gloom and have an attitude of Spirit in me. I think we would all like to be greeted with a smile, a warm hug and a friendly hello, rather than a frown or a cross word.

Proverbs 17:22 says, “*a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a down cast spirit dries up the bones.*” Within our hearts we can find peace. We can find peace knowing that God is always here for us and He will give us peace. Numbers 6:26 says, “*the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*” 2 Thessalonians 3:16 reminds us, “*May the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace at all times in all ways.*”

In the carol *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, the words repeat “Peace on Earth good will to men”. May we all find that peace during this beautiful Christmas season and into the New Year. Peace for the world. Remember that Christ our Savior and Lord is born and that is the reason we celebrate Christmas!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all my church family!
Love, Alice Deal

Monday, December 11

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

– Matthew 1:18-21

Can you imagine the consternation that Joseph felt when he found out that Mary was pregnant? To a lot of men that would have been the death knell to a relationship. But Joseph, loving Mary, and wanting to protect her, wanted to “tuck her away” so that no one would ridicule her. Can you imagine what he must have felt when the Angel announced to him that this baby was going to be the Son of God and be called Jesus! How proud he must have felt when he found out what his child would be accomplishing in the world - saving His people from their sins. Of course, Joseph didn’t know at the time that the Angel meant that Jesus would have to die to save us.

I can recall vividly when my daughter, three grandsons, and two great grandsons were born. And I’m expecting a third great grandson in December. What a wonderful, happy experience all these events were for our family. At the time, we didn’t care if they were going to be ditch diggers or astronauts as long as they were healthy and happy. But to have an Angel tell you before the baby is born he will save everyone from their sins - that’s huge!!

Praise God that he allowed his precious Son to walk this earth and impress upon those he encountered that the way to salvation was through Him and His Father.

May each one of you have a joyous celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Barbara Fryer

Tuesday, December 12

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. *—Matthew 1:22-25*

JOY TO THE WORLD

One of our favorite things about Christmas has always been the music inspired by the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior. When the words from the Bible accounts of the event are combined with great music inspired by these words, it offers proof that Jesus truly is "God with us". That is why the carol-hymns we sing at Christmas time are so beloved by Christians everywhere. One such favorite is "Joy to the World". When Isaac Watts wrote "Joy to the World", based on the 98th Psalm, he borrowed the first four notes from Handel's "Messiah". His carol-hymn radiates with the glorious spirit of the Hallelujah Chorus. And again, like the work of the great classical composer, the author of the familiar song we sing at this season gives us the whole awe-inspiring Christmas story, past and present. Christmas songs go back many hundreds of years. Some are pagan in character. Some celebrate only the secular joys of Christmas. A few dwell only on the miracle of the birth of the Christ child without referring to the effect of His coming into the world. But for the most part, our carol-hymns reflect the true meaning of this sacred day. As we prepare to celebrate this wondrous event, let us put our hearts as well as our voices into a song of thanksgiving to He who brought Joy to the World.

Joyce and Hayes Williams

Adapted from the back cover of one of our own bulletins in 1976. The author was not noted.

Wednesday, December 13

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

– Luke 1:26-31

The most widely shared commemoration across the world, involving more people and more nations than any other Holiday celebration is Christmas. Though it is the most celebrated Holiday around the world in many ways, it is the least understood. This is neither a celebration of human history nor recognition of human achievement. Christmas commemorates a divine person and a divine event. This is the most miraculous story in all of history as God begins to tell the drama of salvation with the birth of our baby Jesus. The word Christmas begins with Christ - the virgin born Christ Child, our Savior, and He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to deliver a message to the Virgin Mary, who was pledged to be married to Joseph. God chose Mary to be the "highly favored one" to bear a son, to be named Jesus. Mary was troubled in the beginning, and the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God..." The word favored is used one other time in the New Testament in Ephesians 1:6, where it means the free bestowal of grace. Mary is about to receive a free bestowal of God's grace. With God's plan for Mary, she faced fears of criticism, inadequacy, and change. Mary gives us an example of three qualities that kept these fears from controlling her and enabled her to be used by God - the desire to do God's will, willingness to pay the cost, and the faith to trust God's promise.

The Christmas Story is important because it is, a story that has endured, a story of hope and survival, a story of peace and goodwill, a story of family, a story of humility, a story that has substantial support and story of love. Christmas is meant to celebrate peace and joy. Amidst the busy time of shopping and attending parties with family and friends, remember that the Prince of Peace came to spread joy to all who believe in Him.

