



THE *Light* IS COMING



*As we enter into Advent, most of us can't help but admit that all is not right with the world. Whether the "not right" is our internal emotions, relational world, churches, neighborhoods or the wider world — most people cannot help but feel that unsettled feeling that something is not right from time-to-time, if not most of the time. We feel grief, and protest and longing as we engage this broken world and face our broken selves. And, as we engage with the story of Advent, we can see ourselves in the people who longed for the coming Messiah.*

*We find ourselves standing next to Mary – uneasy with her mysteriously growing belly. We find ourselves standing next to the Elizabeth – receiving Mary's words of prophetic protest as their unborn children recognize each other. We find ourselves standing next to the magi – tuning into their gut feeling and detouring around Herod on the way home.*

*We hope these devotionals, help you take a step to engage in Advent even if things are falling to pieces. Wait with us here. Even in the darkness.*

***The Light himself is coming.***

# DAY 1

Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 122, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew

Meditate on Psalm 122:1-2, “I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’ Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.” (New International Version)

I find myself rejoicing at the very notion of starting Advent this year. I’m grateful for the rhythm and familiarity that devotional practices and even the moves of the liturgical calendar can bring to my soul. David rejoiced as they ascended to Jerusalem on an annual pilgrimage to worship and celebrate. He describes his feet standing at the gate, about to enter the holy city. That’s where we are right now; excited by the anticipation of the Advent journey.

Though this year has been irregular and unpredictable, it feels reassuring to know how to do Advent. The movements of waiting, anticipating, praying, and preparing for celebration is fortifying and nourishing. These regular practices help ground us, no matter what this year has been or what next year may hold.

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob.” (Isaiah 2:3, NIV) Come, Legacy Church, let us enter into Advent with anticipation and joy.

- How do you feel as you begin this Advent season?
- How do you feel about committing to a practice of using a daily devotional guide?
- What do you hope to experience or get out of this time?

Vicky Vetter

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**How do you feel about committing to a practice of using a daily devotional guide?**

# DAY 2

Genesis 8:1-19, Psalm 124, Romans 6:1-11

A global pandemic! Unemployment. Bills piling up. We fear for ourselves, our family and friends, our nation, and the world – an invisible enemy that kills our loved ones and strips us of our freedom.

There are constant stories of violence and injustice - school shootings, Me Too, and Black Lives Matter. Protests turn violent. The growing disparities in education become obvious due to lack of access to “distance learning.” Are dark forces winning over the good? Is the devil defeating God? Where is God while we are going through all of this?

Does it feel like you are in the middle of a storm, with rain driving hard and no sign of it letting up? The sky is dark, the water is rising, and you don't know where to turn? As we read in the Bible, things have not always been easy, especially for those who follow Jesus. In times like this, it is hard to trust, but God has a plan.

In the days of Genesis, when war and hatred took over the world, he sent a great flood – rain for 40 days to wash out the bad, only to leave a new, clean version of the world. This, of course, did not completely wipe hatred from the world. There have been bad things happening to good people since that time. In Psalm 124, we read how people can be joyous during times of floods and wars by remembering that God is guiding us through the difficult times to a better world.

I have always had a hard time seeing the hand of God in difficult times. It is only later, when I've looked back, that I could see how he got me through. God doesn't work the way it is portrayed in movies. It has always been something small – a stranger stopped to help me change a tire, a good piece of advice at the right time, or someone who paused long enough to ask what

was wrong. As it is written in Romans 6, we are “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus,” and with that comes the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit.

I think that is why I still read the news. After the sensational stories, there are always stories about people doing good - a generous person leaves a huge tip just before the waitress would have lost her house, a business has been repurposed to care for those displaced by tragedy, people standing arm in arm against hatred, or people taking donations to help neighbors recover from an apartment fire.

Despite the fact that we see a lot of bad right now, if you look closely you will see even more good. As believers, it is our job to be the hands and face of God – to be the light that someone needs to see. Do something good for someone, big or small, and you will start to see more of the brightness and light of the world as well.

Aaron Van Ningen

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**Do something good for  
someone, big or small, and  
you will start to see more  
of the brightness and light  
of the world as well.**

# DAY 3

Genesis 9:1-17, Psalm 124, Hebrews 11:32-40

Our readings for today remind us that God has been faithful in the past and for that reason we trust he will continue to be faithful now and in the future. 2020 has dealt us quite a blow. Personally, I have faith that things will get better. Why? Because during other difficult times for me, things did get better.

The Bible is full of times when God's people were in a rough spot. He did not promise to eliminate adversity. But the Bible records over and over how God's people praised him for seeing them through the bad times.

