



Advent Devotionals:

On this 60th anniversary of Gloucester Point Baptist Church (1959-2019), we remember our member's "Voices of Advent" written over the years.

We hope you find this devotional useful in preparing to celebrate God's gift to the world, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.



"Voices of Advent" Cover Art:

©2019, Original Drawing by Mr. Jason Kissinger

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 1

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days. – Hosea 3:4-5

“New Hope for Us”

In His love for us God speaks to us in many different ways. Sometimes this is through life experiences. This divine love can be seen in Hosea’s attitude toward his wife, Gomer.

Hosea felt that God had commanded him to help Gomer repent of her sins and change her way of living. If she could do this, with Hosea’s loving help, eventually their marriage would be restored and they would live as God intended man and wife to live.

Some Biblical scholars have suggested Hosea’s marriage is an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. During the time of the writing of the book of Hosea, Israel had turned away from God. Through their worship of false gods and their debauchery, they had brought God’s judgement down upon themselves. They were taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

God always holds out the hope of redemption through His divine love for His people. As verse 5 tells us that as God’s discipline of Israel was temporary and served the purpose of renewal, so Hosea’s restrictions were to be temporary and aimed at a restored relationship.

As Hosea listened to God’s command to restore his marriage through love, we too, are commanded to help others to seek a relationship with our Lord and Savior through confession, repentance, and a changed way of living. We are not to dwell on the sins of the past, but to help others to look toward the glorious future through salvation.

Kay Riley (1993)

Monday, December 2

*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

Miracle of Christmas

How would you like to follow the extraordinary journey of Mary and Joseph and witness the miraculous birth of Jesus?

Betty Anne, Jeannie, and Alice feel that we did witness this event when we went to see the Miracle of Christmas in Lancaster Pennsylvania in November.

Miraculous and mysterious, angels appeared throughout the performance as God's special messengers, sent from heaven to communicate with people on earth about the coming of the Prince of Peace.

First the angel Gabriel informs Zechariah that his son John will be born, then he declares to Mary that she will give birth to the Savior. Next, Joseph encounters an angel in a dream, assuring him of God's purpose. Finally a vast multitude of angels visits the shepherds, proclaiming the amazing news.

The sky in the theater was dark and stars shone brightly above us, the angels descended from the heavens and hovered over the audience. It was so beautiful it is hard to describe.

Luke 2:11-14 relates this story as we viewed it, making us feel we were right there as a witness to this holy birth and feeling the presence of God.

As we approach this Holy Season may we all be praising God and saying:
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE GOOD WILL
TO ALL MEN----

This is our prayer for all our friends and family's as we enter into a new year.

Betty Ann Shackelford, Jeannie Fitzgerald, and Alice Deal (2009)

Tuesday, December 3

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

*“You are the God who works wonders,
You have displayed Your might among the peoples.”*

- Psalm 77:14

Zechariah was a man that began to doubt God, for he had prayed for a son and his prayer was not answered. He was getting quite old, but God wrought a miracle and Zechariah was given a son.

Many people today too have doubts and some even ask, “Where is God?” When they hear of the tragedies, low morals, and terrible crimes being committed most every day, their doubts increase.

The songwriter says, “I don’t know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future,” and a poem I read encourages me, “Who trusts in God need fear no fate nor look at life in blank despair/Keep hope alive, with patience wait and He’ll answer every prayer.”

Minnie Rowe, (1993)

Wednesday, December 4

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. - Luke 1:5-15

"John's Mission and Ours"

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous---to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:17

In God's promise to give Zechariah a son He also told him what that son, John, would do in his life. His task would be one of preparing a people for the coming of Jesus. We too must be ready to carry out this same task in our lives as we prepare people for the second coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

When considering this task in my own life, I think back to a recent extended stay in the hospital, and how helpless I felt in being able to do anything. But through the visit of my pastor and his lists for prayer from others, I realized even in my weakest moments I could help to prepare others for Jesus by praying constantly for those in need.

So we all can serve as John did, through many ways, but especially in witnessing and in prayer.

Bob Branen (1993)

Thursday, December 5

*“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have,
because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”
So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?” Hebrews 13:5-6*

Strive to be content with less than what we have. Plan to give a share out of abundance rather than accumulating more. Be thankful for what we have rather than being resentful of what we might have. Remember that wealth and possessions will all pass away.

We become content if and when we realize that God will take care of all our needs. Those individuals who become materialistic are indicating by their behavior that they believe God can't take care of them – Relish what God has given you rather than being disappointed in what you might have.

