



# **The Light of the World**

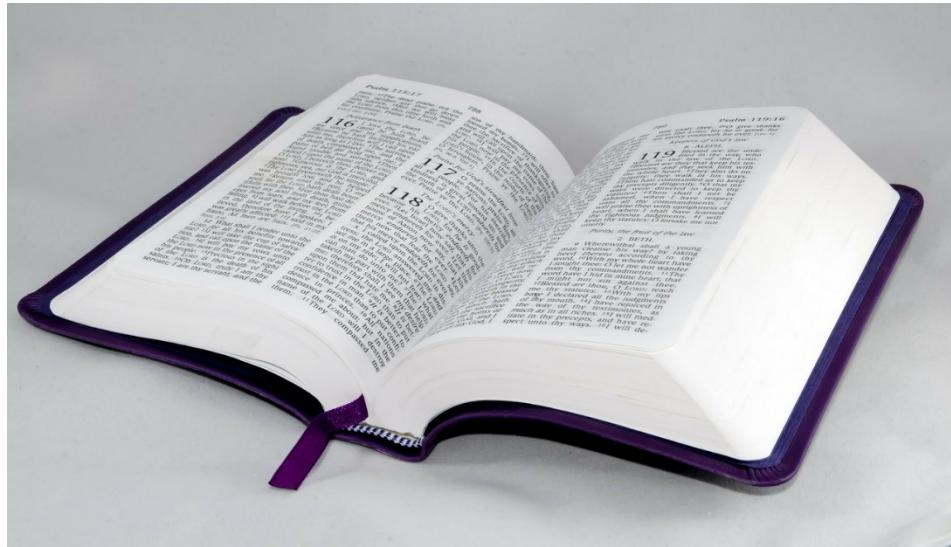
**Devotionals for Advent and Christmas 2018**

**by**

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## The First Sunday in Advent, December 2, 2018

The Mighty One, God the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.  
Our God comes; he does not keep silence;  
before him is a devouring fire,  
around him a mighty tempest.  
He calls to the heavens above  
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:  
"Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"  
The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge! ~ Psalm 50:1-6



Especially as we think about Jesus's coming to earth as a tiny baby at Christmas, we often think of God's love and gentleness, His longsuffering and mercy. Yet He is the Mighty One, the Lord, our judge. Yes, we should think of His goodness and His grace, but we must not forget His judgment and His righteousness. He comes and does not keep silence! Jesus will come again in glory to judge the world. We don't know when, but we must be prepared for that day.

*Lord, thank You for Your love and mercy, Your goodness and grace. Help me to remember that Your judgment and righteousness are just as important. You don't want any to perish, so You give us chance after chance to repent. But someday Your patience will come to an end, and Your judgment will take over. Thank You that You will give me credit for the righteousness of Jesus. In my sinfulness, I could not stand before Your justice, but because I have accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I will not be cast into eternal punishment. Thank You, Father God; help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in Your will. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday in the First Week in Advent, December 3, 2018

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

"Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of

being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the Lord; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it." ~ Ezekiel 36:26-36

God is a just and righteous God, One who is concerned about the glory of His name. Anything God does for us is not because of us—we don't deserve anything. So often we disobey God, we go our own way, we choose evil over good. Yet for the sake of His glory, He will restore the heavens and the earth. When Jesus comes again, we will live in that new Jerusalem, a new Eden. And there will be no doubt who the Lord is. Everyone will recognize that He is the Creator of the Universe, the Ruler of the Cosmos, the King of all nations. We will bow down and worship Him, the One who always does what He says.

*Lord God, thank You that You always do what You say You will do. And You have said that Jesus will come again in glory and that those who love You will live in a new world with You as its King. I look for that day, O Lord, but in the meantime, help me to live righteously in this evil world. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Tuesday in the First Week in Advent, December 4, 2018

Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. ~ Proverbs 23:12, 23

We know it's Advent, not yet Christmas. But all around us, the world is celebrating Christmas—and has been for weeks. Christmas music sounds in our ears, holiday decorations captivate our eyes, shopping and planning occupy our minds. Instead of buying popular toys and flashy clothing, God's Word tells us to buy truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding—the truth about God and His Son, Jesus Christ; wisdom to focus our celebrations on Jesus rather than consumerism; instruction in the coming of Jesus in glory at the end of time; understanding of the eternal and divine.

