

HE WILL BE OUR  
PEACE



GLOUCESTER POINT  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
→ ADVENT ←

2020

*Advent Devotionals:*

*During a year of virus-related challenges and uncertainty, members of Gloucester Point Baptist Church share devotions knowing that only Jesus brings peace.*

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



*"He Will Be Our Peace" Cover Art:*

*©2020, 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, November 29*

*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*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,*

*And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*

*Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

“Advent” gives us the hope of the arrival or coming of our promised Messiah. This year our theme is “He will be our peace.”

Immanuel means “God with us.” Isaiah prophesied 700 years before Jesus’ birth saying, “the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Jesus’ birth fulfilled the prophet’s words. He came to live in Israel and establish His guiding and protecting presence with His people. “Everything was created by Him, and He is the beginning and the end. He was fully God and fully man. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us as the head of the church.

Immanuel gives us hope. After His resurrection from the dead, before Jesus returned to the Father, He made this promise: “I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20. Nothing can ever separate us from God and His love for us in Christ. (Romans 8:35 – 30).

Who would have known that we would have experienced a year like 2020? It has brought sickness, death, loneliness, separation from family and friends, loss of jobs, and security. We cannot depend on the world to bring us hope and peace. As Christians, our hope is in Christ’s promises, and we know that He is our peace. He has given us His birth, death and resurrection to provide us our salvation. We await the day of Jesus’ return to take us to be with Him eternally. We can give hope to the world by sharing Jesus Christ.

Bud and Donna Goude

*Monday, November 30*

*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*

This year is unique to say the least. Not just because of Covid 19, but also, I was fortunate enough to spend some time in Alaska. Plans did not exactly go as expected; however, life is an adventure, is it not? After being laid off at Wildman's, I was blessed to find some work at Gwin's Lodge. I have met some amazing people at the lodge, who have accepted me, and who made me feel like I belonged.

I am also blessed to know that while I was up in Alaska, I was able to send much needed supplies down to some family, and my friends, during the time when everyone seemed to be running out of everything. I am happy that I was able to help as much as I could even when being on the other side of the country. There was a time of uncertainty when Wildman considered shutting down. I had just arrived and had very little funds to come home, I emailed some of my co-workers and a friend had offered to pay for my plane ticket home. I was in shock to say the least. Knowing that I did not have to worry about how to get home was a blessing and it showed that I had friends and people to turn to in time of need. I am blessed to have people like her and others in my life that I could turn to. This experience had allowed my faith to grow and mature. There is light at the end. There is hope. God has a plan even when you think everything is falling apart. He will always be there with arms wide open.

I hope you and your family have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With love,  
Mackenzie Firman

*Tuesday, December 1*

*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*

It has occurred to us that during this time of disunity within our country and dealing with the virus, that we must continue to look to the Lord for our guidance. A review of [Our Daily Bread](#) for December 11, 2014 by Jennifer Benson Schuldt on the passages in Isaiah 11:1-9 are so appropriate and in part, are as follows:

“The Bible speaks of a time in the future when fierce animals will fail to threaten each other or human beings. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb” and “the nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole” (Isaiah 11:6-8). All the inhabitants of the world will experience total harmony and peace.

The Lord will establish this safe environment when He restores the world with His wisdom, might and knowledge. At that time, He will judge the world with righteousness and justice (11:4). And everyone will acknowledge His greatness: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (11:9).

We live in a broken world. Unfairness and discord, fear and pain are a very real part of our daily lives. But one day God will change everything, and “the Son of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” (Mal. 4:2). Then Jesus will rule the world in righteousness.” - by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Don't be fearful dear friends, look to Jesus for peace during these trying times. We are all experiencing a forced distance from our family and friends as we deal with the “virus.” The political environment has caused a great divide in our country and within families. But, all we should do is look to Jesus to calm our fears while also taking the necessary precautions to protect all those we love. As long as we can remember to focus on the knowledge that “the Lord is in charge of it all,” we can deal with anything that comes our way. Be thankful for all the blessings the Lord has given us each and every day!

Buddy and Ann Hogge

*Wednesday, December 2*

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;  
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.*

*I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.*

*You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,*

*I have sworn to David my servant,*

*'I will establish your line forever*

*and make your throne firm through all generations.'"* - Psalm 89:1-4

The heart of Psalm 89 is the question of God's faithfulness. As a royal psalm, the psalm celebrates and explores the relationship between God and David, His anointed one and those that follow in His stead.

God made special promises to David. They are found in 2 Samuel 7:12-17. The important promise is that someone from David's family would always be king. In the psalm, Ethan sings about a problem. God had promised that there would always be a king in David's family. But now there was no Jewish king! The army from Babylon had beaten the Jewish army. They took the Jewish king to Babylon, and the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) became the king of the Jews. How could anyone explain this?