Merry Christmas,
Alice Amanda Oldfield

Thursday, December 14

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. -Luke 1: 32-33

Angel Gabriel is the Angel of the Lord and has an important message for Mary. That message consisted of three divine elements:

- (1) She (Mary) will bear a holy infant who will be the son of the Most High.
- (2) He (the holy infant) will reign over the house of Jacob, David, and expand the kingdom.
- (3) The kingdom will last forever with no end.

This message is astonishing. First, the holy infant born of Virgin Mary is the son of the Most High and will be called Jesus: Jesus is the Son of God. Second, He is also the son of man and is from the descendant of the house of Jacob and David, as God has promised Abraham. Third, what Jesus will do is to expand God's kingdom and reign over forever and ever.

As we celebrate Christmas, we rejoice on the remarkable heritage and looking into the future following Jesus Christ as our Lord, that is without end.

Harry Wang



Friday, December 15

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. - Luke 1: 34-35

Luke 1:34 & 35 - Just two short verses about events leading up to the birth of Christ. The angel had just spoken to Mary. Remarkable, first of all because she is in the presence of an angel, and more so because of what he had just said. “Troubled” and “afraid” were the words used to describe how she felt about the encounter. Angels have a way of saying “don’t be afraid”, and then say incredible things that are anything but ordinary.

Her response was “How” and “because”! Doubt and disbelief would be quite the natural response. The angel had rebuked Zacharias because he did not believe. Some say Mary’s response was not doubt, but wonder. Did she hesitate, or ponder what all that meant, or just blurt out her response? Mary said, “How can this be.” That is almost exactly what Zacharias said to him too! You have to admit, it was an extraordinary thing to have sprung on her in that way. Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” Luke 1:34

The Bible has a way of packing a whole lot of meaning in a few words. In three short sentences the angel answers the question of how, and then goes on to show that with God nothing is impossible. In verse 35 the angel said, “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overpower you: therefore, also, the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”.

Now I’ve never met an angel as far as I know. But don’t we all have those times when we are fearful, or doubtful, and not sure of what God would have us do? This made me think of the words to the song *Mary Did You Know*. She didn’t know. Mary could not possibly have known what the future held or how the words of the angel would change her life. She trusted in God and believed what was made known to her. She put her trust in God completely. What can we take away from these two verses? With God, anything is possible. When we are faced with the difficulties and uncertainties of life we can put our complete trust in God. Proverbs 3:5-6 says it better than I can. *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”*

Earl Conkling

Saturday, December 16

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!

– Luke 1:39-42

After the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary that her barren cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, Mary's reaction to this news was to leave Nazareth and to go into the hill country in Judea, the city where Elizabeth was living. Mary also had some news of her own for Elizabeth but how would she explain it to the older woman?

When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the babe in her womb leapt for joy and she was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. The words of Elizabeth's welcome confirmed that there was no need for Mary to explain her own pregnancy.

When we have something to say, we need to say it. You have good news? Spread it. You have heard a joyful sound? Be swift to share it with others. We need not mumble truths that are at once wonderful and relevant.

Where does our own blessedness lie? Not in Mary, blessed as she is but in the fruit of her womb, JESUS.

Faye Branen



*And blessed is the fruit
of your womb*

Joy



“Jesus said, I am the light of the world; ‘he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’ ” - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of HOPE of the prophets. The second candle reminds us of the light of PEACE God offers us in Christ Jesus. The third candle is a symbol of the great light and JOY which surrounded the shepherds at the announcement of Jesus’ birth.

Sunday, December 17

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ... Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. - Luke 1: 57-66

God has done amazing things in our lives. He has given us His Son to accept as our Lord and Savior. He has blessed us with 37 years of marriage. He has given us 2 wonderful children and a wonderful daughter-in-law. He has blessed us with a loving and Spirit filled church. He has provided us with jobs that allow us to give back to His work. We have a wonderful family that worships Jesus Christ. What joy we have experienced in our lives.

Elizabeth and Zechariah were filled with joy when they found out they were going to have a baby. Everyone thought they would name the baby after his father. He would follow in his father's footsteps and become a priest. Elizabeth spoke up and said, "He is to be called John." She gave him the name the angel gave her and John means "God has been gracious." Because Zechariah was unable to speak, he used a tablet to verify what Elizabeth had named the baby. "His name is John."