*Lord God, help me to focus on You during this Advent season. Let me take some time to ignore the chaos associated with the holiday season—shopping, parties, spending, rushing—and focus on Jesus. Let me remember His coming to earth as a tiny baby and look forward to His coming again in glory to judge the world. Fill my heart and mind with You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Wednesday in the First Week in Advent, December 5, 2018

Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops;  
siege is laid against us;  
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel  
on the cheek.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has given birth;  
then the rest of his brothers shall return  
to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth. ~ Micah 5:1-5

God's planning is amazing! These words from the prophet Micah tell of the Messiah's being born in Bethlehem and shepherding His flock in the strength of the Lord so God's people will dwell secure. This prophecy was partially fulfilled when Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem and will be completed when He comes again in glory. It took thousands of years for even the first part to be fulfilled, and I'm sure people questioned and doubted—it seemed like it would never happen. But our timing is not God's, and He is giving men chance after chance after chance to be saved. Pray that all will come to salvation.

*Thank You, Lord, that You give Your people opportunity after opportunity to come to You because You don't want any to perish. I have accepted Jesus as my Savior, so I will be dwelling secure in the new Jerusalem. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Thursday in the First Week in Advent, December 6, 2018**

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,  
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,  
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and over the young of the flock and the herd;  
their life shall be like a watered garden,  
and they shall languish no more.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,  
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy;  
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.  
I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance,  
and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,  
declares the Lord." ~ Jeremiah 31:12-14

The Lord himself tells us of the joy that we will experience in the new earth, after Jesus comes again. We will sing, dance, and rejoice. Instead of sadness, we will have joy. We will have abundance and goodness. So often we think that what we are experiencing today is what we always experience. During the holiday season, many people are sad and depressed because of their circumstances or attitudes. Instead we should recognize that our time in this earthly life is but a tiny speck in our eternal existence. During this Advent season, let us focus on the happy, abundant, good eternity in which we will sing and dance with joy.

*Heavenly Father, too often I fail to have an eternal perspective. I focus on the circumstances in this life and forget that it is minuscule compared to the life that will come later. Those of us who believe in Jesus*

*as our Lord and Savior will never die. We will live forever with You, and we will be filled with joy. Thank You for that promise, Lord. Help me to focus on it and not any momentary sadness I may feel in this life. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Friday in the First Week in Advent, December 7, 2018**

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. ~ Isaiah 9:6-7

Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah was prophesying of the birth of a son who would have the government upon His shoulder. The Jews were looking for a militaristic Messiah who would free the people from their Roman oppressors. They expected Him to carry the earthly government upon His shoulders and rule on earth from the throne of David. But the Kingdom of God is far greater than a worldly government. Jesus will reign in the new earth for an eternity of peace, justice, and righteousness. His Kingdom is so different from what the Jewish people were accustomed to—and so different from what we today are used to—that we can't imagine how it will really be. No pain, no sorrow, no tears—everyone united in love under the rule of Jesus Christ, with no need for a temple because God will dwell among us.

*Lord God, I can't even begin to imagine what Your Kingdom will be like in the new earth. Guide me in Your way, Lord, so that, when the time comes, I will be with You in glory. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Saturday in the First Week in Advent, December 8, 2018**

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.'

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ~ Matthew 3:1-6

John the Baptist prepared the way of Jesus by calling people to repentance and baptizing them. No one knows when Jesus will come again. He told us not even He knows—only the Father knows the day and

time Jesus will appear in glory. Even though we don't know when it will happen, we can know for sure that Jesus is coming. Each of us needs to prepare the way for Him in our own hearts and tell others about Him. We can be John the Baptist for the second coming.

*Lord God, I want to prepare the way for Jesus to come again in my own heart and in the world around me. Show me who around me needs to know Jesus and give me the wisdom and the courage to tell them. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Second Sunday in Advent, December 9, 2018



"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderer and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ~ Revelation 22:12-20

All are invited to join Jesus in His Kingdom when He comes again, but only those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb can accept the invitation. All it takes is to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior to have His righteousness imputed to us. We can never merit eternal life with Jesus in our own righteousness—our very best is filthy rags compared to God's holiness. But He will see us as pure and clean if we lean on Jesus.