In God's covenant with David, God uses His omnipotence and His omniscience to do good if we follow Christ in the obedience of faith. The most sound truths any Christian can know are that God is all-powerful, all-wise and all for you. Nothing will have a more important impact on your daily decisions concerning your life, knowing that God is working everything together for your good out of sheer grace.

2020 has been a very difficult year for us all! For me personally, I feel as though my life has been turned upside down, but, God has seen me through each day with His love, mercy, and grace.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.

This verse has been my strength and hope. It reminds me that He is still in control. He knows my future, because He has already been there. Even in my darkest days His faithfulness will never fail me. My hope rests on the truth that God's promises will be delivered and His love endures forever.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,  
Barbara Mangrum



Thursday, December 3

*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*

What an amazing prophesy Micah made 600 years before Christ was born! He preached (with Israel), warning Israel and Judah, listing God's goals in Micah 6:8:

*"He has showed you, O man, what is good,  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
And to walk humbly with your God."*

Micah prophesied three key factors in this poetry:

Christ will be born in tiny Bethlehem, He will be the shepherd of His people, and finally, Jesus will be their peace.

Christ is our peace also. During Jesus' last supper with his disciples, he explained this special peace in John 14: 26-27a:

"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

This advent season surrender to God's Holy Peace, to God's Holy Spirit. Our almighty, everlasting Lord is with us all.

Linda Breaks

*Friday, December 4*

“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 days are coming," declares the LORD...

Little did Judah know a colossal judgment was about to be levied on its inhabitants. God finally had enough. He warned them to turn from their evil ways and repent, but they didn't listen. They soon would be brutalized by the armies of Babylon. Some would be killed, some would be led away into exile, but their lives would never be the same. Judah realized its mistake of forsaking God far too late, but there was still a glimmer of hope 600 years in the making.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD...

This statement made by God, through the prophet Jeremiah, invokes a sense of mystery, wonder, and most of all hope. What is coming? *Who* is coming? *Immanuel*, God with us. It took almost 600 years after this statement for God to carry out His perfect plan: to send His own Son into the world to save it. A brighter future came from the most unassuming baby boy born out of the most unusual of circumstances, just as God had planned from the beginning.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD...

So, are the days still coming? Are they yet to come? Have they already passed us? No! They are here right now! The day when the LORD will save His people is happening this very day and every day until Jesus Christ comes again! The hope of the Old Testament Jews and the hope of the people during the days of Jesus is the very same hope we can take hold of today.

What are you waiting for in the days to come? What are you *hoping* for? After a year filled with panic and uncertainty, allow this Advent season to be the reason you hope in Jesus again!

Seth Gandee

*Saturday, December 5*

*“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty. “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. – Malachi 3:1-6*

As we begin to look at these verses, we see that God, through Malachi is answering those who question God’s judgment. During “normal” times we often become preoccupied with ourselves in lieu of trusting God. In times like this we sometimes act as if God is not involved in our daily lives. Thankfully, most of our lives are not lived in crisis--such as COVID19. In times of crisis, everything is important and has meaning, even life itself.

Old Testament prophets, like Isaiah and Malachi, sought to teach God’s people that God was in charge and had a plan for our lives. This plan included John the Baptist to prepare the way for our Savior Jesus Christ.

So what do we do with this information now? God allows times of crisis to come into our lives so that we will rely on Him even more. John the Baptist pointed out that the coming Messiah would restore us to a right relationship with God. God, through Malachi, reminded the Jewish nations that their sins were not pleasing to God, and will be judged.

As we look to the birth of the Messiah (during a time of crisis) let us (in this time of COVID19), be aware that God is still in charge.

May the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, have first place in our hearts as we prepare for and celebrate Jesus’ coming to earth.

Merry Christmas,  
Jimmy & Charlene Diggs

# 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*  
*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*  
*Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. - John 14:27*  
*He is our peace. - Ephesians 2:14*

*Sunday, December 6*

*The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,  
as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" – Mark 1:1-3*

I am always amazed at God's timing in our lives and in the life of His Kingdom. Throughout the Bible you can see very clearly how God was working in the lives of believers. Although they didn't always see God working, we can look back and see His perfect plan. In this scripture, Isaiah is prophesying about a time when John the Baptist will come on the scene to make the way for Jesus Christ to be baptized, preach and change lives. John was special, it says in the Bible that John was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. God had a plan for him to be a messenger, to proclaim the Son of God to all peoples. Like John, we also have a high calling, a purpose and part to play in the Kingdom of God. This year has definitely been a year to remember and maybe a year some would like to forget. But I believe this year has been a year of 20/20 vision. I believe that God is calling us to self-evaluation, to have our eyes opened to His truth. God's timing is not a coincidence. I believe that God is using COVID-19 and issues that divide our country to draw us closer to Him. When we live in anticipation of how God is going to use the situations (good or bad) in our lives, being a Christian becomes exciting.

