

JESUS IS THE WAY



K '18

GLOUCESTER POINT BAPTIST CHURCH ADVENT 2018

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.



“Jesus Is The Way” 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 2

*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*

Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year. It reminds us that God has already secured our future by sending his son. A message that rings out once a year, to people that may have never heard the story. God loves us all so much that he sent his son. A baby, born of a virgin, called Immanuel, God with us.

May joy and peace be in your hearts.

Jodi Lane

emmanuel
G O D W I T H U S

Monday, December 3

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

Isaiah here urges Ahaz to stand in faith and trust in God to protect Judah. The birth of a child would serve as a sign of this (Isaiah 7:10-17). Our verses (9:2-7) announce that birth in poetic form, with vv 4-6 forming a core framed by the joy and the reign of the “child” (vv 2-3, 7a). The poem is further encased by an introduction (v1) and conclusion crediting Yahweh for the people's deliverance (v 7b).

Looking more closely we find that Zebulun/Naphtali (“former time”) suffered under Assyrian rule, but that darkness would be overcome by a light to come, redeeming Judah and Israel. Matthew extends the light to Gentiles (Matt 4:15). This is the only New Testament reference to our verses in Isaiah, as it highlights Jesus' Galilean ministry in the (formerly) Zebulun region, which is inhabited primarily by Gentiles. Verses 4-6 explain the oppression broken, weapons destroyed, and birth of the child to become governor. Growing continually then, Immanuel's character is described by four titles, each in two words: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God (Deut. 10:17), Everlasting Father (Lord of eternity and author of eternal life), and Prince of Peace (health from sin and healthy relationships with God and fellow men). Notice also in verse 4 that the Midian dominion was broken by the Lord himself, not by Gideon; in vv 10:26-27 Isaiah predicts that God will destroy Assyria's army. Those divine deliverances point to man's future deliverance, which also could only be done by the hand of God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Today's devotional opportunity is historically and theologically complex, rich with details to ponder and make part of our lives. It might also be as simple as doing what Isaiah urged Ahaz to do: Have faith and trust the Lord.

Gordon Smith

Tuesday, December 4

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 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 infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. ... Isaiah 11:1-9

“HOPE”

Within one's life there must be a “BEGINNING” and an “ENDING”, the ending must justify the beginning. “JESSE” from his small beginning to his future glory. “ISAIAH” reveals that the tree line from “DAVID” will be cut down, and from the stump a shoot of the rod, outlines the “SPIRIT” of the “LORD” will come forth as the “MESSIAH”. Thus the ending, justified the beginning from the cradle, the veil, to the cross, the “LORD” prevails.

“ISAIAH” the prophet reveals his name as “SALVATION”, that of “JEHOVAH” within the Old Testament, in contrast to the New Testament as “JESUS” the “SON of GOD” our “FATHER”, who is our “LORD and SAVIOR”, “JESUS CHRIST”. By this there is “HOPE”. It transcends unto the “GRACE” of “GOD” by the “HOLY SPIRIT” within our lives. By the “UNITY” of His “GRACE”, we have our being with “HIM”. “GOD” is our refuge and strength and a very present help”, towards meeting all of our needs: that is, there is nothing to fear.

“JESUS” said, “Lo I Am with you always”. How true this is! His promise is constant. It is little wonder that across the centuries, Jesus's words have strengthened men and women, for “HIS” is the voice of love and forgiveness. He identifies with each of us in every aspect of life. There is no grief, no trouble, and no problem that “HE” has not faced and conquered.

Do you know tears? “HE” wept them too; tears of compassion and grace at the grave of His friend, Lazarus—heartbroken tears over the wayward Jerusalem; Are you friendless? Who has ever been more alone than “HE” who came unto His “GOD”, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Are you bereaved? Think of what he did for Jairus and the widow of Nain. Are you sick? He is the Great Physician. May this be the reason Christ perfectly understands the needs of all persons? It is by His Grace; his perfect “WILL” He gave His all that we would have life everlasting. The final ending of the Gospel is not what does it say or how reasonable it is, but what it can accomplish within our lives?

