



**The Coming of Jesus:
from Genesis through Revelation**

Devotionals for Advent and Christmas 2017

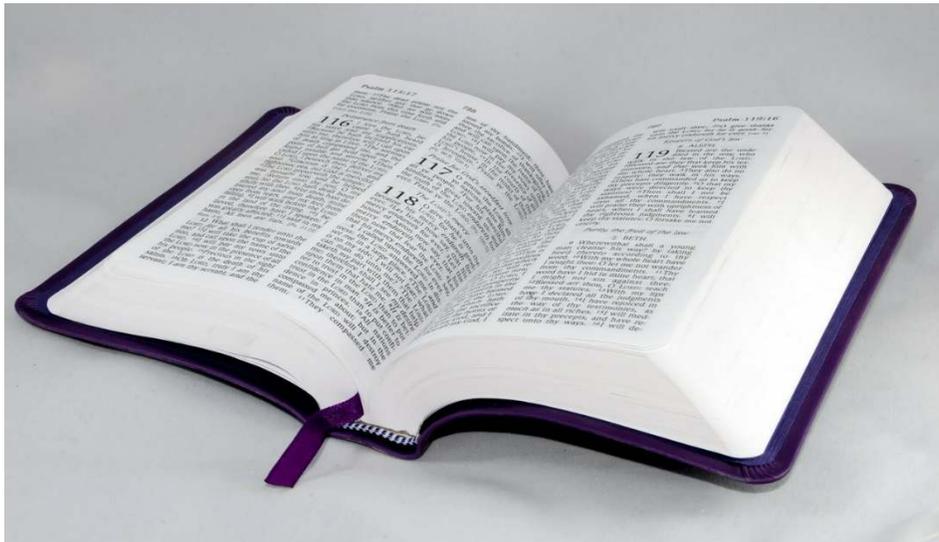
by

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Jesus is the central theme of every book of the Bible. Although thirty-four devotionals cannot cover all sixty-six books of the Bible, these devotionals are based a variety of readings relating to the First and Second Comings of Jesus in both the Old and New Testaments.

The First Sunday in Advent, December 3, 2017

“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

“Speak kindly to Jerusalem;

And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,

That her iniquity has been removed,

That she has received of the Lord’s hand

Double for all her sins.”

A voice is calling,

“Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

“Let every valley be lifted up,

And every mountain and hill be made low;

And let the rough ground become a plain,

And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,

And all flesh will see it together;

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” ~ Isaiah 40:1-5



First Sunday of Advent

Jesus came to earth as a tiny baby more than 2000 years ago, but He will come again in glory as a conquering king to rule the world in all His great majesty and power. We should be preparing a way for Him in our own hearts, and we should be telling everyone we know about Him. So often we hesitate to say anything that might offend someone. It’s better to offend today than for those we love to see His glory only to find they won’t be with Him in His glorious kingdom.

Lord, open my lips to tell everyone I know about Jesus. When He comes in all His glory, let everyone I love be with Him forever and ever in His eternal kingdom. In His name. Amen.

Monday in the First Week in Advent, December 4, 2017

How lovely on the mountains

Are the feet of him who brings good news,

Who announces peace

And brings good news of happiness,

Who announces salvation,

And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

Listen! Your watchmen lift up *their* voices,

They shout joyfully together;

For they will see with their own eyes

When the Lord restores Zion.

Break forth, shout joyfully together,

You waste places of Jerusalem;

For the Lord has comforted His people,

He has redeemed Jerusalem. ~ Isaiah 52:7-9

The feet of him who brings good news are lovely; other translations say beautiful. We usually don't think of feet as being beautiful, and we would be more apt to consider the lips or face of someone bringing good news to be beautiful than their feet. Everything about us is lovely when we share the Good News of the Gospel. Our beauty comes from the message we deliver (and perhaps where we go to deliver it)—not from our own efforts. During this Advent season, let us share not only the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, but also His glorious return.

Lord God, send my feet upon the mountain to take the Good News of our Savior to everyone who needs to hear it. Help me to share directly with those I know and meet and motivate me to support those who go where my feet cannot go. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday in the First Week in Advent, December 5, 2017

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;
And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel." ~ Genesis 3:8-15

God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed. All they had to do was to obey His commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They could eat freely of every kind of fruit, vegetable, grain, and herb—everything except one single tree. Yet when the serpent tempted Eve, she took the fruit and ate and enticed Adam to do the same. Then when God confronted them, they passed the blame—Eve blamed the snake and Adam blamed Eve. Their sin, like our sin today, came from wanting to be like God—wanting to know what God knew. If we are content to be the creations, the beloved servants, of the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, holy God, we avoid sin. But the introduction of sin into the world created the need for a Savior.