*Almighty God, I can never get to Heaven by my own actions. Even when I'm doing the best I can, I fall far short of Your standards. Thank You that you see me as pure and holy because Jesus is pure and holy, and I am His. In His name I pray. Amen.*

**Monday in the Second Week in Advent, December 10, 2018**

Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner,  
but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.

Do they not go astray who devise evil?

Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness. ~ Proverbs 14:21-22

We cannot depend on our own actions to get to Heaven—our righteousness comes from our faith in Jesus. However, if we love Him and trust Him, we will behave more generously and lovingly. Our love for Jesus will be reflected in our love for others, and our love for others will be reflected in the way we treat them.

*Lord God, I love Jesus and that results in my loving others. Help me to be generous and caring—to notice the needs of those around me and to do something to fill those needs. Mold me into a person who reflects the love of Jesus in the way I treat others. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Tuesday in the Second Week in Advent, December 11, 2018**

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ~ Galatians 4:4-7

We are children of God and co-heirs with Christ. We can call on God as “Daddy.” Sometimes we forget how amazing that is. Do we take for granted that we are heirs of the Kingdom of the Son, sons and daughters of the Creator and Ruler of the Universe? Do we forget that God is our Father and Jesus is our Brother and our Savior? Advent is a good time to remind ourselves of the incredible love that the Lord has for us and the amazing relationship we can have with Him.

*Lord God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—thank You for the great love You have for me. Open my eyes and heart and mind to how amazing it is that I can call the Father Daddy, that Jesus died for my salvation, and that the Holy Spirit lives within me. Give me the wisdom and courage to tell others that they, too, can have a personal relationship with the Savior of the World; they, too, can be co-heirs with Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Wednesday in the Second Week in Advent, December 12, 2018**

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ~ John 1:9-13

Jesus is the Light of the World. He shines so brightly that it's hard to understand how everyone doesn't see and recognize the Light. But so many don't. They either close their eyes and stay in the dark or they decide the light is something other than what it is—the Son of God and our salvation. If we receive Him, however, if we believe in Him and follow His Light, we are His brothers, children of God. May we keep our eyes open to see and our hearts open to receive the Light of the World!

*Father God, You sent Jesus as the Light of the World to lead us to You. And when we follow Him, loving Him and You with our whole hearts, minds, and souls, You adopt us as Your precious children. Open my eyes to see and my heart to receive Jesus, the Light of the World. In His name I pray. Amen.*

### **Thursday in the Second Week in Advent, December 13, 2018**

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.  
The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fatted calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea. ~ Isaiah 11:1-9

Jesus will bring peace—the wolf will live with the lamb and leopard will lie down with the young goat. But Jesus is also righteous—He will “strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.” Often, we remember that Jesus is love, but we may forget that He is also righteous and faithful. He decides disputes and punishes the wicked. And what keeps us from being among the wicked? Loving Jesus and accepting Him as our Lord and Savior.

*Lord, I am a sinner and worthy of being killed by the breath of Jesus' lips with all the wicked. Yet You have counted me as righteous because of my faith. Thank You! Instead of the eternal judgment that I deserve, I can look forward to eternity with You because of Your mercy and grace. Give me a grateful heart and lead me in Your ways. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Friday in the Second Week in Advent, December 14, 2018**

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." ~ John 3:16-21

John 3:16 is probably the best-known Bible verse. Most Christians can recite it from memory, even if they haven't learned any other Scripture. It's extremely important because it demonstrates the magnitude of God's love and the amazing gift He gave us in Jesus. But the rest of this passage is also critically important. It reminds us that while anyone who believes in Jesus will not be condemned, anyone who does not believe is condemned already. The wicked love the darkness of sin and evil rather than the light of Jesus' love because they don't want their evil exposed. They want to stay hidden in the dark, but they do so at the cost of their eternal life.