In Genesis 9:1-17, God blessed Noah and his sons. He established a covenant with them – never again would all life be destroyed. Google tells me that the flood was probably around 5000 BC, so God's promise has held for a long time. And God also said Verse 9 "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you." That includes you and me and all believers since then.

Many years passed between Noah in Genesis to David's Psalm 124. But people were still praising God for his faithfulness and provision.

Again in Hebrews 11, we hear of what God's people accomplished through faith. That is 5000 years of recorded experience where God's people found him to be faithful. What does this mean for us now in 2020? We trust that God will continue to be faithful. It also means that it's up to us to keep the faith alive for those coming after us. We should contribute to this rich history of trust and faith. When we commiserate with others over Covid-19, let's also remember to share how our faith and God's provision are getting us through. Thanking God for his faithfulness.



Embrace Matthew 28:20, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Always to the end of the age? That includes us!

Cheryl Sailer

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**When we commiserate with others over Covid-19, let's also remember to share how our faith and God's provision are getting us through. Thanking God for his faithfulness.**

# DAY 4

Isaiah 54:1-10, Psalm 124, Matthew 24:23-35

Have you had days where you secretly thought that it would be a good time for Jesus to return? I tend to have that thought often when things around me seem so dire. I think I'm ready and that I really can't wait for His return. Then I read today's passages, however, and realize I don't think I'm truly ready. When I'm hoping for Jesus' return, my thoughts are probably more like Jonah's thoughts as he waited for God to destroy Nineveh. I think, "Okay, Lord. Come and destroy all the evil ones. I'm ready. Any time now." I want to see an end to all the problems we have and that will definitely happen when Jesus returns. But my thoughts on how that should happen aren't quite in line with today's passages.

David had a better response in Psalm 124. David saw that the end could be near for him and his army, but at that point he spent more time praising God than wishing destruction on his enemies. Isaiah, in Isaiah 54, talks about a time when mountains will be shaken and hills removed, yet God's covenant of peace will not be removed. And in Matthew 24, Jesus states that when that time comes, God will send his angels to gather his elect. Jesus is not returning to destroy, but to save. His ultimate goal is to save all His children. My family and I have made the decision that will allow us to be among those that make it to Heaven. Maybe it's time for us to stop hoping that He comes soon to destroy those that haven't made that decision and actually help with His ultimate goal of saving all His children.

Jeremy Skoglund

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***For the mountains may  
move and the hills  
disappear, but even then  
my faithful love for you  
will remain.***

**Isaiah 54:10**

# DAY 5

Isaiah 4:2-6, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19, Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

With daily reminders of an uncertain future thrust into our face whether we want it or not, it's easy to get caught up in the minutiae, swept away even. I'm not immune. I've been fighting against the tsunami of fear and frustration that always seem to worsen during an election year. I think we all wish 2020 would just end already—as if 2021 will be any better. Yet hope can always be found in Scripture.

So what did I learn from reading today's passage? There's a lot to unpack, but to avoid getting caught up in yet more minutiae, I ask, "What's the overall message?" Isaiah speaks of a branch of the Lord being glorified, and how that branch will wash away the world's filth and build a new place—a shelter that will last forever. The Psalm is a prayer for a king full of justice, righteousness, and one who will protect the poor and oppressed. The portion of Acts seems extraneous at first as it talks about how Matthias replaces Judas. So why include it as part of today's reading?

They all describe certain horrific circumstances: filth, oppression, and betrayal, yet they also describe the eventual One in whom we must place our hope. The passages of Acts are the period at the end of the sentence in that even Judas' betrayal fulfilled scripture. While life is abnormally difficult for most of us this year, in no way does that mean God is no longer in control. No matter our external circumstances, we must focus more on Jesus and less on the world, and trust him to take care of the big things so the minutiae is no longer worth thinking or worrying about.

Andra Marquardt



# DAY 6

Isaiah 30:19-26, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19, Acts 13:16-25

Meditate on Acts 13:25, "As John was finishing his ministry, he asked, 'Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not! But he is coming soon - and I am not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.'" (New Living Translation)

At this time of year, it's easy for me to remember being a kid. When it came to waiting for Christmas, I had so much excitement and so little patience. I know I asked the questions, "Is today Christmas? Is tomorrow Christmas? How long until it's Christmas?" And when the answer was "not yet" I can remember all the frustration and disappointment, but also the anticipation of that incredible morning that a child lives for the rest of the year!