Immediately Zechariah was able to speak and he began praising God. The people were filled with awe and everyone asked, "What then is this child going to be?"

God blessed Elizabeth and Zechariah with a child who would proclaim the coming of the Messiah. God did something amazing and they praised Him. He continues to provide for us what we need and to bless us every day. Take time this Christmas to praise God, name your blessings and thank God for all He has given you.

Love and prayers for you all,
Donna Goude

Monday, December 18

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

*“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.*

*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David.*

- Luke 1:67-69

Today’s passage finds Zechariah filled with the Holy Spirit and stating that Jesus has come and that He alone would redeem His people. “The house of his servant David” reminds us that Jesus, fully human and fully divine, was born into a royal line. Remember, David was Israel’s most famous king.

Later at the sermon on the mount, Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the kingdom of God to come in a way that it has not yet come (Matthew 6:9-10). Part of what it means for God’s kingdom to come is for His name to be hallowed and His will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The kingdom has already come with the coming of Jesus. He has already been given all authority in heaven and earth. But we are still to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Why? Because on earth, there are still those who do not submit to His rule. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we are praying for the continued extension of God’s reign on earth. We are praying for the coming of the day when all evil, all sin, and all rebellion against God is finally eradicated.

Jesus’ birth ushered in His kingdom on that night in Bethlehem. As we prepare for Christmas and await His return, consider what it means to be citizens of His kingdom. When we pray for God’s kingdom to come, let us remember that this begins with each one of us. We must ask ourselves if we are hallowing God’s name. We must ask ourselves if we are doing God’s will.

As we have aged, we no longer enjoy the hustle and bustle of Christmas nearly as much as the quiet times we spend together with family and friends. It’s amazing that in these quiet times we can hear the shout loud and clear - JESUS LOVES YOU!

Merry Christmas Church Family!
Keith and Leslie Belvin

Tuesday, December 19

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. - Luke 2:1:7

Timing Is Everything

As I read the Scripture for today, I am reminded that timing is everything. Several examples come to mind as I think about everyday life. One such is when I am baking my Grandmother's Christmas cakes - putting together the ingredients must be done in a certain way. I watched her (and now do it myself) mix the dry ingredients separately from the wet ingredients and then mix them together gradually. The various frostings have to be worked just as carefully.

Another example comes to mind as I drive to and from work. Timing can be everything when it comes to making it through green traffic lights. Having to slow down or stop may get in the way of making it to places and appointments on time!

I wonder how Joseph felt about having to leave everything behind in Galilee and make the trip to Bethlehem, traveling slowly with his pregnant wife, Mary. Surely this taxation could have come at a better time and yet, in God's plan, it was the perfect time. Things were coming together so that not only would the prophecies come true about the Messiah's birth, but also so that other people and happenings would be in the right place, and at the right time.

God's timing in our own lives may mean making an adjustment on our part. Am I being careful to stay right in step with the Savior? I don't want to get ahead of the plan nor get behind in the work. The best way to stay right on time this season is to be still and know. By paying attention to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I'll know that I'm in the right place at the right time - because timing is everything!

Amy and Mark Boykin

Wednesday, December 20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” - Luke 2:8-12

Our Travels Through the U.S.A

As my wife, Ann, and I traveled through the 50 states of the US, we would see that each State was different. That each State had something different to see.

My wife and I would notice the beauty each State had. As we traveled out West, we saw places like the Grand Canyon with beautiful waterfalls and that old Geyser in Yellowstone National park, the Petrified Forest, Painted Desert and the beautiful mountains. We also saw how God made it all. I don't know how people can say there is no God. But, I'm thankful that Christians know there is a God and He is alive and blessing us every day.

We know there is so much beauty in this world to see. But there is nothing to compare to what God has in store for Christians. God tells us *“eye has not seen and ear has not heard the things He has in store for us.”* So brothers and sisters, I pray we will keep the faith and be ready when he calls us home. That we will hear those wonderful words *“well done thou good and faithful servant, enter in.”*

Love in Christ,
Buddy Hogge



Thursday, December 21

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."
- Luke 2:13-14

Thy Kingdom Come

*"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angels of the Lord came down,
And glory shone all around."*

I think we all look at the sky several times a day. We look for sun, moon, clouds, birds, vapor clouds, stars, rainbows. Occasionally we look for a rocket launched from the Eastern Shore, a rare glimpse of the international space station, a lunar or solar eclipse.