*Lord God, shine the Light of Jesus on me and show the righteousness that I have because of Jesus. Thank You for love, salvation, and eternal life! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Saturday in the Second Week in Advent, December 15, 2018**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." ~ Revelation 21:1-8

After Jesus comes again—and the events prescribed for the end times take place, God will give us a new heaven and a new earth. His people will be with Him in eternal joy, but those who did not accept Jesus will be consigned to eternal punishment. Some people say God is loving and would never let any of His creation burn in the lake of fire, but that's not what His Word tells us. Yes, He is loving. Yes, He desires that all come to salvation. Yes, He wants all of us with Him in eternity in the new heaven and the new earth. And yes, He gives us chance after chance after chance. But one day all the second chances will end. We will have made our choice for the final time. God is loving, but He is also just and righteous. He

gives us every opportunity to come to salvation, but if we choose evil instead of God, we have consigned ourselves to the lake of fire.

*Thank You, Lord, that You give us chance after chance after chance. However, we know that one day we will have made our eternal choice. It will be too late to turn to Jesus. I choose Him today, Lord. I want to be with You and Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth. I choose salvation and eternal joy. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### The Third Sunday in Advent, December 16, 2018

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;  
it shall blossom abundantly  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who have an anxious heart,  
“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God  
will come with vengeance,  
with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then shall the lame man leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

For waters break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

And a highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;  
the unclean shall not pass over it.  
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;  
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return



and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain gladness and joy,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. ~ Isaiah 35:1-10

In this life, we have tribulation—Jesus told us that would be the case, and just about everyone can attest to it in their own life. But the day will come when we will have everlasting joy with no more sorrow. Jesus will come again with vengeance to judge the world, and He will bring his recompense with Him. Those who love and accept Him as their Lord and Savior will spend eternity in joy with the Lord; those who rejected Jesus will go to everlasting punishment. That should motivate us to do all we can to lead those we love to Christ. If we want to spend forever with them, they must believe. If they don't know Jesus, we must tell them.

*Lord God, You are a just and righteous God, and You will reward those who love You and punish those who reject You. Show me who needs to know You, give me the words to say, and touch their hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Monday in the Third Week of Advent, December 17, 2018**

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. ~ John 8:12-20

Imagine walking with Jesus during His earthly lifetime. Would we have recognized Him as the Light of the World? Would we have accepted Him as the Son of God? Would we believe His testimony and the testimony of the Father? Or would we be like the Pharisees, who didn't believe Him because He didn't fit their ideas of what the Savior should be. They were so self-righteous that they condemned the Lord as a liar and a fake. I would like to think that I would have recognized Jesus in His earthly form, but since I wasn't on earth then, I'm so thankful that we have the testimony of the Holy Scripture. I believe.

*Thank You, Lord God, for giving us Your Holy Word to bear witness to Jesus as the Savior of the World. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Tuesday in the Third Week in Advent, December 18, 2018**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And 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 call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. ~ Luke 1:26-38

Every time I read this passage or think about the story, I marvel at Mary. She was a teenager betrothed but not married. When the angel told her she was going to have a baby, she simply accepted it. She asked *how* it would happen, but she didn't hesitate. She must have known that she and Joseph would be the subject of gossip in the community—and she ran the risk of being stoned. Joseph knew the baby wasn't his, so he could have rejected her. An unmarried mother in that time and place would have no way to support a child. Yet Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

*Lord God, what an amazing act of faith on the part of Mary! She didn't question, doubt, or complain—she simply accepted God's will. Please give me that kind of faith. Let me always respond to Your will that I am Your servant; let Your will be done. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Wednesday in the Third Week in Advent, December 19, 2018**

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." ~ Mark 16:15-16

We look forward to Jesus coming again, but we need to recognize that we have a job to do in the meantime. Jesus Himself told us to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel." Elsewhere in Scripture, we read that before Jesus returns, God is allowing time for everyone to be saved. But to be saved, they must know the Gospel. And those who don't know the Gospel are dependent on those of us who know about Jesus to tell them. We don't personally have to go "into all the world." We can proclaim the Gospel much closer to home—to unsaved family members and neighbors. And we can support those who do go out into the far corners of the world as missionaries with our prayers and financial support.