Like the Israelites, for years I have prayed for direction in my life. Each time, His response was to keep serving and to wait on him. I have to tell you, after a decade of waiting, I was tired of that answer and even questioned whether I was hearing Him correctly. I prayed about selling my house and buying another one, questioned whether I should look for another job and prayed that God would bring the right person into my life. In the midst of this COVID-19 Pandemic, God moved in my life, my prayers started to become a reality and I was at peace.

After almost 4 years of looking, in February, Jay put an offer on a house and it was accepted. Once COVID-19 hit, I lost my job of 16 years and sold my house to get out from under the house payment. At the same time, Jay closed on his house and I was able to move my furniture directly to Bedford. At the end of the summer we got engaged and were married in October. God's timing was perfect! God showed Jay the right house just at the right time and because I wasn't working, God gave me the time to get my house ready to sell. And at the right time, COVID-19 restrictions were lifted we were able to have a wedding. I am so thankful to be able to look back and see God's hand in this whole process.

Maybe you are in a period of waiting and not seeing God's plan for your life, I would encourage you to focus on Jesus and to remember that God's purpose for you is to seek him, to serve him, to be a messenger for Him. Once we take our eyes off the things of this world, we are set free to fulfill our God given purpose. During this Advent Season, I pray that you tune into God's promises, listen to the Holy Spirit's leading and live in anticipation of what God is going to do in your life. By doing this, He becomes our PEACE.

Merry Christmas and God Bless You! Jay and Paige Bond

*Monday, December 7*

*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. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” - Luke 1:13-17*

Like Zechariah have you ever prayed the same prayer over, and over again? Years pass by and you wonder if God is listening. But, then your prayer is answered! A miracle happens!

April 22, 1996, there I was lying in a hospital bed totally numb from the waist down waiting for a diagnosis: “Mrs. Svoboda, you have multiple sclerosis.” My head started to spin. It couldn’t be.

In the above scripture God had every detail laid out for Zechariah and Elizabeth. Even though they were both Godly people do you think they worried? Their child John had a great responsibility ahead of him.

As for my family our lives were sure to change. Life went on according to God’s plan. My daily scripture verse through those tough days and still today:  
Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.

After years of praying for God’s healing, He answered my prayer! God healed me of physical limitations. God used “me” the least unlikely. I am humbled, and undeserving. Currently, I’m dealing with back pain. My neurosurgeon told me I have too many issues going on so there’s really no resolution. I won’t give up, I’ll look up with lifted hands. Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you...

As we enter a season of one of the Greatest miracles, let’s all get on our knees and humbly pray for those that don’t know Christ to hear the good news and invite Him into their hearts this Christmas season. Pray for peace everywhere, a safe vaccine and the list goes on.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray continually,

God hears and answers our prayer in His time, in His way.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding be with you,

Theresa Svoboda

*Tuesday, December 8*

*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*

Imagine that you awoke this morning to another very ordinary day. You turn on the coffeepot, let the dog out, check on the weather, plan for breakfast, and sit down for your morning meditation. Suddenly the phone rings, or there's a knock at the door. The message you receive is earth shattering, perhaps even frightening. You contemplate all the repercussions the message brings to you, and wonder how your life and those with whom you must share this news will be impacted. What does the future hold as a result of this new revelation? You quickly realize that life will never be the same again. How do you go forward from this point on?

Now imagine that you are Mary, a young girl in the ancient world. You awoke this morning to another very ordinary day. You fetch the water for your family, sweep the floor, think of the plans to be made for your upcoming wedding, then pause for your morning meditation. Suddenly a light fills the room, and an angel stands before you, uttering words almost beyond your comprehension! You are fearful, confused and bewildered about the appearance and the message. You contemplate all the repercussions the message brings to you, and wonder how your life and those with whom you must share this news will be impacted. What does the future hold as a result of this new revelation? You quickly realize that life will never be the same again. How do you go forward from this point on? In the verses following today's passage, we see that Mary questioned the angel, but her inquiries came out of faith, not doubt. She responds to the angel that she is God's servant, and she will follow His will

Like Mary, sometimes it takes great turmoil for us to come to a place of submission to God's will, but come to it we must. We can take our lead from Mary's response, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said".