Thank You, Lord, that one day Jesus will come again to judge the world. Those who have rejected Him will be cast into the lake of fire, but those who love Him will reign with Him in glory forever and ever. We will no longer be burdened with sin or its consequences but will spend our day praising and worshipping our triune God. Maranatha, Lord Jesus! In His name. Amen.

Wednesday in the First Week in Advent, December 6, 2017

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,

“Do not fear, Abram,

I am a shield to you;

Your reward shall be very great.”

Abram said, “O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. ~ Genesis 15:1-6

Abraham (Abram) was already old when God promised him an heir—an heir that unknown to Abraham would be the beginning of the human lineage of the Savior of the World. He had already decided that his servant would be his heir, but God told him he would have a son of his own body. Abraham took God at His word, even though Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a child by natural means. Abraham knew that God could supernaturally give him a son, and he believed that God would do so. Would we believe something that seemed so preposterous? Abraham did—and God considered Abraham righteous because he believed. God judges us by what we believe. I want to be reckoned righteous because I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the God and the Savior of the world.

Lord, we can never be righteous on our own, but You reckon us righteous by our belief. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ and counted righteous for believing in Him. Thank You, Father God. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday in the First Week in Advent, December 7, 2017

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ The Lord said to me, ‘They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

~ Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Moses predicted a prophet like him thousands of years before Jesus came to earth. This prophet will speak God’s words, and for anyone who will not listen God “will require it of him.” The New International Version says God “will call to account” anyone who does not listen. Other translations say “personally hold responsible” or “personally deal with” or “hold accountable.” Whichever version we read, the bottom line is that we have to answer to God for whether or not we listened to Jesus. The Bible tells us that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Those who wait until it is required, though, will be dealt with in an eternal lake of fire. Those who bow to Him and confess Him now will spend eternity with the Lord.

Lord God, I bow to Jesus and confess that He is Lord of all. He is my personal Savior and Lord, and He is the Lord of the universe. Thank You that those of us who confess Him now will spend eternity with You. In His name. Amen.

Friday in the First Week in Advent, December 8, 2017

I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever;
To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.
For I have said, "Lovingkindness will be built up forever;
In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness."
"I have made a covenant with My chosen;
I have sworn to David My servant,
I will establish your seed forever
And build up your throne to all generations." ~ Psalm 89:1-4

God is always faithful, and what He says He will do, He does. He said He would place the seed of David on the throne forever and ever, and He will. We don't know when that reign will start, but one day Jesus will appear in the clouds to judge the world. Those who don't follow Him will burn forever in the lake of fire, and those who love and serve Him and accept Him as their Lord will reign with Him in the new heaven and the new earth.

Lord, I know You keep Your promises. You are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. What You said will come to pass. I look for the day when Jesus will return. Maranatha, Lord Jesus. Come quickly! Amen.

Saturday in the First Week in Advent, December 9, 2017

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity."
Therefore He will give them up until the time
When she who is in labor has borne a child.
Then the remainder of His brethren
Will return to the sons of Israel. ~ Micah 5:2-3

Long, long before it happened, the Lord shared His plan for the redemption of the world through His prophets. Only God could have orchestrated Jesus being born in Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus thought he came up with the idea of the census, requiring everyone to return to the city of his heritage. Yet God had planned thousands of years before to place Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem at exactly the right time. God wanted Jesus to be born in a nondescript place of little importance, though we would expect the King of the Universe to be born in a luxurious palace.

Lord God, I am amazed at Your incredible planning. You can tell Your people through Your prophets of something to happen millennia in the future, then plant an idea in the mind of an earthly ruler and motivate him to issue a decree. All so Jesus could be born precisely where You wanted Him to be born—a tiny place considered of little worth by worldly standards. I stand in awe of You, Lord, and thank You. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

The Second Sunday in Advent, December 10, 2017



Second Sunday of Advent

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts. “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. ~ Malachi 3:1-6

Those of us who love God long for the day of the Lord, when Jesus will return to earth in triumph to take reign over the whole world. For those who have not been redeemed by the blood of Christ, the day of the Lord will lead to eternal punishment. Now is the time to turn to God and accept the cleansing He offers through the Blood of the Lamb.