I wonder if anyone in the crowd felt that way when John said he wasn't the Messiah, but He would be here soon. I'm sure there were skeptics, as in any crowd. But I can't help but think that the thought of the Savior coming soon filled the believers with the same childlike anticipation and very little patience. I pray that we hold on to that excitement and zeal, not just during this season, but year-round.

Bethany Whitworth



# DAY 7

Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19, John 1:19-28

**Consider this portion from Isaiah 40:3-5:** “Prepare the way for the LORD...and the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.” (New International Version)

**Read Isaiah 40:1-11 two or three times.** Maybe make a printout of this passage of scripture. Underline or circle the things you notice. Make notes in the margins.

- Notice the heart of God; His tenderness, His gentleness, His desire to bring comfort to His people. Notice the shepherd imagery... how God “carries His people close to His heart.”
- Notice repeating words and concepts: speak, proclaim, voice, say, good news, shout.
- Notice references to the natural world: desert, wilderness, mountains, hills, valleys, rough ground, rugged places, grass, flowers.
- Notice the transient nature of humankind and the eternal nature of God’s word.
- What other Scriptures might this passage in Isaiah remind you of?
  - Do you think of John the Baptist? (Matt 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, John 1:23)
  - Does the concept of “hard service being completed” remind you of James 1:2-4?
  - Do you think of the shepherds whom the angels visited the night Christ was born? (Luke 2:8-20) They, in the land of Judah, were the first to hear the news: here is your God. Go to Bethlehem and see Him. After they saw Him, they went out, glorifying God and spreading the good news.



- ***Epecially notice the command to “prepare the way.”***

-Consider the **effort** involved with building a highway: planning, materials, tools, labor, time, cost, difficulties encountered.

-Visualize the **process**. Visualize the **transformation** that occurs when obstacles such as mountains, valleys, etc. are removed .

-Is the highway in Isaiah 40 literal or metaphorical?

-What is the **purpose** of all this preparation? ***The purpose is to reveal God’s glory.***

- And who will **see** it? ***All people will see it.***

Advent is about anticipation and preparation. Prepare the way, that all may see the light of His glory.

Kristine Leinart

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***The glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.***

**Isaiah 40:5**

# DAY 8

Isaiah 11:1-10, Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12

Of the many prophets in the Bible, John the Baptist is one of my favorites. While I admit to admiring his living on the land, and there is a certain charm to his woolly attire, that isn't what ranks him among my favorites. No doubt the heavenly script of his birth, with doubting Zechariah and faithful Elizabeth, add to his anticipated calling. In fact, if I were asked for my top ten living or dead people I would like to meet or dine with, he would be included. However, I'm not a fan of locust lunches even with honey dip!

John the Baptist, who throngs of people came to see and receive baptism from while confessing their sins to, was more than the Billy Graham of his day. He paved the way for the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 3:7 from today's reading, John chastises the Pharisees and Sadducees who also came to see him.

So, what would we visit about during this hypothetical lunch? I hope my motives would be more pure than these hypocrites, yet my list of sins and failings would also be a disgrace, especially since I have the benefit of hindsight; the whole story of Christ's crucifixion and grace, the gift of the Holy Spirit is there for me to read. John the Baptist knew the whole story, too. He was gifted by God to profess this light.

To think he was chosen to baptize our Lord and Savior! How much closer to God himself could any man be? I don't know if we eat in heaven or have chats with the saints. Yet, I expect God has a plan for us where we can all praise our God together. We are Brothers and Sisters in Christ, forgiven and loved!

Kenton Carlson



# DAY 9

Isaiah 24:1-16a, Psalm 21, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Meditate on Psalm 21:7, “***For the king trusts in the LORD. The unfailing love of the Most High will keep him from stumbling***” (New Living Translation).

The book of Psalms falls into the category of Hebrew poetry, and part of its beauty comes from its literary structure. As you read Psalm 21, notice how the structure of the poem is formed by the different verb tenses used. Study the symmetry: Present - Past - Present - Future – Present. Who wrote this poem? Knowing his background aids our understanding of this poem. What do we know about the king’s past? David had been persecuted and on the run from people who wanted to kill him. He fought many battles. He faced defeat and shame. There were times that David had felt alone and discouraged.

As King David remembers the past (verses 3-6) and anticipates the future (verses 8-12), what does the king do in the present? Take special notice of the first verse, the middle verse, and the last verse.