*Prayer: Lord, sometimes you ask me to do a hard thing. May I always count it an honor to be your servant. Lead me to serve with joy and not with fear and doubt. Help me to be a servant of whom you can be proud. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

Betty Jane Duncan

Wednesday, December 9

*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*

This awe-inspiring pronouncement given by the angel Gabriel to Mary has since touched vast multitudes as they have either read it or have heard it proclaimed from God's Word. This passage articulates that the coming One would be great, and unlike any other, He would be called the Son of the Highest! It's also clear that the house of Jacob is being referenced, saying that the fruit of Mary's womb would *reign* over them forever.

Because of His great love, God seeks to touch everyone on a personal level. We were created to have a one-on-One relationship with Him. His Son, Jesus Christ, is calling each and every individual unto Himself. He wants to be Savior and Lord of each one of us. The Scripture says that Jesus will *reign* over the house of Jacob forever. Here's the eternally important question to ask yourself, "Have I decided to trust Jesus as Savior and let Him *reign* upon the throne of my heart as Lord forever?" He's great and greatly to be praised, so let us believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and serve Him wholeheartedly forever!

Have a wonderfully blessed Christmas!  
David and Angie Crummett

*You are children  
of the Most High.*

Psalm 82:6



*Thursday, December 10*

*“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*

Mary’s statement that she hadn’t been with a man gives an opportunity for something spectacular to happen.

Back in Jeremiah 22:30, the prophet placed a curse on any genetic descendant of King Jehoiachin, the second to the last of Judah’s king— that such a one could never prosper while seated on David’s throne.

So if a supposed messiah attempted to use a genetic connection to the last of Judah’s kings to leverage his way to the throned David, he would fall under Jeremiah’s curse, immediately nullifying his claim. Hmm.. that’s a problem.

Yet in the OT, Messianic promises were made to people like Abraham and David. So, what gives??

But what if one who is a virgin married a genetic son of David??

And what if this son of David adopts the little one as his own son??

This would give the little one a legal claim to the throne of David through the power of adoption.

Jesus could rightfully lay claim to be the Messiah seated on David’s throne— while completely bypassing the curse of Jeremiah, because He isn’t a son of King Jehoiachin. God does things that are far beyond spectacular.

Only one thing would need to happen for everything to fall into place perfectly. Joseph, Mary’s beloved, would have to be persuaded to take Mary as his wife and adopt the Little One as his own. But this would be a tough sell....

Tom McElfresh

*Friday, December 11*

*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 first time I heard these verses with understanding, it changed my perspective of the world and our place in it. Here is why:

Mary goes to visit Elizabeth and Zacharias. Mary is pregnant with our Savior, and Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptizer. When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the baby John leaps in her womb and Elizabeth is filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit! She shouts "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

This event fascinates me. Unborn baby John reacts in the presence of Mary and the unborn Savior Jesus! This is such a unique and holy moment that I can't express it adequately.

Psalm 139:13-16 God plans us beforehand and knits us together for His purposes. We are expressions of God's love and plan. Each of us are here at the appointed time and everyone is important to God! Someday in Heaven it will be revealed to us just how we fit into God's weaving.

Christ was Holy in the womb and was already blessing those around Him and it would seem that baby John recognized and leapt for joy in Jesus' and His mother's presence! That may not be the theologians' explanation of the verses here, but it is part of what amazes and blesses me in this passage.

Be sure to realize in this Holy season that you are important to God. He planned you and thought long about you before you were ever born. He put you here for His wonderful purposes and created you for your part in eternity.

Rejoice in our Savior born!

Margaret Sarratori

*Saturday, December 12*

*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*

Three things in the above scripture stood out to me that still apply today, especially this time of year: celebration, tradition, and peace. As we remember past Christmases, memories of our family gatherings and traditions bring us peace and joy, especially Christmas Eve services attended by all 8 of us. Even as our kids grew older, it became a wonderful time for us to spend Christmas Eve with our church family. No matter how busy it became, all of us would gather at church for Christmas Eve service. Thankfully now we share that special time with our kids and their families.

We celebrate the service differently each year, but the message always reflects the peace, love, and joy that the birth of Jesus Christ brings. We will always treasure the memories of holding the lit candles and singing Silent Night. Jesus is the reason for the season and God brings peace to everyone who accepts His Son. Our peace begins with Jesus and will continue forever.

After Christmas Eve service we ride around the neighborhoods and look at the various decorations and lights, pick up some pizza, and celebrate being together, a longtime family tradition.

We will be gathering to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Christmas Eve and hope to see you there.

Have a blessed Christmas,  
Al West

# 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 13*

*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*

Picture it - the hope and joy of a child after so many years, the feelings of joy when John was born but not able to express them.

Finally, after obeying God by naming his child John, Zechariah's chains of silence were broken and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. His joy was so great that he began to prophesy. Do you remember the joy when the Holy Spirit filled your heart? We can have that joy every moment of our lives through Jesus Christ.