Lord, I want to welcome Jesus with joy when He comes again. You never change, You are always just, and You will punish evildoers. Father, forgive me that I am an evildoer. Thank You that Jesus has paid the penalty for me on the cross, and in Your eyes I am pure because of Jesus’s purity. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to live in a manner worthy of my calling. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever, world without end. Amen.

Monday in the Second Week in Advent, December 11, 2017

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. ~ John 1:1-8

This is one of my all-time favorite passages of Scripture. Jesus Himself is the Word—He was with God in the beginning, and He is God. We usually think of God the Father as the Creator, but the entire Trinity created the world and everything in it. Nothing was created apart from Jesus the Son. His beginning wasn’t when He was born in Bethlehem—He has no beginning and no end, just like the Father, just like the Holy Spirit. He is the Light of the World, yet the world doesn’t know Him. The world doesn’t recognize His Light because the world doesn’t even know it’s filled with darkness—especially today, when sin is celebrated and the only thing to be condemned is failure to tolerate diverse sins. The world is a dark place that rejects the Light that can save it.

Lord God, thank You that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. Thank You that You sent Jesus, the Son, into the world to save it. Forgive us for our blindness to His Light. Open our eyes, Lord, and let us see the Light. Let us feel its warmth, and let us seek it out, running from the dark. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday in the Second Week in Advent, December 12, 2017

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. ~ John 1: 9-18

One of my favorite passages of Scripture, this so beautifully describes the glory of God, the Son and the Father. He brought us grace and truth, and He lit the whole world, but the world rejected Him. Jesus shows us God; He is God Incarnate. He came into the world to shine light into dark places, but the world preferred to stay in the dark, away from the light. Those of us who recognize the Light He makes children of God. He chooses us and shines His glory upon us and blankets us in His love. Let us stay in the light of His glory!

Father God, thank You for making us Your children through Your Son Jesus Christ. Let us live in the Light of Christ. In His name. Amen.

Wednesday in the Second Week in Advent, December 13, 2017

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,

Who will prepare Your way;

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

'Make ready the way of the Lord,

Make His paths straight.'" ~ Mark 1:1-3

Centuries before it happened, Isaiah prophesied that John the Baptist would be a messenger going before Jesus to prepare His way. Today we can be messengers preparing the way for Jesus to return in majesty and power and glory. We don't have to wear rough skins and eat locusts, but we do need to proclaim the Gospel to those we come in contact with. We also need to make a pathway for the Lord in our own hearts and lives.

Lord, give me the wisdom to take advantage of every opportunity to share Jesus with those around me. Take away my fear of being ridiculed or rejected and give me courage. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday in the Second Week in Advent, December 14, 2017

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” ~ Luke 1:5-17

Zacharias was a faithful priest who served the Lord blamelessly, yet he was frightened when he saw an angel. Just about everyone who encountered an angel in the Bible was afraid. Usually the first words an angel said when appearing to a prophet or Mary or Joseph were “Fear not.” The sight of an angel must be glorious, and wondering what message the angel is delivering is bound to cause more awe and anxiety. But whatever messages we get from God—through an angel, a voice in our head, a compulsion—will be good. We may be tasked with a difficult responsibility, but the Holy Spirit will empower us to do whatever God gives us to do. We do not fear, but we must be in awe whenever God tells or shows us anything.

Thank You, Lord God, that You speak to us through angels, dreams and visions, thoughts, leadings, and—above all—Your Holy Word. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to believe and obey. I don’t always know or understand Your plan. In my human arrogance, sometimes I wonder why You do things the way You do, but I know that Your way is always best. Your plan is always perfect. Your love is always infinite. I thank You and praise You in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday in the Second Week of Advent, December 15, 2017

Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.” ~ Luke 1:18-29

Even though Zacharias was a priest who loved the Lord, he found it hard to believe what the angel told him. He questioned the possibility of having a child at this stage in his life, in effect, doubting God's ability to do the impossible. How like us! We say we have faith and believe, but when we run into serious trouble, we see no way out. We depend on our own abilities to provide for our needs and we doubt God's plan.