But I don't think any of us look to the sky, expecting to see a choir of angels. What a sight that must have been for the shepherds! After hearing the message, they did not sit around and debate its validity, or even if the sheep had been scared and scattered. They immediately got up and went to Bethlehem to worship this newborn king.

During Christ's short ministry on earth, he gave his disciples a model prayer. Most Christians repeat this prayer often, at least once a week. In it we say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do we stop and think about what we are saying?

What would happen if God's will were done on earth, as it is in heaven? Where would we stand? Would we need to change some of our activities, words, friends? Would we find ourselves without prejudice; would there no longer be the homeless, or abused: or would crime cease?

Jesus did tell his disciples that there would always be wars and rumors of wars, there would always be poor people with us until he comes again to receive his chosen followers. And none of us can make this world perfect. That can only be done by Jesus Christ.

But just as the angels responded to Jesus' birth with praise and action, just as the shepherds responded by praise and action, we, too can respond with praise and adoration, and follow his will for our lives, with the knowledge that, in due time, God's kingdom will come and his will will be done on earth.

Wishing all a blessed Christmas,
Jimmy and Charlene Diggs

Friday, December 22

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

—Luke 2:15-20

FAITH- it's defined as “complete trust or confidence in something or someone”.

The Bible tells us that faith in God means that we have put all our confidence and hope in Him. The shepherds had enormous faith, they trusted the angels enough to follow their instructions and search for the new Savior.

Do we trust God? Trusting God is so fundamentally important to the Christian way of life. Faith is a gift from God and He wants us to live in faith. God loves us and He can do all things. This means that God is always able to take care of us, so we can trust in Him. When we go through our days trusting God and knowing He will help take care of us, that is living in faith. When we trust God (even a little) we find out that He keeps His word, this helps us trust Him even more.

The shepherds who were out in the fields of Bethlehem must have been amazed and excited to be selected by God to have the angels appear to them. God didn't choose powerful or wealthy people to be the first to hear this special message. These were just ordinary shepherds, but God chose to reveal the glory of His Son's coming to them first.

God knew the exact time Jesus was to be born to save us from sin. God chose the exact time for us to be born because he has a unique plan for each of us. We must have faith and trust in God's wisdom.

Wishing my GPBC family a wonderful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year,
Sonya Anthony

Saturday, December 23

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

– Luke 2:25-35

"The Promise from God"

Can you imagine the patience of Simeon as he waited on God's promise to be fulfilled? Did he know when he heard the news that he would live to be very old before the promise was fulfilled? He was an old man but had been told by God that he would see the Messiah with his own eyes before death. And Simeon was faithful to listen to God for that "right time".

But Simeon was not only the recipient of the blessing, he was the deliverer of a message to Mary and Joseph as well. God chose to use Simeon to bless this child's parents with important knowledge of Jesus' future. I imagine the entire meeting was a strange blessing for them to know their child would be a light unto the world, not just the Jews, but also that Mary's heart would be broken.

When I think of promises in my life, I wonder about displaying the grace and patience necessary to wait on the Lord as Simeon did. I want things to happen the way I envision and in my preferred time frame but life hasn't always given me that. Stewart and I have endured the loss of two sons (our two eldest children) and I pray that someday I may understand why. My faith was tested and my heart broken but I believe that my testimony may have a purpose. Is it wrong to hope that our own suffering can lift someone else in their time of need? I don't have the answer to that question but I trust that the Lord does and will, in His time, reveal what I need to know. Maybe that will be when I see Him.

As the miracle of Christmas unfolds, I want to always be ready to respond as Simeon did but that requires me to listen instead of talk, to open my heart instead of steel my mind, and to wait on the Lord. The birth of Christ is told throughout the world as a story of hope. To those who are ready, the miracle unfolds to the salvation story. Bring us glad tidings of great joy.

- Debra Wood

Love



“Jesus said, I am the light of the world; ‘he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’ ” - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of HOPE of the prophets. The second candle reminds us of the light of PEACE God offers us in Christ Jesus. The third candle is a symbol of the great light and JOY which surrounded the shepherds at the announcement of Jesus’ birth. The fourth candle reminds us of the tremendous LOVE that God has for each one of us.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life” - John 3:16

Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 24

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

– Luke 2:36-38

Testimony

This year, I will say has been a rough year for me. But I know I'm blessed in many ways and I am thankful for all that I have been given. I have lost friends, gained new friends lost employment and gained new adventures with Jamestown. With school, work and church I have been keeping busy. I know that God will not put me through any more than I can handle. I can honestly say when I was working for Colonial Williamsburg, I have lost faith for a short time. Being forced to be around people who had a negative outlook on life had made me turn into someone who I wasn't happy with.