I have always enjoyed sitting in the dark and looking at Christmas lights because their beauty and presence becomes more prominent. This year I finally understand why I do this. In Psalms 30:5 David talks of "joy comes in the morning". As I thought about this phrase it became clear to me that it means joy comes in the light. Jesus is the light and source of our joy. Just as the lights dispel the darkness of the room, the light of Jesus dispels the darkness in our lives.

As we celebrate Christmas, I pray that the light and love of Jesus brings joy into your life.

A joyful Christmas to all,  
Martha West

*be filled with the Spirit*

*-Ephesians 5:18*

*Monday, December 14*

*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*

We all need some peace. Some tired folk may even request "peace and quiet" as the Christmas gift they most want!

Especially in the chaos of this year, though, it can be a serious problem if we become overwhelmed by riots, inequality, unrest and politics. Many have lost loved ones, jobs, direction, and worst of all, Hope.

This verse inspires Hope for many of us. Rom 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose".

Besides Hope, we should also find Peace in the fact that the God who ensured the complicated lineage of Christ, filled with very imperfect people, who made mistakes and chose actions that were terribly wrong and sinful, is still in control of the fate of our world, nation and lives.

Some people God used in Christ's lineage were homeless (Ruth), prostitutes (Rahab, and Tamar had to act as one), adulterous (David) and worse. So as we see people in our world doing and acting in ways that shock us, remember; Luke 6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned."

God is in control. His will is steadfast, and He is not surprised by the course of events. His glorious gift of the Savior was delivered right on time that first Christmas day, through many generations of answered promises and "making all things work together for good". We may keep our peace, hope and joy and extend it to others at every occasion as God's hands and voice; for the grace of God continues!

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Mark Boykin

*Tuesday, December 15*

*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*

### A DREAM, AN ANGEL, AND A DECISION

We are all faced with decisions every day. Some are small unimportant decisions such as: what to wear today, what to have for dinner or should I have that second piece of dessert! Others can be life-altering decisions: such as relocating to a different city or changing jobs. Decisions big and small can be a bit overwhelming.

Joseph was faced with a life altering decision. Joseph was known as a good man, a God loving man. Upon learning of Mary's pregnancy before they were married, he was faced with such a decision. Joseph was an honorable man but wasn't sure if he should marry Mary. Matthew 1:19 captures Joseph's agony at this decision. It also points to his integrity and his tenderness. He had made his decision to quietly divorce Mary. It was only then the angel intervenes.

This very often happens in our lives as well. We find ourselves worried about some decision, we find ourselves without clarity. We do what Joseph did- we bring it all to God through His word and wisdom, spending time in prayer, seeking wise counsel and advice from others and using your spirit filled mind and heart.

We use these tools to come to a conclusion and make a decision. Perhaps we are not completely happy with it, but all facts, all the things we know, everything we have examined carefully, all our prayers seem to point one way, therefore, we act.

Ultimately, we need to take responsibility for making the decision that brings peace to our heart. If we make a mistake, it's not the end of the world.

But being true to what God has put on our hearts, is the key to our Peace and Happiness!

With Love and Blessings, Sonya Anthony

Wednesday, December 16

*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*

We can only imagine the whirlwind of emotions that Joseph was feeling. There was probably shock and disbelief when he learned that Mary was with child. He loved Mary and felt a responsibility to protect her from public disgrace, so he felt unsure of what to do next. His devotion to God and God’s laws conflicted with the expectations of man. He was at a low point and feeling hopeless.

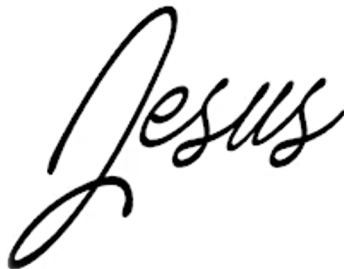
And then—a message of Joy!

Joseph knew the teachings of the prophets. He believed in the coming Messiah. This message from God, delivered to him by an angel through a dream, brought joy and peace. Jesus was coming! He would save His people from their sins. Joseph’s obedience to God’s instruction shows the peace he felt.

As we go forward into the coming year, let us be obedient to God. Following His teachings and looking to Him for help and guidance, instead of following and listening to the confusion and chaos that is in the world around us, will give us true joy and peace.

... they will call Him Immanuel – which means, “God with us”. God is always with us, watching over us and guiding us. He is our peace!