Father God, forgive me for depending on my own power when I am nothing without You. Forgive me for doubting that You can and will solve my problems. Even when the situation is hopeless, You are sovereign. You can work miracles. And if You decide to let me walk through tribulation, I know You are with me, and since Your plan for me is always good, I know You will bring me through my trials and lead me out on the other side. Thank You! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday in the Second Week of Advent, December 16, 2017

Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." ~ Luke 1:39-45

What a great testimony about life in the womb! The baby, John the Baptist, leaped for joy at seeing Mary with Jesus in her womb. He was not a clump of cells or "the product of reproduction" or any of the other names people invent to pretend unborn babies aren't humans. Perhaps not every baby leaps for joy in the womb—after all no baby today has seen the Lord. But every baby is a human being created by God the Father. Every baby is valued and loved by our Lord. Jesus Himself chose to spend time in the womb as an unborn baby because that is how God puts people—and even His Son, who was fully man and fully God—onto this earth.

Father God, as we remember baby Jesus during Advent and Christmas season and throughout the year, let us value Your precious children in the wombs of mothers everywhere. Protect them from those who would take their lives before they've had a chance to live and shower them with Your love. In the name of Jesus Christ, who was fully human in Mary's womb. Amen.



The Third Sunday in Advent, December 17, 2017

And Mary said:

“My soul exalts the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave;

For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

“For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.

“And His mercy is upon generation after generation

Toward those who fear Him.

“He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.

“He has filled the hungry with good things;

And sent away the rich empty-handed.

“He has given help to Israel His servant,

In remembrance of His mercy,

As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home. ~ Luke 1:46-56

Mary praised God in this beautiful song even as she faced the stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. She believed the promises and the prophecies and looked beyond the immediate consequences to God’s plan. She thanked God that He had chosen her to be part of His wonderful plan. None of us will ever be called on to give birth to the Savior of the world, but all are called to be part of God’s unfolding plan. Will we be like Mary, rejoicing in the privilege rather than looking at the hardships? Or will we dread, complain, and look on the negatives rather than rejoicing in the great blessing that God is giving us?

Thank You, Father God, that You call on me to be part of Your great plan. Whether my part is small or large, whether it is easy or hard, I want to embrace the tasks You have called me to and rejoice in the honor of serving You. May it be so, Lord! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Monday in the Third Week in Advent, December 18, 2017

Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.” And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.” And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God. Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill



country of Judea. All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him. ~ Luke 1:57-66

God set aside John to proclaim repentance to God's people and to prepare the way for Jesus's earthly ministry. Even before he was born, God had John's life laid out. We may not be proclaiming God's Word to sinners in the wilderness, but God has His hand on each of us and on life that He creates. Every person is created for a purpose, but each has the choice of whether to follow God's plan or to wander off on our own path. May we all be as faithful as John the Baptist grew up to be!

Lord God, I know that You created me for a purpose, and Your hand is on my life. Forgive me for all the times I wander off Your path and try to run my own life. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to live my life according to Your plan. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Tuesday in the Third Week in Advent, December 19, 2017

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant—
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—
Salvation from our enemies,
And from the hand of all who hate us;
To show mercy toward our fathers,
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,
To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;
To give to His people the knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins,
Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,
To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. ~ Luke 1:67-80

Zacharias recognized that God was fulfilling His long-awaited promise of sending a Savior, and he understood that his own child would be a prophet of the Lord. When John was just a few days old, Zacharias thanked God and praised Him for what would happen when John reached adulthood. He was filled with praise and gratitude for what would happen. Too often, we don't give thanks until after the promise is fulfilled, but if we have faith, we can thank God for what He has promised.

The Coming of Jesus

Thank You, Lord, that Jesus is coming again. Just like the Israelites waiting for the Messiah, we don't know when Jesus will return. I want to be like Zacharias, who gave thanks for the future fulfillment of God's promises. I praise You and thank You that I will rule with Jesus in the New Jerusalem in Your perfect timing. May I be ready when Jesus comes again, no matter when it is. Maranatha, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Wednesday in the Third Week in Advent, December 20, 2017

Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." ~ Isaiah 7:10-14

Just as the angel told Mary that she would bear a child even though she was a virgin, He had told His prophets centuries before. He even gave them the name: Immanuel, which means God with us. Jesus was Immanuel because He was God with us on earth as a human just like us. In the same way, God has told us what will happen in the future: Jesus will come again.