- Verse 1: How the king rejoices in your strength, O Lord! He shouts with joy because you give him victory. (NLT)
- Verse 7: For the king trusts in the Lord. The unfailing love of the Most High will keep him from stumbling. (NLT)
- Verse 13: Rise up, O Lord, in all your power. With music and singing we celebrate your mighty acts. (NLT)

Advent is about hopeful expectation. Let's remember what God has done in the past. Let's wait with hopeful expectation for what God will do in the future. And at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of our daily trials, let's trust and celebrate the steadfast, unfailing love of God. It isn't necessarily easy to follow this example, but it's worth the effort.

Kristine Leinart

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**Advent is about hopeful expectation.**

# DAY 10

Isaiah 41:14-20, Psalm 21, Romans 15:14-21

**Psalm 21:13, “Show your strength, God, so no one can miss it. We are out singing the good news” (Message).**

In the story of Jesus' birth, we're told that three wise men were guided to His humble birthplace by a star. This could have been a normal star, twinkling with all the other stars, and was possibly only noticed by these men because of their vast knowledge of astronomy. But in my imagination, this isn't just any star. This is the biggest and brightest of stars that no one could have possibly missed. I think this unique star was God showing His strength as He pulled it a little closer to Earth to guide these men to His son. And we sing the good news of this event today! God is still guiding His people with extraordinary and individual approaches, showing His strength in ways no one can miss. I pray that we tune in to God and take the time to recognize the stars He places in our own lives.

Bethany Whitworth



# DAY 11

Genesis 15:1-18, Psalm 21, Matthew 12:33-37

Meditate on Psalm 21:6, "Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence." (New International Version)

I despise infomercials. They all sound exactly the same, no matter what product they're selling! During each one, there's a point where the announcer says, "But wait! There's more!" This is when they throw in some fabulous prize you can't possibly live without to make the original product more enticing.

Regardless of my feelings on infomercials, that's what this verse reminds me of... that moment of throwing in the additional fabulous prize. Not only did King David have unending blessings, he also had the joy of God's presence. But wait! There's more! So do YOU! Whatever you are going through or struggling with, you too can take joy in God's presence.

Bethany Whitworth



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**Whatever you are going through or struggling with, you too can take joy in God's presence.**

# DAY 12

Ruth 1:6-18, Psalms 146:5-10, 2 Peter 3:1-10

Psalm 146:9 pretty much sums up the story of Ruth in one sentence: “The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow.”

Naomi and her daughters-in-law are all widows and have no children. They are living in a land that is foreign to Naomi. The three decide to return to Naomi’s homeland where they heard that God is providing there for his people. For many reasons it’s a great idea. In fact – spoiler alert - it turns out better than Naomi and Ruth could have imagined. God rewards Ruth (one of the widowed daughters-in-law) with a new husband (Boaz), a son, and a position in the lineage of Christ (Great grandmother of David).

But it almost didn’t happen. On the road, Naomi thought more about this idea and started having doubts. Naomi tried to convince the daughters- in-law to remain in their homeland and let her return to Judah alone. In fact, one daughter-in-law did turn back.

I’m a lot like Naomi. I’ll have a great idea, but start talking myself out of it as I begin to plan and mull over details in my head. Imagining so many reasons why something won’t work. That’s what Naomi was doing. Her reasoning about not being able to provide the sons that her daughters-in-law needed was almost comical! God is probably shouting “Just do it. Trust ME for the details.”

Prayer: Lord, I know You have good plans for me. Plans to help and uplift others. Let me not get caught up in the details, but rather trust that if it’s Your will, You will show the way.

Cheryl Sailer

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***The Lord lifts up those who  
are weighed down.***

**Psalm 146:8**

# DAY 13

Ruth 4:13-17, Psalms 146:5-10, 2 Peter 3:10-18

Lord Jesus, no matter what occurs, let us be like Naomi and Ruth. Where they did not give up and lose hope (even though they lost all their security and everything when their husbands and children died). Let us too not lose hope in these times.

Lord you say you will be returning. Lord help us to live like it may happen tomorrow (and be ready spiritually), but also let us live and prepare as if we may live to an old age. Lord as trials occur, remind us that you are real and your love for us is unwavering. Let us believe the promise of heaven and draw near to you.

As people hurt us, help us to know how to respond. Oh Lord, let us be people to walk with others, even when we are in our own pain (like Ruth). Let us be people that will live as light in the darkness, and not lose hope. Oh Lord, transform us, and let us remember who you are — The God who created all we know. No matter what happens, let us keep our hope and trust in you — Our Kinsman Redeemer. The one to take care of all our needs and more.

Thank you, Lord, for hearing this prayer.