*Lord, give me a passion for the unsaved. Empower me to share the Gospel with anyone I encounter who doesn't know You, and motivate me to pray for and financially support the people who share Your Gospel with the unreached. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Thursday in the Third Week in Advent, December 20, 2018**

But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we

proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ~ Romans 10:6-17

Jesus saves everyone who believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth. If we're blessed to have been raised in a Christian home, we may take it for granted. However, there are many people around the world and right in our own neighborhoods that don't know the Lord. They can't come to faith unless they hear the word of Christ. Today Jesus is appearing in dreams and visions—a large percentage of Muslims who come to faith in Christ do so because of a dream or vision. But that doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to spread the Word—to those close to us and those far away. We may not be called to be missionaries, but we are called to share Jesus with those we come in contact with. We are called to support missionaries who go into places we don't go.

*Lord God, give me the wisdom to know what to say to unbelievers and the courage to say it. Give me a desire to pray for and support ministries who spread Your Word—here in my own community and around the world. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Friday in the Third Week in Advent, December 21, 2018**

Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
 Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
 If I take the wings of the morning  
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
 even there your hand shall lead me,  
 and your right hand shall hold me.  
 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
 and the light about me be night,"  
 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
 the night is bright as the day,  
 for darkness is as light with you. ~ Psalm 139:7-12

If we had an earth-shaking announcement to make, most of us would make it in the bright midday or in a room lit by lots of artificial light. But when God announced the birth of Jesus, He did it at night. The dark sky lit up like day, and the shepherds saw and heard the heavenly choir that told them the Savior had been born.

*Lord God, I see night as dark and sometimes scary. Yet to You, night is as bright as day. You lit up the sky on the night of Jesus's birth so it was as bright as day to the shepherds. Lighten my darkness—not only*

*the darkness of the night, but more importantly, the darkness of sin, doubt, and fear. Let me see Your love clearly. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### Saturday in the Third Week in Advent, December 22, 2018

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." ...

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. ~ Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus will come again to judge the world, and His angels will gather from His Kingdom all those "bad seeds" that the enemy has sown in God's Kingdom. Just belonging to a church and calling ourselves "Christian" will not keep us from being gathered by the angels and thrown into the fiery furnace. Only those who truly love Jesus and accept Him as our Lord and Savior will be saved. That means we must really believe what He says. Today, there are far too many people in churches who call good evil and evil good, who claim that because God is love, everyone will go to Heaven. Jesus Himself told us that is not the case. Being in a church and claiming to be Christian doesn't save us—only faith in Jesus Christ will do that.

*Father God, thank You for sending Jesus into the world to save sinners. Open the eyes of anyone who is deluded and just going through the motions. Search my heart, Lord, and ensure that my faith is pure and true. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 23, 2018



You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

I had read and heard this passage many times before I realized the significance of the words “You are the light of the world.” In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” If we follow Jesus, He shares His Light with us for us to share with others. Sinner that I am, I reflect the Light of the World—Jesus Himself. Of course, my light will be always be a pale pinprick compared to the glorious Light of Jesus, but how amazing to be able to reflect a little of His Light to a dark, dark world.

*Lord God, thank You that I and all Your followers are the light of the world, reflecting our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the true Light of the World. Let my light shine ever brighter as I grow closer to You and more like Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.*

## Christmas Eve, December 24, 2018

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. ~ Matthew 1:18-25

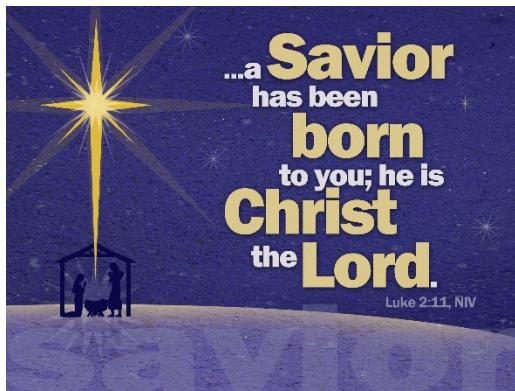
Mary’s faith was amazing—when the angel told her she, a young virgin, would become pregnant, she didn’t look upon all the problems. She accepted the Lord’s will without hesitation—and so did Joseph. When he learned that Mary was pregnant, knowing that he wasn’t the father, he was going to divorce



her quietly when he could have had her stoned. But when the angel appeared to him in a dream, Joseph believed the angel and followed the instructions to take Mary as his wife. He willingly took on the responsibility for a child that wasn't his, and he accepted whatever repercussions happened for his betrothed becoming pregnant before their marriage. Both Mary and Joseph showed incredible faith.