This is the miracle of CHRISTMAS, let us stand humble in GOD's presence and give of our all to Christ, our Lord and SAVIOR! ***The End Is The Beginning***. HOPE, grant this ADVENT will transcend to peace, joy, love and GRACE one to another. Merry Christmas!

Blessings,
Thomas (TOM) Hardy

Wednesday, December 5

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

Christmas isn't just a season or a happy holiday
It's more than gifts beneath a tree or an ornament display
It goes beyond the sparkly lights or cards up on a shelf
The meaning is a whole lot deeper than Santa or an elf

All those things have their place and truly play a part
But the reason we can celebrate, comes from God's own heart
For God so loved the world He gave a treasure beyond worth
A redeeming love embraced mankind through the Savior's birth

A night divine was orchestrated, ordained by God above
Emmanuel was sent to us to express the Father's love
And even tho' the world has tried to minimize his role
The abiding love that brought him here still seeks to make us whole

Through his birth he made a way for us to find the key
To open up Salvation's door and live a life that's free
The King of kings became a servant and displayed the gift of grace
That went beyond just simply giving...he came to take our place

For God so loved the world He sent a message wrapped in peace
To tell us of a joy and hope that never has to cease
Oh come let us adore him now and share the Christmas story
Of how the precious Lamb of God left his home in glory

So rejoice with friends and family, make memories you can treasure
Moments to cherish throughout the year are truly without measure
And love is always the greatest gift; it will never be outdone
For God so love the world He gave...Christmas through His son

By Marissa Lee Kelley

The above poem was given to me by a dear friend. I hope that you enjoy it.

Merry Christmas
Martha West

Thursday, December 6

“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 Lord Our Righteousness”

Most of you are aware that names were very important in Biblical times. Often your name shaped your life and, if outgrown, could even be changed. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel when he matured and became the father of a nation. Jesus changed disciple Simon’s name to Peter (the rock) to foretell his leadership role.

In this passage from Jeremiah, God prophesies the coming of Jesus to save Judah. This righteous branch will be called “The Lord Our Righteousness.” What a wonderful name! Various meanings include holy, just, virtuous, good, sacred, moral, honest, trustworthy and wise. Our God is all that and SO much more.

Some time ago, a friend gave me a list of 100 of God’s names as stated in His word. “Our Righteousness” wasn’t included, but that omission does not diminish its importance.

In Sunday School, we have been studying prayer, specifically The Lord’s Prayer. Supplication does not arise until the middle verses. We are instructed by Christ to come to God with praise and Thanksgiving, first and foremost. Focusing on one or more of God’s many names is a joyful, meaningful way to honor Him. As Matthew 6:19 states: “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

My prayer for you this Advent season is that you “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

Linda Breaks

Friday, December 7

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

¹ In the beginning [before all time], was the Word (Christ) ... ⁴ In Him was life [and the power to bestow life] and the life was the Light of men." Amp. Bible

What a special time of year Christmas is and for so many reasons, starting with the Christ Child. One obvious part of this season is the use of lights in so many ways. Trees, houses, roadways, sweaters, hats, etc. are twinkling with colorful, blinking, attention grabbing lights!

Today's Bible verses are packed full of such wonderful truths about the Christ, and the words speaking to me are that Jesus is the Eternal Light of men!

We don't say "Turn on the dark" or "Turn off the dark," although we do say "Turn on the light" or "Turn off the light."

Darkness is only the absence of light! When there is any amount of light, it dispels darkness. The more light there is, the more darkness that is dispelled. Darkness never puts out light.

Darkness is helpless to the light. Light always wins. Darkness is only a problem when there is no light.

When you and I use our voices, gifts, talents or lives in any form to spread the Gospel, that Gospel is the Light, dispelling spiritual darkness around us and others! That Light can be passed from person to person causing a blaze of God's Light.

You and I can turn on the Light in a dark world. The light always wins, praise God! Let's be God's twinkling Gospel lights this Christmas and coming year -- dispelling spiritual darkness and calling attention to Jesus, the Eternal Light of men.