Lord, You tell Your people what will happen, and You have told us that Jesus is coming again. When He ascended into heaven, two angels told His disciples that He would come in the same way—in the clouds. You haven't told us the day or the time—even Jesus doesn't know, so we need to be ready all the time. Keep me from distractions that would keep me from being ready. Help me remember and understand that nothing is as important as being ready—whether You take me at the end of my own life or Jesus comes while I'm still on earth. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday in the Third Week in Advent, December 21, 2017

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God." ~ Luke 1:26-35

When the angel appeared to Mary, she was confused. She knew the prophecies of the Messiah being born of a virgin, but she certainly didn't expect that she would be the virgin to give birth to the Messiah. Yet she didn't question except to ask how that could be. The Jews had been waiting for centuries for the Messiah to arrive, and no one had any reason to expect it at that particular time. Yet Mary didn't doubt the word of the angel.

Lord, may I respond to Your call as Mary did—perhaps confirmation to ensure I heard You right but not questioning Your will. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday in the Third Week in Advent, December 22, 2017

The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. ~ Isaiah 9:2-7

This prophecy was made thousands of years before Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, but God already had it all planned out. Jesus is a great light shining in the darkness. The Israelites thought the Messiah would be a powerful earthly conqueror who would break the yoke of their oppressor and divide the spoils. They couldn't see beyond the immediate earthly realm—they couldn't see the heavenly kingdom that will last forever with Jesus on the throne. When Jesus comes again, He will reign on earth as well as in Heaven, and we will be with Him forever. Maranatha, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Lord God, sometimes I get so focused on the here and now that I don't realize that this earthly existence is only a dot in my eternal lifetime. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to receive the truth of the Second Coming of Jesus and then an eternal kingdom of peace and love. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday in the Third Week in Advent, December 23, 2017

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,

And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist. ~ Isaiah 11:1-5

We usually think of Jesus and His Father as love—and that they are. However, we sometimes forget that justice and righteousness and faithfulness are equally important. It's popular today to think that God is so loving He wouldn't condemn anyone to hell, but His Word says He will "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth." He loves us far beyond what we can imagine, and He gives us every chance to repent and turn to Him. But in the end, His justice will prevail. The evil will be destroyed forever, and those who love Him will rejoice to live with Him in righteousness and justice.

Lord God, forgive me for sometimes forgetting that You are just as well as loving, righteous as well as compassionate. Thank You that those who mistreat others will be punished if they do not repent. Thank You, also, Lord, that if I or anyone repent of my sins, my slate is wiped clean and I am forgiven. Convict me of my sin and lead me to repentance. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 24, 2017



Fourth Sunday of Advent

beginning and the end, past, present, and future.

Thank You, Lord, that I will rejoice when I see Jesus coming in the clouds. I could never earn a place at His side. I am unworthy to be with Him forever. I do not deserve Your grace. Yet all it takes for me or anyone to rule with Him forever is to love Him. And that I do, Lord. Maranatha, come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." ~ Revelation 1:7-8

Every eye will see Him when He comes again. Only His disciples saw Him leave, but everyone—billions of people—will see Him when He returns. Those who have rejected Him will see their fate, and they will mourn, but it will be too late then. Those of us who love Him and follow Him as our Lord will rejoice. He is the Alpha and the Omega—the

Christmas Day, December 25, 2017

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their



sins.” Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.” And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. ~ Matthew 1:18-25

Sometimes I think we don’t give Joseph enough credit for his role in the Incarnation. He had to believe the angel and take Mary for his wife even though they would be subject to public ridicule that Mary was pregnant before they married. He had to parent and protect the baby and then the child even though Jesus was not biologically his. Joseph could have refused to get involved, but instead he believed the angel and from that moment on, he was totally committed to raising the Son of God.

Lord, touch my heart and mind so that I am as willing as Joseph to do whatever You ask of me. Easy or hard, long or short, fun or tedious—whatever You ask of me, I want to respond joyfully in agreement. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Second Day of Christmas, December 26, 2017

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is

Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. ~ Luke 2:1-20

The Christmas story in Luke has become so familiar to us that we may fail to be as amazed as we once were. Imagine a baby born in a stable, His birth announced by angels and the heavenly host to lowly shepherds. God didn't make Jesus known to the rulers, the rich, the elite, but to the lowest class of people in the society. The message of peace on earth was proclaimed not to heads of states but to animal-herders. God orchestrated everything exactly as He wanted it, though far different than we would expect or plan if we were in charge. Praise God that He is sovereign and all-knowing, and the salvation of the world was up to Him and not us!

Thank You, Lord, that You orchestrated everything from inducing a secular ruler to declare a census to the heavenly host appearing to the shepherds. Thank You that You will orchestrate Jesus's return just as meticulously. Maranatha, come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.