As Christians we are all indebted to others who have taught us what we needed to know concerning the Bible and Christian living. During a recent experience of an automobile accident – a broken leg and the recovery period – I was made aware that the Lord is my helper and that I was not afraid.

Carl Morris (2004)

Friday, December 6

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 2:20

“Our First Christmas”

This was to be our first Christmas together, and we planned to go to Mississippi to spend a few days with Elizabeth’s family. It was the Advent season of 1963. We were completing a full schedule of pre-Christmas programs in two churches before driving to Mississippi. Late on December 22 Elizabeth and I returned to the parsonage to pack and rest.

When we awoke early on December 23, the world was totally white. We postponed our departure for a day, hoping that the falling snow would cease. So on Christmas Eve at mid-day we started out, with the road crews pushing the snow off the roads, enabling us to get to Bristol that night. Early on Christmas morning, we stared out again. Little of the food we had was left; we began looking for an open restaurant. Shortly after daybreak we found one all lit up and inviting hungry travelers in. We ate and continued our journey. The temperatures rose; the road began to clear. Suddenly my 1958 Chevrolet began to jump, making strange clicking sounds. A sign promised that Phil Campbell, Alabama, was just ahead. We found a service station where a mechanic diagnosed the problem—a bent push rod. He didn’t have parts, but he could straighten the rod.

So we made it to Houlka, Mississippi, in time for supper with Elizabeth’s mother and family. We shared modest gifts around Elizabeth’s mother’s typically straggly little Christmas tree, but the gifts we celebrated that Christmas were wonderful. Gifts like an innkeeper on Christmas Eve, a restaurant open for hungry travelers on Christmas Day, a mechanic who helped out travelers in an ailing car. Gifts like highway department workers who cleared the roads. And gifts like churches that worship God in Christ, and teach all folk to sing and tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love. Gifts like families that strive to model the kingdom of God among us. Gifts like Elizabeth and the beginning of a Christian marriage. What a memorable Christmas, our first, thirty-three years ago.

Like the shepherds, let us go on our way glorifying and praising God. The Lord has come.

Paul and Elizabeth Garber (1996)

Saturday, 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

“The Eternal Light of Christ”

New Testament Lesson: John 1:1-5

Revelation 21:6

Old Testament Lessons: Genesis 1:2-3

*“In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD,
and the WORD was GOD.” John 1:1 KJV*

Most children are scared of the dark. This dread is usually carried over in the teenagers. In fact, most adults are frightened by unfamiliar darkness.

But---what a comfort light is!

According to the Scripture, it didn't take GOD very long to “Turn on the Light.” In the second verse of the Bible we find darkness but---in the very next verse, GOD says, “Let there be Light: and there was Light”. As we ponder that statement and compare these two verses with other verses in Genesis 1, it is quite evident that GOD wasn't talking about the light of the Sun, Moon, or Stars because---GOD didn't form the light-bearing heavenly bodies until later, on creation's fourth day.

So---what could He mean?

Where was the Light coming from?

By cross-referencing one would find answers in John 1:4 and Revelation 21:6, i.e.

“In Him was life and the life was the light of men”

“I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End”

How thrilling it is to see JESUS in the first and last books of the Bible.

Where is He in our lives today? Is He at the beginning of our day---at the end???

Lee May (1993)

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 8

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. — Psalm 23

“Joy, Peace and Security”

“The Lord is my Shepard; I shall not want...”

What a joy it is to have the assurance that we have a Shepard who is ever interceding for us. He is guiding us by His gracious Spirit and is ever working on our behalf to ensure that we will benefit from His care.

I have had many joyful Christmases and a few sorrowful ones. One that stands out in my memory is our first visit to a foreign country to spend Christmas with our children and grandchildren in Germany. When we arrived at our destination, the Berlin wall had just been erected and travel was restricted; however, that did not diminish the joy and pleasure of being with our children and grandchildren and the experience of the customs of the country at that season of the year.

Some years later I had the occasion to go behind the iron curtain into the communist zone. What a sharp contrast—the lack of freedom, an atmosphere of resignation and weariness in the people. Churches and cathedrals were nothing more than tourist attractions. Worship was done in secret. Recently, I revisited the same area and since the wall has come down there is much jubilation, rebuilding and restoring churches and places to worship.

Through adversities, trials and tribulations, whether individual or collective, the good Shepard gathers His flock and leads us through the dark valley in His own time.