Margaret Sarratori

Saturday, December 8

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

“Star Search”

by Deborah Ann Belka

A single star shinning,
on a moonless night
God’s gift to the world
wrapped up in One Light.

Wise men make the journey,
from places east and far
in search for what they know
will be the Morning Star.

With gifts they travel,
to the town of Bethlehem
knowing there they’d find
the Babe, the Christ, the Lamb.

And so they came to be,
face to face with their King
knowing He was the Price
who eternal peace would bring.

One single, solitary star,
still beckons the world today
to follow the Light that leads . . .
to the Truth, Life and Way!

Merry Christmas
Lynn Walton

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 9

*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. – Matthew 1:1-17*

Right off the bat, the first words in the Holy Gospels are proving the validity of Jesus's lineage. Matthew, the tax collector and well-educated Roman official, is writing to the Jews, I'm sure an argument he had many times spreading the Gospel, that Jesus was from the lineage of Abraham and David. Without this information, it would be difficult to make the case that Jesus was the prophesized Messiah. It is fascinating and alarming to watch some of the YouTube videos of professors interviewing Jews in Israel, asking them who was Jesus and what did he mean to them. Talk about a very difficult mission field! Hershel Hobbs wrote an intriguing story about Jesus's lineage in his book *The Illustrated Life of Jesus* at the end of the first chapter "The Period of Preparation." Our Lord and Savior had famous and infamous relatives in the past, proving that his purpose was not just to be a Royal of the House of David, but also of a humble house of sinners to show that he was also sent to atone the sin for all who believed in him, Jew or Gentile. Another fascinating topic is the significance of the number 14 Matthew's testament.

Reflecting on my own lineage, I cannot trace it back more than 5 generations. I find it inspirational, as my Grandpa was a 155mm howitzer gunner in WW2, one of 8 who survived out of his original platoon of 150 men. He was a POW, escaped, helped clear the Vatican, and was even blessed by the Pope. God had a plan for him and his lineage, even though he was disowned by his own family. My Father's side great great grandfather was a stow-away in the 1880's that nearly drowned at sea working as a sailor. Constant life and death struggle, survival against all odds, all leading to me: a sinner, husband & father, teacher, NNS patternmaker/craft instructor, maker of toot sounds on a big piece of conical brass, and loves to laugh and see others succeed. How God plans to use me I do not know, I just hope I am ready and able to fulfill whatever small part of it that I have in his Master Plan. Please see the big picture in how anyone, no matter how meek or humble, can play a critical role in His work. And often, it is not our original plan or design.

God Bless & Merry Christmas!
Tim Owens.

Monday, December 10

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

"Trusting in God"

What does it mean to truly trust in God? What happens to trust when we face a crisis?

When reading this passage of scripture and considering the situation that Joseph found himself in, I wonder about the thoughts that went through his mind. Infidelity is a very important and relevant topic that can result in the dissolution of a relationship even today. For Joseph to want to save Mary, his betrothed, from shame, even though she was pregnant presumably by another man, is a testament to his love and his kindness. How it must have hurt Joseph to think these things about Mary and how this must have burdened his heart! Then an angel of the Lord appeared and told Joseph not to fear but to take Mary as his wife and raise the child of God. Wow! Really, WOW!! It was overwhelming to me that God allowed me to raise my children, let alone His.

Then I considered this: We are all children of God. He loves us and entrusts us with countless blessings. He wants our love, trust, and faith. There have been several times I can identify during my life when the burden of my situation seemed more than I could bear. The angels of the Lord that gave me hope were wonderful members of my church family. Through their love and kindness, my faith was shaken but not broken. I was able to go on when others said they were certain they couldn't. We all suffer, as Joseph surely did, but we should try to find purpose in our pain and faith in our walk. And we should never discount the potential that we may be someone's angel in their time of need.

This second week of Advent brings hope and peace as we come closer each day to the birth of Christ our Savior. Just as Joseph must have felt anticipation in his life as his role changed to husband and father, we look forward to the birth of Jesus as we pray each day of the Advent. We can have peace because of our trust in God. We should have peace and share this peace with the world that is sorely in need of its power. Blessings to you this day and each day of the season.