The Third Day of Christmas, December 27, 2017

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah;
For out of you shall come forth a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” ~ Matthew 2:1-8

Herod wanted to hold on to his own power, so he used deceit and subterfuge to try to get the magi to reveal Jesus's location to him. He knew enough to find out the prophecies of where the Messiah would be born, but he was arrogant enough to think that he could change the outcome of God's prophecy by his human power. How often we think we are in control of our lives and circumstances, when we can do nothing on our own.

Lord God, so often I want to be in charge and think I know what's best for myself, if not for everyone. Yet, I can do nothing without You. I am totally dependent on Your grace. Open my eyes and ears to see my dependence on You, and open my heart to glory in Your loving plan. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Fourth Day of Christmas, Holy Innocents, December 28, 2017

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she refused to be comforted,

Because they were no more.” ~ Matthew 2:13-18

We’re still celebrating the joy of Christmas, and today we encounter the Holy Innocents, all the two-year-old and younger male children in Bethlehem who were slaughtered by Herod. He was protecting his throne from the One he considered an interloper, and his power was so important to him that he wantonly murdered all the male infants in the small town. It’s hard to imagine being so selfish and cruel, yet something similar happens all the time in our society today. Mothers decide having a child would disrupt their lifestyle, so they kill the baby before the birth. Men put pressure on the women in their lives to “get rid of the problem” of an unwanted pregnancy. Sometimes even the grandparents get involved and advocate for the killing of the precious child, a creation of God. Herod’s murders were pure evil, and so are the murders of unborn babies today.

Father God, open the eyes and hearts of mothers, fathers, and grandparents who are thinking about killing precious babies. Convict them of the evil they want to do and change their hearts. Give life to every child You have formed in the womb, every child You have created, every child You have plans for. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Fifth Day of Christmas, December 29, 2017

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. ~ Titus 2:11-15

Jesus has come. He walked on the earth and lived among and like his fellow Jews in a world ruled by the Romans 2000 years ago. He will come again with glory, and His Word tells us to live sensibly, righteously, and godly now as we wait for His glorious return. May we live the way He wants and look toward His coming with blessed hope.

Lord God, Your timetable is different from our timetable. You have given us 2000+ years to prepare for Jesus's coming, but we don't always live like we're expecting Him any minute. Forgive me, Lord, when I fall, lift me up, and guide me to live in Your will. Fill me with hope and anticipation for that great day when Jesus will appear in the clouds. Maranatha, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! Amen.

The Sixth Day of Christmas, December 30, 2017

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. ~ Hebrews 1:1-4

Jesus is fully God, the heir and Creator, who holds everything in the world by the word of His power. That is beyond our human comprehension, but we can barely see a glimmer of His majesty and glory knowing He is seated at the right hand of the Father. We can look at His life and see what the entire Godhead is like—filled with love, compassion, mercy, truth, and surrounded in glory.

Father God, we can look at Jesus and see You. We can feel the nudging of the Holy Spirit and hear You. We can't comprehend Your power, might, dominion, majesty, and glory, but You have shown it to us in Jesus. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to receive the truth of Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Seventh Day of Christmas, The First Sunday after Christmas, December 31, 2017

Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.'" ~ Zechariah 6:12-13

When He comes again, Jesus will build the temple of the Lord—the new Jerusalem. He will rule in honor and power, a mighty ruler, while remaining our High Priest. Only a member of the Godhead could do that.

Praise Jesus and thank You, Father God, for Your perfect plan. Although sometimes I can't understand how the suffering we go through on earth fits into Your plan, I look forward to the day when Jesus will rule in glory in the New Jerusalem. Maranatha, Lord Jesus! Amen.

The Eighth Day of Christmas. The Circumcision of Christ, January 1, 2018

And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

“Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A Light of revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. ~ Luke 2:21-38

Jesus went through the same rituals that all Jewish babies did: He was named, circumcised, and presented in the Temple. Even though He was fully God, He was also fully human and followed the dictates of His people. What a heavy responsibility Mary and Joseph had to raise the Christ Child as an ordinary Jewish boy and at the same time know He was their Lord and Savior! And I am intrigued by Anna. Widowed after only seven years of marriage, she must have been very young when she started praying full-time in the Temple. Her story really convicts me of my own attitude toward worship. I’m happy to go to church a few times a week for an hour or two at a time. I manage to spend an hour or two every day worshipping God, praying, and reading the Bible on my own. But I can’t imagine spending decades worshipping God nonstop. I have been known to get impatient if a service ran overlong or if my Bible reading takes longer than expected. I want to be more like Anna.