In my own simple minute life, I am reminded of the words of St Augustine: “Lord, when I look upon mine own life it seems Thou hast led me so carefully, so tenderly, Thou canst have attended to no one else; but when I see how wonderfully Thou has led the world and are leading it, I am amazed that Thou hast time to attend to such as I.

Surely, the Lord is my Shepard ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Katherine Hall (1996)

Monday, December 9

“The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

- James 3:17-18

My niece Janet and her ten year old grandson Mason came down to Virginia from New Jersey to visit with us and see the sights.

While they were driving around down here they saw an accident involving two cars. Both drivers were women. Mason sat in the car with his grandmother and watched in amazement as the two women involved in the accident got out of their cars and hugged each other. “Why are they doing that?” Mason asked. “Why aren’t they fighting over who caused the accident?”

Janet simply answered, ‘They are Christian ladies. We are in the Bible Belt.’ The two women who were consoling each other with a hug were unaware that they were teaching a ten year old boy how to make peace in a time of trouble. This is a scene Mason will always remember.

This Christmas let us show others by our actions how to be peaceful. People will be rushing around and nerves will be on edge in heavy traffic or in log lines. By our actions they will know that we are followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Joan Huhn (2004)

Tuesday, December 10

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.*

- Zechariah 9:9-10

“Christ the King Comes in Peace”

Walter and I were married seven and half years before Betty Reed arrived. The joy in our waiting hearts plus the happiness of family and friends was overwhelming. We had hoped and prayed for her a long time.

How much, much more the people of Bible times looked forward to the long-expected Jesus. Upon His miraculous birth, there was even greater and more widespread joy. The people had hoped and prayed many more years for His coming. Zechariah 9:9 in the New American Standard bible, referring to the first Advent of Christ, states that He would be just and endowed with salvation. Zechariah 9:10, referring to the second Advent, goes on to state that He would bring peace to the nations and His dominion would be from sea to sea.

We wait with great expectations; we savor the joy of birth as our hearts grow in love for not only our children, but for our Savior. We look forward with anticipation His second coming

Walter and Helena Oliver (1993)

Wednesday, December 11

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

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

- John 10:14, 27-28

How wonderful is the assurance that comes when we hear the words, "I love you _____ (fill in your name). I will watch over you and care for you. I will be your shepherd, for you are my sheep."

As we think of Jesus as our Shepherd, we are also reminded of the fact that even when we wander from Him – as we often do – He comes and looks for us to return us to His fold. Beyond that, He gives to us the assurance of eternal life as "*He leads us in the paths of righteousness*" with the added bonus that "*we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*"

Surely this love of the Shepherd for His sheep is a love which we joyfully re-claim during this Christmas season as we take time to listen and again hear Jesus call our name.

Sarah Starkey (2004)

Thursday, December 12

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

John's Gospel: GOD – ONLY – SON – PERISH – EVERLASTING

God is love! *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."* 1 John 3:16

A mother gave her ears to a son who had no ears. She gave a part of herself to meet her son's need. The love of God is greater than this mother's love. God gave us more than ears. He gave His Son! The world may look back on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary and think it unnecessary. There is no greater demonstration of love than the giving of one's own life for another. Jesus Christ did it for you and me. God sent His Son so that sinful man would understand this thing called love.

I believe in love even when it is not shown. I experienced a great outpouring of love, from Christian friends, at a time when I was very anxious. The expression of their love, along with God's love, helped me overcome my anxiety. Love, in order for it to work, is a two-way street. We give love and we receive love. Love was born at Christmas when Christ child was laid in a manger. Let's give thanks for God's Great Love!

Leah White (1998)

*God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten Son
that whoever believeth in Him should not perish,
but have everlasting life. – John 3:16*

Friday, December 13

“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

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” - Revelation 21:3-4

When I was a child I always bombarded my Mother with questions about Heaven, death, pain and anything else that puzzled me. Her answer was always the same – “You’ll know when you get to Heaven.” I remember that promise when I question the turmoil we face each day. I even personalize it to include the pain and sadness I experience.

It is comforting to read the words from Revelation 21:4, “*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.*” Just as my Mother said, “Everything will be all right when you get to Heaven.”

As Christians, we must tell everyone their questions will be answered and their worries will be no more “when they get to Heaven.” The only sadness we should feel is the sorrow of knowing some people will never get to Heaven. Therefore, we should spend every conceivable minute helping people learn about Jesus. Christ will bring peace and joy to every believer on earth. But, the real rejoicing will be when we “get to Heaven.”