Donna Phillips





*Thursday, 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*

When I read these verses, I empathize with Mary and endeavor to walk a mile in her shoes. At the time of the Census, and with her due date being concurrent with their registering, it is a busy and inconvenient time for the situation she was put in. Mary is only betrothed to Joseph, and she is pregnant with Jesus, God in flesh. What will any of Joseph's family in Bethlehem think? Is Mary thinking, do I want to deal with that right now? Can I deal with that right now? Mary is very near to her due date, traveling to a foreign area possibly stiff, swollen, aching, uncomfortable and sometimes in pain during the long journey. Mary is leaving her safety net of family, friends and possibly midwife. So, whom will assist in her childbirth if needed? Where are they going to stay, reservations weren't made, and hospitals were not around yet for healthcare or childbirth? Mary ends up in a barn, her betrothed, animals and Angels to witness an assist in the birth of our Lord!

Overwhelming to think about so many inconveniences, such a busy time during Census and so many preparations already made for the due date. Trial runs were made and practiced. People were prepared to attend and assist Mary with the birth. Items that would be needed were on hand and ready for use. Certainly, there wasn't a thought that a place to give birth would be a problem as that was already established.

The inconveniences in my life are petty in comparison, to what Mary endured. I am thankful Mary and Joseph both relied on God and God provided what was needed to fulfill His holy scriptures.

Have a relaxed and Merry Christmas with much love,  
Sarah Saunders

*Friday, 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*

The scriptural passage above tells us that the shepherds were in the fields around Bethlehem watching their flocks. Since Bethlehem was close to the temple in Jerusalem, it is most likely the shepherds were watching over sacrificial sheep to be used in the temple ceremonies, protecting them from wild animal attack or theft. These rough uncultured men staying in the fields, guarding the sheep indicates the importance of their jobs and that it was not a seasonal or part-time occupation. This was a year round task and it gives us no real clue to the time (season) of Jesus' birth which we celebrate on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Being accustomed to only moonlight and campfire light, the shepherds were startled and terrified when the angel of the Lord appeared before them in a brilliant light. The angel quickly told them not to be afraid-that he was bringing them good news of a Savior who would bring great joy to all people. This Savior, the long promised Messiah, the Lord, had been born in Bethlehem, the city of David. They would find Him, a baby wrapped snugly in swaddling clothes, lying in an animal-feeding trough (a manger) for a bed.

These simple shepherds believed the angel's good news but God's plan to send the Savior in the helpless form of a human baby was not what the Jewish people expected or accepted. God sent His Son to save all people who were lost in their sinful condition-not to deliver them from the political oppression of Rome. Jesus would be the Messiah or Christ, the "Anointed One", long prophesied as the King. Jesus was Christ the Lord, God's Son in human form.

Bill and Gloria Breeden

*Saturday, 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*

It is very difficult to imagine being a 1<sup>st</sup> century shepherd, to have had no experiences with the grandeur of Heaven, then suddenly to experience the most glorious angel chorus coming down from Heaven. This has to be the most phenomenal marketing job in the history of the world imparted on the shepherds. After this, the shepherds all agreed to find Jesus (talk about inspiring!). What is most ironic is the setting that God chose to reveal his Glory to the humble Shepherds and not the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

I had a co-worker in Cincinnati who switched from Catholicism to Judaism. I asked him why Jews had such a hard time accepting that Jesus is the fulfillment of all prophecy of the Old Testament and that He is the son of Yahweh. He said that it is because of how Jesus came, He was more like another prophet and not like God talking to Moses or igniting the soaked alter with Elijah. God’s favor here rests with the Shepherds, not the Jewish elders or Temple in Jerusalem. I often contemplate if this was also done to set Him apart as a Savior to the world, not just Jewish people. I’m sure King Herod had a part to play here, and the parallel circumstances to baby Moses (Egyptian Pharaoh killing of all Hebrew boys like Herod) are well noted. Moses delivered the Hebrew nation to Israel-Jesus delivered the world.

As we grasp for glimpses and experiences of normalcy in this pandemic, I’d like to share a few classical masterworks that tie into these verses to listen to or watch online. I’ve been blessed watching many of Alyssa’s performances of Handel’s *Messiah*, the most moving and immaculate of which was performed by a small Korean Church in downtown Cincinnati. These masterworks give me peace, a chance to ponder the greatness of the Lord and Heaven, and longing for the days when He will return and rule on high.

- *The Messiah* by Frederick Handel – (choral and vocal)
- *Hallelujah Chorus Bundit Ungrangsee* by Ludwig Von Beethoven – amazing by Mormon Tabernacle Choir
- *Symphony No. 3 in C minor – Organ Symphony, Finale* by Camille Saint Saens – (Organ is like the grandeur of God and Heaven here)
- *Oh Holy Night* by Adolphe Adam – seek the arrangement by the group Pentatonix
- “*O Holy Night*” performed by the New York Symphonic Brass and James D. Wetherald on Organ. December 13, 2015 - Stamford, CT. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRI6FGtzQ64](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRI6FGtzQ64) (turn up the bass)

God Bless and Keep you All,

The Owens Family

# 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 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*

Today begins the final week of Advent, the week with the theme of LOVE. What is love? Is it that little emotion that stirs your heart or is it something more? I believe it is both that emotion that sets our heart in motion and much more. As these verses remind us, we see that faith and love in what they had heard stirred the shepherds to immediately drop what they were doing and go in haste to see for themselves the truth of what had been told to them. Unlike the previous three weeks of Advent where the birth of Christ is anticipated, this scripture shows us that the Savior has been born. Love is represented in the heart of Mary who stored up all that was presented to her by the shepherds who were sent by angels but, most importantly, love is represented in the amazing gift of Christ Jesus. His birth was prophesied, anticipated, and now celebrated.