Debra Wood

Tuesday, December 11

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

²⁰⁻²³ While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God’s angel spoke in the dream: “Joseph, son of David, don’t hesitate to get married. Mary’s pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God’s Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—‘God saves’—because he will save his people from their sins.”

This would bring the prophet’s embryonic sermon to full term:

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;

They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for “God is with us”).

²⁴⁻²⁵ Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God’s angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus.

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Joseph is a man of mystery in the Christmas story. The Bible reveals little to us of who he was, but there is a valuable lesson for each of us in these verses that reveal so much about his character and faith -- and perhaps our own.

What must Joseph have been feeling at the time he learned of Mary’s pregnancy? He pondered in his soul how best to handle this unforeseen situation. As he lay down to sleep, surely he was overcome with a mixture of confusion, sadness, a sense of betrayal, perhaps anger, but still he felt compassion for his betrothed Mary.

God had a plan bigger than either Mary or Joseph had outlined. It was a plan of action for them, in the words of the prophets. This plan was revealed to Joseph as he tossed and turned, trying to figure it out on his own. He awoke to a new day, a new path, and an awesome responsibility and command sent by God himself. Joseph chose to trust and obey, and his free will choice was a link in God’s miraculous plan of salvation.

Suppose he had not relied on God and decided the choice and the sacrifice were too great? His step of faith was one for all mankind! Joseph became a link to MY own salvation. What a lesson we can learn from these few short verses! We ponder and wrestle on our own with doubt and difficult decisions in our lives, trying to solve and work out a plan on our terms. But if we can only learn to trust and obey when God speaks to us, His kingdom would be advanced, one step at a time. Perhaps we could each become a link for someone else in the salvation plan. Perhaps as we accept and change our own lives, we will be the example that motivates another on their quest for salvation. And to God be the glory!!!

“Trust and obey for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

John H. Sammis, 1887

Betty Jane Duncan

Wednesday, December 12

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

At some point in our lives, most of us have doubted whether God would really deliver on His promises, and most of us have also wondered how we possibly could play a role in His plans. Closely following the announcement of Elizabeth's pregnancy comes this even more miraculous news: At long last a Savior is coming, albeit through some unlikely circumstances.

Luke introduces Jesus' earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, as a betrothed couple, meaning that they were officially engaged so that a divorce would be necessary to terminate their relationship. Although Joseph is not Jesus' biological father, as a descendent of David he connects Jesus to Ruth, Rahab, Abraham, and all who received promises from God. Jesus' impending birth is a fulfillment of the longstanding covenant between God and His people, down to the detail of His bloodline.

Because women married as teenagers in this time, it is possible that Mary could have been as young as 12 or 13 years old at the time of her betrothal. Mary was a mere child faced with the gift and responsibility of bringing the Savior into the world, yet her response is remarkable. When others encounter an angel of the Lord, the most commonly reported reaction is fear, but Mary is not afraid of the angel; she is, however, confused by Gabriel's greeting. How can she, a humble young girl who holds little worth in her society, be favored by God? The angel reassures Mary that she is being honored by God.

As with so many others throughout Scripture, despite her ordinariness, God selects Mary for an extraordinary role. While Mary demonstrates courage and humility, God's message is made clear through His actions. He is fulfilling His extravagant promises, and in the process, He is empowering the downtrodden. Only God's faithfulness, strength, and grace make such an event possible.

Mollie Trainum

Thursday, December 13

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

Luke 1:32-33 - He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

What a wondrous future the Angel was laying out to Mary as he was telling her about the wonderful event that would be taking place in her life. He described the great connections Jesus had and how he would reign forever. What a scary situation for a young girl who didn't know anything about birthing babies nor what being married was like. She had no inkling about what it would entail to become the mother of a baby -- especially one as precious as the Son of God. How awed she must have been that she had been chosen to have that honor. I'm sure that all seven of her children were very important to her as a mother, but to be the mother of the Son of God was an honor beyond measure for her.