Lord God, I cannot comprehend how Jesus could be fully God and fully man, but I know that to be the case. It is a great mystery of the faith, but if I could understand You, You would not be powerful and almighty Lord that You are. Give me the faith to know the truth even when I can’t understand it. Forgive me for those times I hurry through my devotions or complain because my daily readings are too long. Mold me into a person more like Anna, one who will pray and fast day and night for decades for love of You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Ninth Day of Christmas, January 2, 2018

When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. ~ Luke 2:39-40

Mary and Joseph did everything the Law required. Even though they were raising the Son of God, they still ensured that He was circumcised and that all the other Jewish rules were kept. The grace of God was upon Him as He grew, but that didn't exempt Him from being subject to the same Law and rules as everyone else. How often we think exceptions should be made for us—that we shouldn't have to go through certain things in life. If Jesus had to do it all, then we can expect to also.

Lord, forgive me when I want special treatment, when I think I shouldn't have to do things that are hard. Jesus was God Himself, yet He followed every requirement of His Jewish upbringing. May I joyously accept every requirement placed in my life as He did. In His name. Amen.

The Tenth Day of Christmas, January 3, 2018

O sing to the Lord a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.
The Lord has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the Lord.
Let the sea roar and all it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.
Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy
Before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples with equity. ~ Psalm 98:1-9

We praise God for all He has done and for who He is. Yet we always have to remember that when Jesus comes, He will come in judgment. He will judge the world and the people with justice. How could we stand before the Lord in judgment without being condemned? All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). None is good, no, not one (Romans 3:10). Hallelujah! We are judged not on our own merits but on Jesus's spotless record. All we have to do is proclaim Him our Lord, give Him our hearts, and obey His voice.

Thank You, Lord, that I will be able to stand before You with a clean slate, pure and white, because the blood of Jesus has washed away my sins. When Jesus shed His blood for me, He washed away every sin I have ever
The Coming of Jesus

committed and every sin that I will ever commit in the future. My judge is my advocate and the one who paid the price for my sins. I thank You and praise Your name. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Eleventh Day of Christmas, January 4, 2018

“Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
“For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the Lord will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.
“Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.
“Lift up your eyes round about and see;
They all gather together, they come to you.
Your sons will come from afar,
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.
“Then you will see and be radiant,
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you.
“A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba will come;
They will bring gold and frankincense,
And will bear good news of the praises of the Lord.
“All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,
The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;
They will go up with acceptance on My altar,
And I shall glorify My glorious house.
“Who are these who fly like a cloud
And like the doves to their lattices?
“Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish *will come* first,
To bring your sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,
For the name of the Lord your God,
And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you. ~ Isaiah 60:1-9

The Jews thought the Messiah was coming to free them from their earthly oppressors. But the prophet Isaiah clearly says that when the Light of the World appears, nations and kings will come to worship. They will bring gifts to worship the Lord. That came to pass when the Magi (Wise Men), kings from the east, followed a bright star to worship the baby. It will come to pass when Jesus comes again.

Thank You, Lord, that Jesus came for all who would believe in Him. Thank You that I am one of those from the nations coming to worship the Lord. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Twelfth Day of Christmas, January 5, 2018

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's son.
May he judge Your people with righteousness
And Your afflicted with justice.
Let the mountains bring peace to the people,
And the hills, in righteousness.
May he vindicate the afflicted of the people,
Save the children of the needy
And crush the oppressor.
Let them fear You while the sun *endures*,
And as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
May he come down like rain upon the mown grass,
Like showers that water the earth.
In his days may the righteous flourish,
And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.
May he also rule from sea to sea
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
Let the nomads of the desert bow before him,
And his enemies lick the dust.
Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.
And let all kings bow down before him,
All nations serve him.
For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help,
The afflicted also, and him who has no helper.
He will have compassion on the poor and needy,
And the lives of the needy he will save.
He will rescue their life from oppression and violence,
And their blood will be precious in his sight;
So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him;
And let them pray for him continually;
Let them bless him all day long.
May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains;
Its fruit will wave like *the cedars of Lebanon*;
And may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth.
May his name endure forever;
May his name increase as long as the sun *shines*;
And let *men* bless themselves by him;
Let all nations call him blessed.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.
And blessed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen, and Amen.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. ~ Psalm 72:1-20

David's prayer is a prophecy of Jesus's rule. The whole earth will be filled with His glory. His Kingdom will extend from the earth to the other. He will judge the people righteously. Kings and nations will bring Him gifts and bow before Him. He will rescue the weak and afflicted and needy. Abundance and wonders will flourish, and He will be blessed forever. Of His mercy and compassion, there will be no end.

Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.

The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6, 2018



After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned by

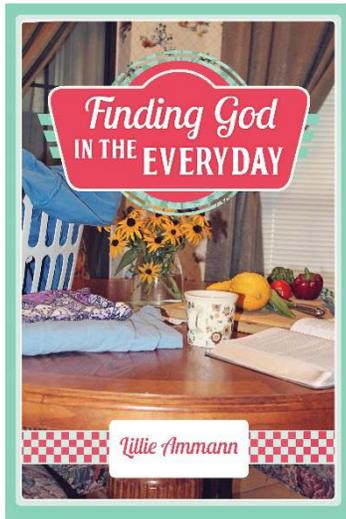
God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way. ~ Matthew 2:9-12

Although there are many traditions about the magi, also known as Wise Men and kings from the east, there isn't a lot about them in the Bible. We sing about "We Three Kings of Orient," but we don't even know if there were three, just that the magi gave three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But as little as we know about them, the Wise Men are incredibly important. We may not know exactly who they were, but we knew who they weren't—they weren't Jews. The visit of the magi—the Epiphany—was the manifestation (the meaning of Epiphany) of Christ to the Gentiles. The Messiah prophecies had been given to the Jews, and so they expected that the Messiah, the Christ, would come to the Jews alone. Instead, God revealed the Christ by a star shining in the east that led men from far off to come worship. Now everyone can be saved!

Thank You, Lord, that You sent Jesus to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. If You had saved only Your Chosen People, I wouldn't be worshipping You and loving You and praising You today. Hallelujah! I am saved by Your grace and mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Finding God in the Everyday

by Lillie Ammann, author of *The Coming of Jesus: From Genesis Through Revelation*



We expect to find God in church and in our private devotions. But have you ever wondered where He is the rest of the time—especially when things go wrong? With humor and poignancy, author Lillie Ammann shares in these ninety devotionals how she finds God in the everyday experiences of her life.

Finding God in the Everyday is available in paperback and ebook formats through online stores or directly from the author.

If you like the smell of cookies in the oven and watching reruns of *The Waltons*, you will love the folksy flavor of *Finding God in the Everyday*. ~ Molly Noble Bull, Christian romance author

Lillie has written a refreshingly insightful book. This book is practical, inspiring, and highly readable. ~ Terry L. Sumerlin, Conference speaker and author, www.terrysumerlin.com

Lillie Ammann shares stories from her life, showing great insight in how God has used these experiences to help her and others grow in their faith. This book will encourage everyone who reads it to look for God's hand in their daily lives. ~ Janet Kaderli, Christian author

I've been privileged to be Lillie Ammann's priest for 13 years. She's like an onion...lots of layers of wonderful experience, wit, humor, and talent. And God has used those layers in her devotional book. Read this and grow in Him Who is our Hope. ~ The Venerable Father CB "Chip" Harper++, Anglican Archdeacon Emeritus of San Antonio, Texas

"Where's God" is a question everyone asks, particularly when life brings heartaches and difficulties. Lillie Amman answers the question by pulling back the curtain, allowing us to see and feel her personal struggles to find God's presence in the good, the bad, and the ugly of daily life. Her message: we too can find God when we stop, look, and listen. Where's God, you ask? He's here with us; we can find Him in our daily life when we look. ~ Ben Ferguson, Adopt-a-Chaplain

You have within your grasp a key to 'Finding God in the Everyday.' The faith and stories shared in these pages are not only inspiring, they are instructive. They are helpful. They are down-home. They are everyday. And they are otherworldly. Read and be blessed. Welcome to the life of knowing God in the miraculous, other-worldly, plain ol' life of every day. ~ Fr. Jerry Sherbourne

The devotional format of Lillie's unique, real-life experiences, followed by Biblical Scripture and closing prayer, is a very effective procedure to help the reader arrive at a sense of ultimate gratitude. ~ Cedric D. Fisher, Publisher, San Antonio's INFLUENCE Magazine

Lillie's ability to view life from a faith perspective encourages her readers to do the same. Stories from her life and Scriptural passages inspire us to rely on God in all circumstances. ~ Jan Kilby, Ph.D., Writing consultant and freelance writer, San Antonio, Texas