*Father God, thank You for the examples of Mary and Joseph, who each took on responsibilities and situations that were not of their choosing but were Your will. Give me the faith and the courage to take on whatever responsibilities and situations You have for me with the same faithfulness. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### Christmas Day, December 25, 2018



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. ~ Luke 2:1-7

The Christmas story is so familiar that we must be careful not to take it for granted. Really think about it—Jesus was born in a stable! Not a modern barn with electric lights and protection from the elements and comfortable individual stalls for pampered animals. No, the stable of Jesus' birth was more likely a cave or a very crude structure with little protection from the cold and wind. It was dark and smelly and possibly crowded with dirty animals. Instead of a beautiful crib in a newly painted and decorated nursery, Jesus was laid in a rough container for animal feed. The Creator of the Universe, the king of kings, God of gods, Lord of lords gave up His glory and power in Heaven to become a tiny baby in the roughest and crudest circumstances imaginable. He did it for us—to save us from our sins!

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth to save me from my sins. Impress me to the magnitude of Your sacrifice and Your love. Give me a grateful heart and unwavering trust. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

### The Second Day of Christmas, December 26, 2018

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 2:8-20

God could have chosen anyone to notify of Jesus’ birth with an angelic choir. But He didn’t choose kings or religious leaders or rich people. Instead, He chose the lowliest of people in Judea—the men who lived out of doors caring for sheep, often considered the dirtiest, smelliest, and stupidest of animals. Jesus was born and died for those same lowly shepherds—and for us, no matter who we are.

*Thank You, Lord God, that Jesus came to the lowliest and poorest among us—that He came for the most sinful. He came for those of us who need a Savior. Everyone needs a Savior, but not everyone is humble enough to recognize and admit. I know I am a sinner. I know I am totally helpless on my own. I recognize my need for a Savior, and I thank You for sending Jesus to save me. In His name, I pray. Amen.*

### **The Third Day of Christmas, December 27, 2018**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ~ 1 John 1:5-9

Jesus came at Christmas, but He came to die. He would grow up and begin His ministry, and after only three years, He would give His life for us on the cross. He came because we are sinners, and He is faithful to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness. That tiny baby born in a stable is the King of all Creation and our Redeemer.

*Lord, I am a sinner, utterly dependent on the sacrifice of Jesus for my redemption. Thank You that He came to earth at Christmas, and thank You, thank You, thank You that He died and rose again to give me eternal life. I confess my many sins and transgressions and look for forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **The Fourth Day of Christmas (Holy Innocents), December 28, 2018**

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.” ~ Luke 2:16-18

Herod was so threatened by the idea of another King of the Jews that he had innocent babies killed. Every boy two years old and younger was viciously murdered to eliminate any competition to Herod. It's hard to imagine evil of that magnitude born of selfishness and pride. Yet something similar happens thousands of times a day today—mothers and fathers and grandparents kill unborn babies for the crime of being inconvenient. We may not participate in the killing ourselves, but as part of this country, we allow it to happen. And we allow other children to die from abuse or starvation because it's more important to us to satisfy our own fleshly desires. We see terrible pictures of children in need and turn away, whether from lack of caring or from feeling overwhelmed.

*Father, forgive me! I put my own desires above the lives of Your innocent children—individuals created by You in Your image. Open my eyes and heart to see the needs and put others first. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **The Fifth Day of Christmas, December 29, 2018**

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. ~ John 1:14-18

Jesus is the Word, filled with grace and glory. Yet He gave up His glory and power in Heaven to come to earth as a tiny baby. Even as a tiny human baby, He was filled with grace and glory because He was still fully God, still the deity. From Him, we have received grace. He has forgiven our sins and given us eternal life.