May God bless each of you at this special time of year when Christians uphold the idea that Jesus is the reason for the season.

Barbara Fryer

*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 1:35

Friday, December 14

“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

On December 14, 2009, Tommy and I welcomed our second child into the world. Elaina's birth was not your typical hospital affair. We chose to deliver at a freestanding birth center in Hallandale Beach, Florida.

Labor began the day prior. We were greeted at the birth center by my midwife and her assistant. Around midnight, Tommy and I decided to go for a walk. This peaceful evening stroll was only interrupted by the occasional labor pain and need for me to catch my breath.

Throughout the next few hours, Tommy and I reflected on the path that led us to this moment--from our marriage at a young age, our two-year struggle with infertility, and our two surprise pregnancies. As we reflected back, we could see God's hand in our lives. My prayer had always been to raise children in a true Christian home with God's love expressed and proclaimed daily. God answered this prayer by not allowing us to conceive until we had both professed Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He has allowed us the privilege of raising four children.

God is our great provider. If we lean on His understanding and not our own, His way will be known. Just as Mary had faith to believe in what she could not understand, we too must have faith that the Lord has a plan for us.



Devan Willard

Saturday, December 15

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

Upon hearing she would be the mother of the Savior of the World, Jesus Christ, Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who at an old age had conceived her first child. As Elizabeth went to greet her cousin, the child she was carrying immediately leapt in her womb.

Upon reading this, the title of a song came to mind, *"I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord."* The song is not about John the Baptist being happy to meet Jesus, though both were still in their mother's womb. It is about the joy we express when we come to the Communion table to partake of the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus. Then after we express our joy in accepting the invitation of Jesus to share in this feast, we promise to go out to *"live and speak His praise."*

John was appointed by God to prepare people to meet Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Light. This Advent, as we await and celebrate the first coming of Jesus into this world, let us also keep our eyes and hearts on the reason He came... that if we believe in Him, we shall not perish but have Eternal Life.

The 4th stanza of the song reads,

*"And thus with joy we meet our Lord, His presence always near,
Is in such friendship better known: We see and praise Him here."*

May we all share the joy we have in Jesus Christ.
Jimmy & Charlene Diggs

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 16

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

The Advent Sunday of joy offers a simple message for all at Christmas.

J- Jesus

O- Offers Love, grace, redemption, peace, salvation, reconciliation and healing for

Y- You.

We pray everyone would accept this simple message. We are looking forward to the **Joy** and adventures 2019 holds.

Merry Christmas
KC and Laraine Sentz



Monday, December 17

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

Anticipating God's Blessings

To give us some context, we have to remember that before John's birth, his father Zacharias had been unable to speak for a little over nine months.

It had been one ordinary day at work in the temple when the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias and announced that his and Elizabeth's prayers for a baby were being answered. They had been praying this prayer for many years and suddenly, God was giving them a son.

Because of his initial disbelief, Zacharias was unable to speak until the baby was born and his first word was to say the child's name, John.

But can you imagine -- months earlier, how Zacharias could hardly have waited for his week's work to be done? How he wanted to speed home to communicate with Elizabeth this strange and wondrous news? Having to use a stylus and not his voice? Their prayer was being answered.

In today's verses, we read how Zacharias used his voice, after John was born, to praise God and prophesy the blessings of salvation. The Lord was going to redeem His people.

Today, we have the opportunity to share in Zacharias' excitement as we wait with anticipation for Christmas to arrive. There are just a few more days left and with so much to be thankful for -- let's be careful to use our voices to praise God for His many blessings - those we have received and those to come!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Amy and Mark Boykin

Tuesday, December 18

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

During this time in history, Palestine was under the rule of the Roman Empire with Caesar Augustus in charge. The Roman rulers were thought to be like gods. They had complete control, so they thought. As we read the Holy Scriptures, we can see who truly is in control.

Augustus' decree went out in God's perfect timing, and according to God's perfect plan, to bring His Son into the world. All through the Old Testament, the prophets speak of a coming Savior -- a King who would rescue His people and restore them to God. The Old Testament contains more than 300 specific promises about the coming Savior. God used this Roman census to fulfill one of those promises found in Micah 5:2. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, even though Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth nearly 100 miles away. God made a way for it to happen. He is faithful to His word.