I became irritated with the simplest of things. When I was hired, I wasn't able to attend church as much as I would like, In the nine months I was employed with them, I think I may have attended three Sunday services. I felt myself change and I didn't like it. I didn't know how to fix it. Once I left that job, I made a point of being more active in church and I can feel myself gain more control over my feelings of negativity towards the world around me. I prayed more, going to Bible study on Wednesday nights and Bible study on Monday nights with a great group of friends I met. I can say that I don't know what I would've done without the help of my friends. As they say, *'when one door closes, another opens.'*

I am truly thankful and blessed to have my friends and my church family and my family who support me, and guide me on the right path. This year has been a roller-coaster filled with mixed emotions but I know with God's strength he'll give me the patience, the courage and the ability to succeed in whatever path he leads me.

Merry Christmas to all, and a Happy New Year.
Mackenzie Firman

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love



“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good new of great joy that will be for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. ‘Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth PEACE to men on whom his favor rests’”

- Luke 2: 10-14

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. - John 3:16-17

During my studies, I found this devotional thought for **John 3:16**. If we ever memorize a verse of Scripture, it will most likely be **John 3:16**. **John 3:16** is the entire gospel in a nutshell.

Rev. Dr. Angel Martinez, the late evangelist who had memorized the entire New Testament, referred to John 3:16 as salvation's formula containing four applications: salvation's cause, its cost, its condition, and its consequence.

Salvation's Cause - *"For God so loved the world"*

The motivating factor behind God's redemptive plan for every man and woman is His love for us. He not only loves us, He *so* loves us!

Salvation's Cost - *"that He gave His only begotten Son"*

Our salvation, is the promise of abundant and eternal life in Christ did not come without cost. The Bible says, "but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Our salvation in Christ came at a great cost to God who "gave His only begotten Son."

Salvation's Condition - *"that whoever believes in Him"*

Salvation is spelled "d-o-n-e." Many people, however, think their own good works are the pathway to eternal life. It is already purchased for us with the blood of Christ on the cross. Our only part is to believe by faith in Him.

Salvation's Consequence - *"should not perish but have everlasting life"*

What a consequence! Those without Christ are perishing (missing out on Heaven) but those in Christ have the eternal promise of "EVERLASTING LIFE." God's love is received by faith through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we meditate on, *"God so loved the world that He gave,"* let us give God our gift on Christmas Day --- our lives in faithful service to His *"only begotten Son,"* Jesus Christ!

Merry Christmas Day,
Bud and Donna Goude

Opportunities for Involvement, Service, and Worship

Gloucester Point Baptist Church

7741 Terrapin Cove Road (P. O. Box 305), Gloucester Point, VA 23062

Phone: 804-642-2555 <http://www.gloptbaptist.org/>

December 3	<u>First Sunday of Advent</u>	
	9:30 AM	Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
	2:00 PM	CARE Ministry
December 6	6:30-7:30 PM	Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5 th)
December 10	<u>Second Sunday of Advent</u>	
	9:15AM	Sunday School Breakfast
	9:30 AM	Sunday School 11:00 AM –Worship
	11:00AM	Children's Christmas Presentation & Party
	2:00 PM	CARE Ministry
December 13	6:30-7:30 PM	Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5 th)
	6:30 PM	Called Business Meeting
December 15	7:00-10:00 PM	Youth Christmas Party
December 16	9:00-12:00 AM	Chancel Choir Dress Rehearsal
December 17	<u>Third Sunday of Advent</u>	
	9:30 AM	Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
	11:00 AM	Christmas Cantata
	12:00 PM	Christmas Dinner
December 24	<u>Christmas Eve - Fourth Sunday of Advent</u>	
	9:30 AM	Sunday School 11:00 AM - Worship
	5:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service
December 25	<u>Christmas Day</u>	
December 30 – January 1		Youth at Winterfest
December 31	<u>New Year's Eve</u>	
	9:30 AM	Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
	2:00 PM	CARE Ministry
January 1	<u>New Year's Day</u>	

Each Wednesday

5:30 PM Youth Program-TLC

6:30 PM Children's and Adult Bible Study

7:30 PM Chancel Choir Practice

Each Friday

9:30 AM Seniors Morning Out