As the scripture says: “*God will dwell with His people.*” Can you imagine the joy and love that reunion will have? To be with Jesus forever and ever is the hope of every Christian. There will be no more pain or crying and most of all there will be no more death. Living forever is beyond our conception but we will live forever with Jesus. What a future to look forward to!

Barbara Gordon (2004)

Saturday, December 14

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

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

- John 1:9-10

When Herbert and I got married we did not know exactly how our lives would be together but it must have been right because that has been 50 years ago.

We lived with his parents for a while since we both were working at the time. After about two years we decided to look around at some lots that we both would like and that was right here at Gloucester Point.

After we got our house built we talked about having a family. We had two girls, Connie and Pam. Our family was complete with the help of the Lord. We now have a grandson, Hagan, who we enjoy very much.

Jesus is the light of our lives and without him I don't think we would have made it this far, especially since we have lost several members of our families through the years. He really helped us to understand the meaning of losing your loved ones.

We really enjoy Gloucester Point Baptist Church and the people. We are glad we changed our membership when we did.

God Bless Everyone!

Herbert and JoAnne Shackelford (2009)

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 15

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

*"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again
and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."
John 16:22*

The joy that no one can steal is the joy of our salvation. He is alive, and we have every reason to rejoice! The Lord does not replace our sorrow with joy; He transforms our sorrow into joy. Even if life is difficult now, one day we will rejoice. Keep your eye on the future and on God's promises.

Today share with someone what joy it is in knowing God's love and how He is always ever present in everything we do.

Francis Rowe, (1995)

Monday, December 16

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

*“Your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man
taketh from you.” - John 16:22b*

“The Christmas Story”

We were asked to pick a Christmas that was most meaningful. I tried to think of just one, and I can't. Each Christmas our entire family gets together and a devotion is read. Sometimes Luke 2 is chosen, or I find something printed that would suit.

Think of the music we have about Jesus at Christmas—“Joy To The World,” “Hark! the Herald Angels sing,” “Good Christian Men, Rejoice,” “There’s a Song in the Air.” These are just a few of the joyous songs we have for Christmas, the birthday of Christ.

Most important is that Jesus has been born in our hearts.

-Paul and Mildred Scott (1996)

Tuesday, December 17

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

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 (2017)

Wednesday, December 18

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

Because of Abraham's faith, he was promised by God he would have a son despite his age and Sarah being barren. And the Lord said unto Abraham; *"Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son"* (Genesis 18:14).

After our daughter and son-in-law married, they prayed that GOD would bless them with children. It wasn't long when the doctors told them their chance of having children would be very difficult. Through their faith and believing in the word, on January 5, 2007 their first child was born; a son. Twenty-two months later they were blessed with a daughter.

Life often confronts us with challenges that make it very difficult to stay in faith. It is God who we can truly believe and trust during good times and bad. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God (Luke 18:27). Whether it be days, weeks, months, years or generations, God; in his own time, will reveal his promises.

What a glorious day when the promise of our Savior, JESUS was born-The greatest gift to all. May we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas this year and prepare ourselves for the second coming of our Savior.

The Word by our faith is still rewarded today...and the Word was made Flesh.

Lynn & Bernie Walton (2014)

Thursday, December 19

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

“Such Joy”

Such Joy! That beautiful, glorious night filled with excitement – the shepherds did not doubt the reality of the angels’ proclamation, but accepted it at face value. They hurried to see the fulfillment of the Word and to be a part of it (as a witness for us to know it is so).

My family and home in West Virginia were always so special at Christmas. I would always try to get home if I were anywhere in the States. Every Christmas morning that I can remember, one of the children would pass out the presents to each family member. Then we would gather around Mother to watch her open her gifts, with “Oh!,” “Ah!,” “Just what I wanted!” and such words to make us feel good. Now, it was Daddy’s turn. He acted like a little boy at his birthday party. Then, after our watching Daddy, we each dug into our packages, laughed and played until Mom said, “Breakfast is ready!” We would eat, then hurry back to enjoy our day.

The following definition of “Joy” is found in The Layman’s Bible Encyclopedia (Southwestern Co., Nashville, TN.). “Joy—the emotion excited by the acquisition or the expectation of good; pleasure caused by good fortune, or the like; gladness, delight. Throughout the Bible, joy and gladness are related to the life of Israel and the Church. This joy is not only a response to the present blessings of a covenant relationship with God but is also an anticipation of the future state, when redeemed man will be able to enjoy the fullness of the presence of God.”