The road from Nazareth to Bethlehem was a long, difficult journey, especially for Mary who was about to give birth. I wonder if Joseph and Mary had doubts that God was still with them--if they were still in God's will during this difficult time. God didn't make things easy for them, but He did give them strength and grace to make it through each day.

God does not guarantee us comfort and convenience as we journey life's path with Him. But He does promise to work all things together for our good. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, may we also rejoice in knowing that our God is in absolute control of this world. He is trustworthy, His timing is perfect, and His love is never ending.

Merry Christmas

Love, Gary & Barbara Mangrum

Wednesday, December 19

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

Why Shepherds?

As Jesus introduced Himself to the world, He didn't choose a special sign for the religious elite, the Levite or even Simeon (v25) or Anna (v36). Instead, He revealed His glory and presence to men of extremely low regard; the shepherds. They didn't get a complete gospel presentation, but maybe something more valuable--an invitation to behold the face of One who was both Child and Savior.

But why did He choose these shepherds? Do they hold a special place in His heart? His Glory manifested in the place of their profession, and His presence in a place where animals rest.

Go back in time 585 years or so. Jerusalem was being flattened by Nebuchadnezzar, and God's people were deported from their beloved homeland, never to return again. There are multiple reasons for this, but Ezekiel 34 points to abuse of power by the leaders -- the shepherds of God's flock. They were hateful and violent toward the flock, profiting at their expense. God promised someday that things would be different. He would gather His flock, care for them, and give them good pasture (vv12-14).

Here's the kicker. In v23, He would "set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and He will feed them Himself, and be their Shepherd." The LORD had plans to be their God, and "My servant David" (v24) would be among them. Hmmm... God's people were to look forward to a person like David. A Shepherd!

Well, fast forward. The Child is now an adult. The scribes and Pharisees had a great deal of trouble with Jesus in John 8. He claimed to be the "I AM" of the Old Covenant. In John 9, He healed a blind man, and they'd worked hard to de-supernaturalize it, without luck. So, in John 10, He talked to them about the profession of shepherding.

Now, there is quite a bit of documentation of how these religious elite abused their power:

- devouring widow's houses, while praying to preserve appearance (Mark 12:40)
- doing things simply "to be seen of men" (Matthew 6:16)
- even planning to kill the son of the vineyard owner (Matthew 21:38)

So, right in front of them, He calls Himself "the Good Shepherd." This is huge! He claimed to be the Shepherd of Ezekiel 34, the One who would remove their power and care for His flock Himself. So, after all this, does He have a special place in His heart for the humble and lowly shepherd? Yep. I think He does.

Tom McElfresh

Thursday, December 20

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."*

In verse 13, "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God". One can only imagine the joy at seeing heavenly angels, what a blessing that would be. Of course, God sends us blessings- JOY- every day in smaller doses. We simply must retrain ourselves to be open to them and recognize them.

It may come to you in a beautiful sunrise or sunset. When you see that beauty, God is trying to get your attention and wants you to stop and receive that blessing.

I love photography and many times I have seen something breathtaking; a butterfly or dragonfly on the perfect flower. A slight pause and it changes or flies away. For a moment I think, "Oh no, I missed my perfect shot." And then I realize the true blessings I was just given my heart is filled with JOY.

Joy is all around you, open your heart and it will find you. Joy can be walking down the aisle of the grocery store and pass a mother with a small baby, you look at the baby and it breaks into this big beautiful happy smile...JOY! Seeing your church family on Sunday knowing they are also happy to be in the same building...JOY!

Everyone wants to be happy, yet JOY is elusive for many. One reason is people tend to expect their joy to come from big things. Some take numerous blessings for granted because they tend to only see the big prize.

Life is made up of little things, be happy and content with those small pleasures/blessings. We are given so many little blessings every day, but we are so consumed by our busy daily life we fail to recognize them.