*Lord Jesus, even as a tiny infant lying in a manger, You were the Son of the Father, filled with glory and grace. The angels glorified You. The shepherds worshiped You. I glorify You and worship You. Lead me to live my life for You. In Your name. Amen.*

### **The Sixth Day of Christmas, December 30, 2018**

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore they are before the throne of God,  
 and serve him day and night in his temple;  
 and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.  
 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
 the sun shall not strike them,  
 nor any scorching heat.  
 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
 and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
 and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” ~ Revelation 7:9-17

Christmas ultimately leads to the saints gathered in Heaven in white robes washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Jesus was born to become a sacrifice so we can have eternal life. We will stand before the throne of God, and we will never again hunger or thirst or be burned by the sun. God Himself will wipe away our tears, and Jesus Himself will shepherd us and lead us to springs of living water. Caught up in the celebrations of the newborn Babe, let us not forget the culmination of Jesus' birth—His death and resurrection and our salvation and eternal life.

*Thank You, Lord, that one day I will be in Heaven with You, free of all pain and sorrow and anxiety and the cares of this world. Give me endurance for this life and gratitude for the one to come. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### The Seventh Day of Christmas, December 31, 2018

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ~ Galatians 3:28-4:7

The coming of Jesus made it possible for us to be heirs of God through adoption. We are redeemed when we proclaim our faith in Jesus as our Savior. Recently, someone asked a question in Sunday School: Are all the people who have never heard of Jesus going to Hell because they haven't accepted Him as their Savior? The answer was that we leave that to God's grace and can't presume to make that decision. But what we must do is to share Jesus with everyone so no one will go to Hell because we didn't tell them how to be saved. If we tell them and they reject Jesus, they have made a choice. But it would be terrible if they never learned about Jesus because we didn't share with them.

*Lord God, help me to tell everyone I know about Jesus and to support missionaries who tell people far away about Him. You are giving the world lots of time for Christians to go into all the world telling people*

*about Jesus and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Help me to do my part. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.*

### **The Eighth Day of Christmas (The Circumcision of Christ), January 1, 2019**

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.”

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 2:21-24, 39-40

Even though Jesus is the Lord, His earthly parents followed everything that was required of them as faithful Jews. Jesus was named and circumcised on the eighth day, fully obedient. Circumcision to the Jews, like baptism for Christians, brings the person into the family of God. Jesus did not need to do anything—after all, He is God, but He did everything that was required on our behalf.

*Thank You, Lord, that Jesus was obedient to the Law on my behalf and that He has given me eternal life. Make me obedient to Your will. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **The Ninth Day of Christmas, January 2, 2019**

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 2:25-38

Simeon was privileged to see Jesus when His parents took Him to the temple on the eighth day. Simeon had been promised by God that he would see the Messiah, and he immediately recognized Jesus as the Savior. It's interesting to note that Simeon knew that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles. Traditionally, the Jews expected Jesus to be the Savior of the Jews—God's people—only. With Jesus, God's people expanded from only the people of Israel to everyone who accepts Jesus. The prophetess Anna also recognized Jesus. Both Simeon and Anna were faithful and righteous people. Anna had prayed and fasted in the temple for many decades. I so admire that—sometimes I find it difficult to pray for an hour.

*Thank You, Lord, for the examples set by Simeon and Anna. They were faithful and righteous, and I want to be like them. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### The Tenth Day of Christmas, January 3, 2019

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;  
incline your ear to me; hear my words.

Wondrously show your steadfast love,  
O Savior of those who seek refuge  
from their adversaries at your right hand.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings,  
from the wicked who do me violence,  
my deadly enemies who surround me.

They close their hearts to pity;  
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

They have now surrounded our steps;  
they set their eyes to cast us to the ground.

He is like a lion eager to tear,  
as a young lion lurking in ambush.

Arise, O Lord! Confront him, subdue him!  
Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword,  
from men by your hand, O Lord,  
from men of the world whose portion is in this life. ~ Psalm 17:6-14

The Lord is our refuge who delivers us from danger. He hides us under the shadow of His wings—like a mother hen protects her chicks under her wings to protect them from danger. He shows His wondrous, steadfast love in many ways, but most of all in sending His Son to save us from our sins. There is no danger we face that has everlasting ramifications like our own sinfulness.