When I recall the birth of my children, I am reminded of how I knew them even before they were born and how every little movement in the womb stirred my heart. When their long anticipated birth actually came to be, I held them in my arms and my heart rejoiced. Just imagine how Mary must have felt knowing who this baby was and the circumstances of His birth. I think, too, of Joseph and the incredible responsibility he must have felt in being chosen to be the earthly father of the Son of God.

God’s action due to His love for us was to send His Son to save us. Let us, too, put our love into action. This year may not look exactly like previous years since we are in the midst and aftermath of a pandemic but we can still show love to others. There might be someone in your midst who is hurting and needs love at this time. Perhaps, more than ever, this is the time when we can reach out and start new traditions in addition to the old ones. When God created us, He gave us this wonderful capacity to carry love in our hearts in all its expressions. My prayer is that we can each find a way to reach outside of ourselves and what we might want or need to show love to someone else. Let our hearts exemplify the love of God at this special season and, in this way, we find peace.

Blessings in this holy season, Debra Wood

*Monday, December 21*

*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 today's scripture Simeon is described as righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of the Hebrew nation, Israel, by the Messiah (or the Holy Spirit). Simeon was looking for comfort (consolation) from God in the form of our Messiah. The Holy Spirit revealed that he would not die until he had seen Jesus Christ.

Imagine that your death is "standing by" waiting for a promise that was made to you to be fulfilled. Depending on how long it took for this promise, it could be both a blessing and a hardship. But Simeon was faithful in his watchful waiting as he was continuously looking for the revelation. Simeon met Christ as a very small child and was over wrought with emotion at meeting his and mankind's Savior. Simeon told God that he was ready to die and was at peace.

What brings us peace? A new baby, sitting on the beach, a good book, a job well done or any number of other things. But all these things bring only a temporary peace. God's love brings a very deep peace that we will be forever in the arms of our Savior and that is peace that never ends.

I pray that this Christmas season finds us all at peace.

In Christ Jesus, Stewart Wood

*Tuesday, December 22*

*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*

Anna's position was probably a very hard one. She dedicated herself to her Lord and the Temple and encouraged all those who would listen to come in and give thanks if they were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. Anna was not faced with all the trials and tribulations of what we go through in this day and age - and there are very few of us who would take up the mantle that Anna did. I for one, after retiring, chose to be pretty much a couch potato and was willing to let others do "Anna type" work. But after I moved to GPBC, I decided that I was not a slacker after all and chose to be on the Pre-School Board, help with the Hospitality group, sit for Susan when she is absent from the office and do CARE for Bud and Donna in their absence. I am now tutoring a 9 year old (great grandson) in virtual school until they are able to go back full-time. He doesn't attend church but on Friday evenings when he spends the night with me - he sits with me and watches Bud's sermon on our You Tube - he especially likes the prayers and the music. So, in the end I guess I am doing Anna's work after all - although in a different environment. We all have to choose our "temple" to work from I think.

Be safe - Barbara Fryer

*Wednesday, December 23*

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*

WOW...2020...what a year?!? It ushered in a multitude of challenging events. Corona virus, political unrest, economic uncertainty, civil upheaval, record hurricanes, tornados, fires, floods and even killer bees have turned our world upside down. Many are shaken to their core but none of this has taken God by surprise. Jesus said in (Jn. 16:33), "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." What a promise...what a Savior!!!

Believers who have been trusting God's promises have rested in His "peace" that surpasses understanding, and have found a refuge and fortress in our God (Mt. 11:28, Phil. 4:6-7, Ps. 91:2). Rest, peace, refuge... rare commodities in these unprecedented times.

Relying in God's every promise (Prov. 3:5) equips us to soar above the uncertainty of kings and rulers standing against the Lord (Ps. 2:2). As we acknowledge that He is sovereign even when the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the sea (Ps. 46:2Is. 55:8-9, Mt. 6:34) we remain secure in Him.

Believing that God loves us beyond understanding (Eph. 3:19), is in control (Eph. 1:11) and working all things for good (Rom. 8:28) brings contentment even in these chaotic times.