God tries many times a day to fill your heart with JOY. Don't wait to be bowled over by a great heavenly host to find JOY. Open your heart....God is waiting to fill it with HIS JOY!

With Christmas Blessings
Sonya Anthony

Friday, December 21

*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

When we start to celebrate this Christmas season may we remember that Mary gave birth to our Savior many years ago. May we be like the shepherds praising Him and glorifying His name. May we spread his word to others. We at Gloucester Point Baptist Church have many leaders that teach us about our Savior all year long. I can’t tell you the many blessings that I receive each Sunday in my Sunday school class. Thank you Amy and class members. Thank you Bud for preaching God’s word to us each Sunday. Thank you Margaret and Choir for praising God in song each Sunday. Thank you church members for your friendship and love. It is so wonderful to attend such a Christian, loving church and that Jesus was born to save us all.

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a blessed new year!
Rachel Wells



Saturday, December 22

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." – Luke 2:25-35

In Hebrew the meaning of the name Simeon is: Obedient, listening. In the Bible, Simeon was the old man who recognized Jesus as the Messiah. He was a devout, righteous man, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Simeon identified God's salvation as being personified in Jesus, for Jesus to come was for God's salvation to come. Salvation is portrayed as light. The word salvation combined with the word light means "saving light." Jesus is the glory of Israel because through Him the nation would see the fulfillment of God's promises. The same Spirit that provided for the support of Simeon's hope, provided for his joy.

I would like to share the lyrics of this song "Now That I've Held Him in My Arms" by Michael Card. The song is based on the scriptures of Luke 2:25-35.

That old man in the temple
Waiting in the court
Waiting for the answer to a promise
And all at once he sees them
In the morning sunshine
A couple come and carry in a baby

Mary and the baby come
And in her hand five shekels
The price to redeem her baby boy
The baby softly cooing
Nestled in her arms
Simeon takes the boy and starts to sing

Now that I've held Him in my arms
My life can come to an end
Let your servant now depart in peace
Cause I've seen Your salvation
He's the Light of the Gentiles
And the glory of His people Israel

Now's the time to take Him in your arms
Your life will never come to an end
He's the only way that you'll find peace
He'll give you salvation cause
He's the Light of the Gentiles
And the glory of His people Israel

Merry Christmas,
Alice Oldfield

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 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

Sunday, December 23

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

This is the prophecy of Anna, a prophet. She was a widow and she was very old. Scripture tells us she stayed at the Temple day and night, fasting and praying. And she told everyone she saw about Jesus. This is Love.

Every time we sing “Silent Night,” we have a feeling of awe and wonder about the Savior’s birth. And every time we sing “Joy To The World,” our hearts seem to burst with Joy and Love.

Christmas is more than a celebration that took place almost 2000 years ago. It is Love incarnate in our hearts. Just as our Sunday school lesson said last week, Love and Joy fill our body, even to the marrow of our bones, just as Anna the Prophet must have felt Joy and Love the first time she laid her eyes on Jesus. Just as the Magi and the Shepherds felt Joy and Love when they looked upon Jesus.

Christmas reminds us of the mystery and miracle of life itself.

So let us sing “Silent Night,” “Joy To The World” and “Holy Night” because it is indeed a Holy Night filled with Love -- and a night all Christians will never forget.

I pray the Advent season and the Christmas season will be a blessing to you and your family and fill your hearts with Love.

Love to all of you, my Church Family. You are all special to me.

Alice Deal

JOSEPH MOHR (GERMAN) – FIRST PERFORMED DEC. 24, 1818

Silent Night

1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright.
2. **Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep-herds quake at the sight.**
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God love's pure light.

Round yon Vir - gin, Moth-er and Child. Ho - ly in - fant so ten - der and mild,
Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far Heav'n-ly hosts—sing Al - le - lu - ia,
Ra - dant beams from Thy ho - ly face With the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,

Sleep in heav - en - ly peace, Christ the Sav - ior is **born!**
Je - sus Lord, at Thy birth. Sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
Christ the Sav - ior is **born.**
Je - sus Lord, at Thy birth.