Ruth Conner (1996)

Friday, December 20

*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

As Christmas 2006 approached, our stress level was tremendous. We were anxiously awaiting the finalization of our son’s adoption. Zac, with us since birth, was then fifteen months old. What should have been a quick adoption process had become a horrific emotional roller coaster.

The young mother, who delivered Zac, was having a difficult time detaching from us and was delaying the signing of the adoption decree, necessary for the judge’s approval. After several unsuccessful attempts to locate the young mother, disappearing, and then resurfacing when in need, we feared we would lose our little boy.

My mom and I were finishing our Christmas shopping when I got a phone call from the mother. She was upset and distraught. Christmas was three days away and she could not buy gifts for her children. My rational and calm mother suggested that we take Christmas to them. I rejected the idea quickly, not wanting to be away from our cozy home filled with our family on Christmas Eve to spend Christmas in an efficiency motel.

As Buck and I discussed the call, her desperation echoed in my mind. We talked about her children, her traumatic life and forgiveness. God revealed himself to us many times and now we needed to open our eyes and hearts and allow God to work through us to touch this girl. We knew what we had to do. My mother and I shopped all day long December 23rd. A local grocery store had one prepared Christmas dinner left.

On Christmas Eve, Zac, Buck and I drove to the efficiency motel to deliver Christmas packages, a meal and lots of baked goods, already prepared. We rode home in silence.

After arriving home, we broke our silence. We remembered the faces of the children, the sounds of laughter, which will never be forgotten or regretted. This indeed, was a very happy and joyous Christmas shared with a desperate girl who unselfishly gave us the most precious gift she could ever give, our son! He truly is a gift from God.

God revealed himself to us!
Buck and Pam Hartman (2013)

Saturday, December 21

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

- Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Joy of New Life in Christ

“Joy to the World!” God has made a New Covenant with His creation. A covenant is an agreement between persons to do or not do certain things. This definition sounds stilted and cold, but the covenant the Jeremiah described is filled with love, compassion, hope and joy, and great anticipation! The old covenant had been broken, ignored, and flaunted in times past and was now replaced by God’s new and different promise.

The exiled people were ready for this gleam of hope that came shining through Jeremiah’s words from God. The words “*The days are coming*” spoke of a time that God was preparing, and their hearts were stirred with new strength. Instead of laws and rituals performed by the priests for the people, God’s new law would be in “their hearts.” All people could come to know the Lord Jehovah – not just the Jewish people.

The great power in this new promise was that God would “forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more”! In verse 32, God reminded the people of their past rebellion, but never again would He remind them. “As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

A New Covenant – a promise of greater things – a Messiah, Christ Jesus is coming! He came – The Babe in Bethlehem – Christmas! Let us proclaim aloud with accepting hearts, “Hail! Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Born to reign in us forever!”

Dot Barkley (1993)

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 22

“How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings.”

- Psalm 36:7

Our English language has but one word for LOVE. However, that word has many meanings.

Our deepest love should be for CHRIST. He loved us even before we were born. Even though He knew we would sin against both Him and our fellow man, He loved us enough to send His Son into the world to live and to die that through His death we might have forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

Love of family and friends – I am so blessed to have a loving family and many wonderful friends. Many of you know that I still have two friends that I have had for over seventy years. Norma, Bobbie and I went all through school together. We grew up, married, followed our husbands all through World War II, settled back in Richmond, Virginia, raised our families, and became active in the same church we grew up in. Through all these years we have laughed together, cried together, and shared our hopes and dreams. We may know more about each other than our husbands know about us. Two of us are widows now. Even though we are in our eighties, we still try to meet once a month for lunch and shopping. Do we love each other? You bet we do!

God loves us more than family or friends. He rejoices when good things happen in our lives. When we have sadness or disappointment He tucks us under the shadow of His wings until happy times return.

This Christmas season let us show someone we love them – not for what they give us but for who they are.

Dot Elder (2004)

Monday, December 23

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” - 1 Peter 4:10

“A Christmas Visitor”

A Woman’s Missionary Union mission project helped make the Christmas of ’71 a meaningful experience for our family. Early in the year the Annie Armstrong Circle “adopted” Linda, a teenage resident of the Virginia Baptist Children’s’ home, located in Salem, Virginia. During the summer, Linda spent several weeks with our family, residing in our home for a part of that time. During that visit Linda asked if she could spend some time at Christmas with us and, in response to an inquiry about gifts she would like to receive for Christmas, expressed a desire for a green velvet dress.