So, I ask that God would strengthen our resolve to keep trusting Him and to give us the courage to share the Good News of Christmas. Jesus incarnate, so that in Him others too will have "peace".

I wish you and yours a "peace" filled Christmas as you trust in the "Babe of the Manger", the author of "peace".

In Awe of Jesus,  
Sharon Warren



## Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24

*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*

As I read the first part of the scripture verse John 1: 9 my heart was filled to the point of almost bursting. I was overwhelmed with the meaning, magnitude and strength of that verse and what it means to us in this day and time. This magnificent event, the birth of our Savior and Lord, brings “light to everyone”!

Earlier in John 1:5, John writes “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it”. There are still many who do not comprehend Jesus, the Light of the World. The good news, though the world remains in darkness- the darkness of sin, despair, sickness, death, and corruption, the TRUE light is given and available to everyone!! Every person has a chance to believe, regardless of whether they failed to comprehend the Light.

It is important that we are not deceived by false light! The TRUE light is starkly contrasted with false messiahs of the past and with those who are predicted in the days preceding His second coming. Jesus, as opposed to any other “luminaries,” is the true and exclusive revelation of God to man”. See Matthew 24, verses 11 and 24.

Do not follow those that claim to be our help in times of darkness! I would suggest that the government is one that falls in this category. We can only count on the TRUE light of Jesus Christ! Rely on the Bible and the teachings of Jesus when making every daily decision. The false light deceives and will lead you to danger. The TRUE light, Jesus Christ, does not deceive, in fact He warns us against danger, and guides us to safety. Christ will not lead us astray, but FALSE teachers will!

When we place our hope in Jesus Christ, when we live our lives according to the Bible, when we acknowledge that He is our Lord and Savior, “He will guide, direct and lead us!

Christ is the TRUE Light and only His Light will dispel the darkness!

We wish you the Merriest of Christmases! Keith and Leslie Belvin

*Dear Heavenly Father, We praise your Holy Name! Thank you, God, for sending your Son to provide light in a very dark world. We pray, as we study and apply your word to our daily lives, that our minds are opened to fully comprehend your LIGHT and will for our lives! AMEN*

# *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*

When I was a young girl, like so many, I dreamt of growing up, getting married and having children. But, God had a different plan for me. Although I didn't have children of my own, He filled my life with grandchildren, nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, even great-great nieces and nephews, friend's children, GPBC children and our girls with AHG. He has blessed me with more children than I could have ever imagined.

(Jeremiah 29:11) "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".

As humans, it's hard to fully comprehend God's infinite love for us. He sends His only son, Jesus Christ in the form of an innocent babe who would eventually die for our sins. God only allows us to know a small portion of His love here on earth, its when we get to heaven that we will know the full extent of His love.

Would you sacrifice your child if God commands? Abraham did without delay...until the angel of the Lord stopped him and a ram was provided for the sacrifice in place of Abraham's son, Isaac (Genesis 22:11-13). God made the ultimate sacrifice, giving up His one and only perfect son, to take the punishment for our sins and give us the opportunity to receive eternal life with Him.

God's plan and love for us is not by chance but was His plan before the beginning of time. It is perfect, unwavering and in His own time. ... *to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority, though Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.* Jude 1:25

Revelation 1:4 Grace and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come... May you be filled with God's love and peace this Christmas Season and in the days ahead.

Lynn Walton

*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/>

<b><i>November 29</i></b>	<b><u>First Sunday of Advent</u></b>	
	11:00 AM	Worship Hanging of the Greens
<i>December 2</i>	6:30-7:30 PM	Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5 <sup>th</sup> )
<b><i>December 6</i></b>	<b><u>Second Sunday of Advent</u></b>	
	11:00 AM	Worship
<i>December 9</i>	6:30-7:30 PM	Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5 <sup>th</sup> )
<b><i>December 13</i></b>	<b><u>Third Sunday of Advent</u></b>	
	11:00 AM	Worship
<i>December 16</i>	6:30-7:30 PM	Children's Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5 <sup>th</sup> )
<b><i>December 20</i></b>	<b><u>Fourth Sunday of Advent</u></b>	
	11:00 AM	Worship Christmas Program – Adult Choir
<b><i>December 24</i></b>	<b><u>Christmas Eve</u></b>	
	5:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service
<b><i>December 27</i></b>	<b><u>Worship</u></b>	
	11:00 AM	Worship

Gloucester Point Baptist Church invites you to join us for worship each Sunday at 11:00 AM. Social distancing measures to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus will be observed. Sunday School is not being held in-person at this time, but online Bible studies are provided each week for your home study. In addition, weekly worship service and mid-week devotional videos are available on the church website <http://www.gloptbaptist.org/>