*Thank You, Lord, that You save us from eternal damnation through Your Son Jesus, who came to save us from our sins. I get fearful of physical danger and of hurt and emotional pain, but these are temporary. The only thing that can harm me forever is turning away from the salvation that comes from faith in Christ Jesus. Keep me grateful and faithful. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

## The Eleventh Day of Christmas, January 4, 2019

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

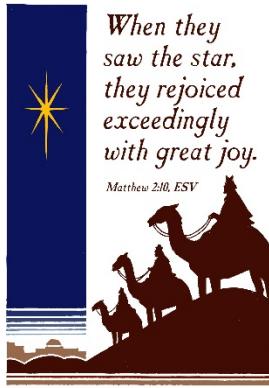
"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ~ John 14:15-21

God loves us and will forgive our sins when we repent. However, He doesn't expect us to walk in sin—He expects us to follow His commandments. We can't do that on our own, but God sent the Holy Spirit to live within us and be with us forever. He guides us in the way of truth of righteousness. Yes, we will always continue to sin in this earthly life, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will not live a sinful and rebellious life. We will sin but not walk in continuous sin.

*Thank You, Father, for sending the Holy Spirit to guide me in Your ways. Forgive me when I sin and continue to lead me in the paths of righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Twelfth Day of Christmas (Eve of the Epiphany), January 5, 2019

"For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And



*When they  
saw the star,  
they rejoiced  
exceedingly  
with great joy.*

*Matthew 2:10, ESV*

they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth

that I make

shall remain before me, says the Lord,

so shall your offspring and your name remain.

From new moon to new moon,

and from Sabbath to Sabbath,

all flesh shall come to worship before me,

declares the Lord. ~ Isaiah 66:18-23

God told His people that people of all nations and tongues would see His glory, everyone would worship Him. The Jews thought the promises of God were for them—His people—alone. But in the Epiphany, the coming of the Wise Men, God showed that His salvation was for everyone.

*Thank You, Lord, that You manifested Christ to the world, not just to a select group of people. The Wise Men reflected people of other nations and other tongues. You led them to Jesus by Your star, opening*

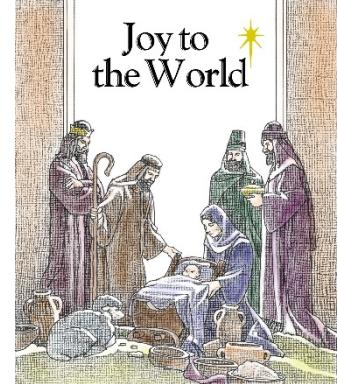
*Your love, grace, mercy, and salvation to me and everyone who will accept it. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6, 2019

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. ~ Matthew 2:1-12

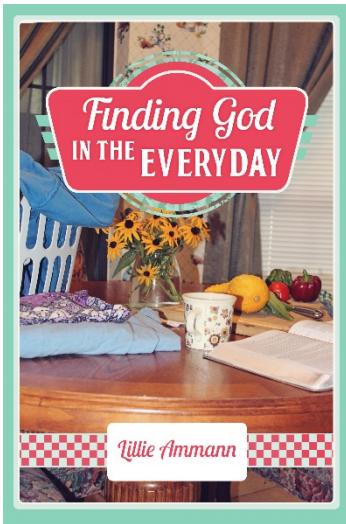


Wise men from the East saw an amazing star in the sky and knew that the King of the Jews had been born. God revealed to them that this King was more than the royal leader of one small nation. Otherwise, they wouldn't have traveled from the East to find Him and bring Him gifts. Somehow, they knew this infant was worthy of their time to travel a very long distance and their treasures in their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Somehow, they knew this was their King, too. Just as He is our King today and throughout eternity.

*Lord God, how You have blessed us by making us part of Your Kingdom—and even more, part of Your family. You revealed the birth of Jesus to humble Jewish shepherds and to wise men from far away. Jesus is still King to people throughout the earth. I and all who trust in Him will spend eternity with You in Heaven because Jesus came to save us from our sins. Thank You! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## ***Finding God in the Everyday***

by Lillie Ammann, author of **The Light of the World**



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](http://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