Gifts for Linda, including the materials needed to make a green velvet dress, were added to the family Christmas shopping list. The drive to Salem to pick up Linda, as soon as she completed her last day of school before Christmas break, and the return trip went smoothly. She stayed with us until about noontime on Christmas Day, then visited other members of our church family before returning to Salem a few days later. While with us, she participated in our usual Christmas activities: Christmas Eve dinner with Doris’ mother and family, a Christmas morning reading from Luke’s gospel, a birthday party for Jesus and the exchange of gifts. Her delight with t green velvet dress (and other gifts) was evident.

It’s amazing how much joy and excitement Linda’s presence added to our family’s rather normal Christmas celebration that year. Our efforts to share our gifts and Christian love with a young teen who was separated from her own family resulted in our family being rewarded tenfold and more.

Tom and Doris Riley (1996)

*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*

Love, what do I think about when I hear this powerful word?

“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.” John 3:16

God’s love comes first – of course, and then there is Christina. Three weeks before Christina was born we learned she would not be normal. She would be a vegetable, and might not survive.

Now 15 years later with a lot of encouraging she has learned to walk, talk, count, spell and yes, even sing! If you ask her who her best friend is, she will tell you Jesus. She sings! GOD IS SO GOOD! He’s so good to me. We love her so much it is sometimes hard to express. She is such a blessing, and she returns her love to everyone she meets.

Being legally blind is an added handicap. That doesn’t seem to hold her back. She enjoys videos and loves for you to draw for her.

When I think of love, I think of Christina. We still don’t know how long God will let us keep her, but in my daughter Leann’s words “We thank God for every moment we do have her.” She is an angel and a blessing – this is love!

Ervin and Alice Deal (2006)

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*

*“ Today... a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”
- Luke 2:11*

A Most Cherished Gift

As a child we can recall some special gift at Christmas time. Growing up, toys were displayed in the stores from November until December. I remember, oh so well, the bicycles all shiny, red, white and blue that my siblings and I wanted so badly! The most popular one was a Western Flyer. This is the one we begged our Dad for and he said, “I will make you a promise! I will give each of you a red, white and blue balloon.” It is still vivid to this day how disappointed we were about balloons. Two months before Christmas that was the clarion call---three balloons.

Let us remember that there is always a rainbow after the storm. We three children were not too anxious to look under the tree Christmas morning. Yes, there were three balloons. One red, one white, and no blue! My Dad smiled and said, “Santa left a little something on the front porch.” There it was! A red and white Dayton Flyer bicycle with two balloon tires and a blue balloon tied to the handle bar. Needless to say, we were three happy children.

As we remember how good our parents were to us as we were growing up- let us remember the scripture says God gave us the most precious gift we have ever received, His only begotten Son.

*“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 (John 3:16).”*

Today wise men still seek Him. Join us in thanking God for His most precious gift, remembering Jesus is with us and will never leave us.

Blessings on you and yours during this coming year,

Ray and Pearl Goude (2009)

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

1. To God be the glo - ry, great things He hath done, So loved He the world that He
 2. O per - fect re - demp - tion, the pur - chase of blood, To ev - ery be - liev - er the
 3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, And great our re - joic - ing thro'

gave us His Son, Who yield - ed His life an a - tone - ment for sin, And o - pened the
 prom - ise of God; The vil - est of - fend - er who tru - ly be - lieves, That mo - ment from
 Je - sus the Son; But pur - er, and high - er, and great - er will be Our won - der, our

Refrain

Life - gate that all may go in.
 Je - sus a par - don re - ceives. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His
 trans - port, when Je - sus we see.

voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the peo - ple re - joice! O come to the

Fa - ther thro' Je - sus the Son, And give Him the glo - ry, great things He hath done.

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 1* 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 4 6:30-7:30 PM Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

***December 8* Second Sunday of Advent**

9:30 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM –Worship

5:00 PM Angel Tree Deadline For Gifts

2:00 PM CARE Ministry

December 11 6:30-7:30 PM Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

6:00 PM Called Business Meeting

December 14 9:00-12:00 AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal

***December 15* 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 18 6:30-7:30 PM Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

7:30 PM Children's Christmas Party

December 21 7:00-9:00 PM Youth Christmas Party

***December 22* 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 29* 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