Jesus answered, *“I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

- John 14:6

The first weekend in November I had the opportunity to attend the annual women’s getaway at Eagle Eyrie in Lynchburg, VA. As I read the scripture verse for today, a song we were lead in during one of our worship services filled my mind, “Way Maker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the darkness.” My God that is who you are.”

Jesus and only Jesus is our Way. He is the Great I Am!

In 2008, my first international mission trip to Peru was over Christmas. My son shared with one of his co-workers that I would be spending Christmas abroad. The coworkers comment was: “She’s trying to buy her way into heaven.” Oh my friend, the price was paid on that cross in Calvary. We are the hands, and feet of Jesus. He shows us the way if we choose to follow. How many times have you tried your own way? It doesn’t work. This year has been a roller coaster ride for me with plenty of ups and downs. Like Thomas, that was me doubting Theresa. I realize God was trying to get my attention, reminding me I’m not in control. Without Him we can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Truth is the reality of God’s promises. The written Word of God. The Word of God is eternal it lives and abides forever. (1Peter 1:23)

Jesus is the resurrection and the Life. (John 11:25).

I thank God that we are loved so much that He sent His one and only Son to offer us an eternal spiritual life that death cannot conquer.

May Jesus be your Light in the darkness.

Christmas Blessings,
Theresa Svoboda

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

Christmas is a time of celebration. It is a time to share our blessings and a time to be surrounded by our family and friends. It is a time of decorations, shopping, baking, food, and church events. It is a time of giving gifts because we want others to know how much we love them, but most of all it is a time to remember how much God loves us.

On December 25, God gave us His only begotten Son. He came in the flesh to save all who choose to believe in Him as their personal Savior and Lord. God does not want anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance. Jesus is the greatest gift we can ever accept.

John 3:16 has been explained like this:

For God... the greatest lover
so loved... the greatest degree
the world... the greatest company
that He gave... the greatest act
His only begotten Son... the greatest gift
that whosoever... the greatest opportunity
believeth... the greatest simplicity
in Him... the greatest attraction
should not perish... the greatest promise
but... the greatest difference
have... the greatest certainty
everlasting life... the greatest possession.

Excerpted from The Joshua Code by O. S. Hawkins

We wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!
Bud and Donna

What Child Is This?

Em G D Bm Em

What Child is this who, laid to rest On Ma - ry's
Why lies He in such mean es - tate, Where ox and
So bring Him in - cense, gold and myrrh, Come pea - sant,

6 C B7 Em G

lap is sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with
ass are feed - ing? Good Chris - tians, fear, for
king to own Him; The King of kings sal -

11 D Bm Em B7 Em

an - thems sweet, While shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
sin - ners here The si - lent Word is plead - ing.
va - tion brings, Let lo - ving hearts en - throne Him.

17 G D Bm Em

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shep - herds
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be
Raise, raise a song on high, The vir - gin

22 C B7 G D

guard and an - gels sing; Haste, haste, to bring Him
borne for me, for you. Hail, hail, the Word made
sings her lul - la - by. Joy, joy for Christ is

28 Bm Em B7 Em

laud, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.
flesh, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.
born, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.

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 2* First Sunday of Advent**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
11:00 AM Hanging of the Greens
2:00 PM CARE Ministry

December 5 6:30-7:30 PM Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

***December 9* Second Sunday of Advent**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM –Worship
11:00AM Children's Christmas Presentation & Party
2:00 PM CARE Ministry

December 12 6:30-7:30 PM Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

6:00 PM Called Business Meeting

December 15 9:00-12:00 AM Chancel Choir Dress Rehearsal

***December 16* Third Sunday of Advent**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
11:00 AM Christmas Cantata - Adult Choir
12:00 PM Christmas Dinner

***December 23* Fourth Sunday of Advent**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM – Worship
11:00 AM Children's Choir
2:00 PM CARE Ministry

***December 24* Christmas Eve**

5:00 PM Christmas Eve Service

***December 25* Christmas Day**

***December 30* Sunday School and Worship**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM -Worship
2:00 PM CARE Ministry

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