Jen Einrem



# DAY 14

1 Samuel 2:1-8, Psalm 146:5-10, Luke 3:1-18

Think of all the things you prepare for in your life. When you go on vacation, you plan dates, make reservations and pack clothes. When you host a meal, you invite guests, shop for groceries, and prepare the meal. When you are expecting, you prepare the baby's room, buy baby clothes and diapers, and attend Lamaze classes.

This Advent, are you preparing for the coming Messiah... Immanuel, God with us? In Luke 3:8, John the Baptist told the crowds, "Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God." We want assurance of eternal life, but are we really willing to repent of our sins and change the way we live?

As we live in this world, we find the world (or should I say Satan) wants just the opposite. Commercials tempt us to buy things we really don't need. Peer pressure suggests the way we dress, talk and live. Pandemic and chaos cause us to fear what is going to happen. All these things take us farther and farther away from our relationship with God.

Maybe this Advent we need to do what it says in Luke 3:4, "Prepare the way for the Lord's coming!" Let's remember the reason for Christmas: the birth of Jesus. Let's also remember what happened at Easter that Jesus died for our sins and, because of this, we can repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness.

In 1 Samuel 2:2, Hannah prayed, "No one is holy like the Lord! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." Jesus is our Rock...firm, strong and unchanging. We can trust in Him as our Savior, Provider and Protector. This Advent, prepare the way for Jesus.

Bruce Walth

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***No one is holy like the  
Lord! There is no one  
besides you; there is no  
Rock like our God.***

**1 Samuel 2:2**

# DAY 15

Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, Luke 1:46b-55, James 5:7-10,  
Matthew 11:2-11

The theme of these verses is a call to be holy and the way to achieve it. Isaiah 35:8 says it perfectly: “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.” As one who is often foolish, I take comfort in the last part.

One way to find holiness is knowing what to avoid. For instance, Psalm 146:5-10 warns us to not put our “trust in princes or son of man” (vs 3), and our help, freedom, justice, etc., comes from the Lord. This is especially convicting considering we spent so much time arguing over who’d be best to lead our nation.

Luke 1:46b-55 continues this thinking with Mary’s Song of Praise where God “... has brought down the mighty from their thrones...” (vs 52).

James 5:7-10 stresses patience, including with each other. Verse 9 is even more convicting than the Psalm: “Do not grumble against one another... so that you may not be judged; behold the Judge is standing at the door” (gulp).

Matthew 11:2-11 discusses how our actions show who we are more than our words. I love Jesus’ response to John the Baptist’s question, “Are you the one who is to come... ?”(vs 3) He told his disciples, “Go and tell John what you hear and see...” (vs 4)

What we do matters. We cannot be holy if we never act—not always for our sake, but for those we help. Our actions—our holiness—are meant to point to Jesus, not to ourselves.

Andra Marquardt





# DAY 16

Psalm 42, Isaiah 29:17-24, Acts 5:12-16

## **Read Psalm 42, meditating on Psalm 42:11.**

- 1) When you read Psalm 42, how do you relate to the psalmist?
- 2) Do you feel the psalmist's heartache and desperate need?
- 3) Do you recognize the questions?
  - Why has this happened?
  - Where is God?
  - When will God hear and answer me?
  - Why am I so discouraged?
- 4) Have you cried tears, day and night?
- 5) Have you found yourself looking back, reflecting on how things used to be?
- 6) Now consider the remainder of Psalm 42. What stands out? What does come naturally or easily?
- 7) Notice in verse 8 that each day, the psalmist remembers the abundance of God's love, and each night, the psalmist sings and prays to God who gives life. Notice in verses 5 and 11, the psalmist looking forward, resolving to take action, "I will remember my God...I will put my hope in God...I will praise my Savior."



# DAY 17

Ezekiel 47:1-12, Psalm 42 and 36:8-9, Jude 1:17-25,

**Meditate on Exekiel 47:12:** “Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (New International Version)

Ezekiel was a priest at the Temple in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. The book of Ezekiel is a collection of warnings against Judah as well as against foreign nations. These were written during and after the fall of Jerusalem (~586 BC), the destruction of the Temple, and the deportations of the Jews to Babylon. Chapter 10 gives a sad depiction of God’s glory leaving the Temple. These were bitter days for the people of Judah. They were grieved from loss of life and loss of home. They were in a crisis of faith.

The last several chapters of Ezekiel are prophecies of restoration and hope. In Ezekiel 47, the prophet describes a vision of a new Temple. God’s glory will once again dwell in the Temple. Notice measurements given for distance and depth, describing an increasing volume of water. What is the effect of this abundance? Better day, transformation, the Dead Sea brought to life, salty made fresh, healing, and abundant life! Notice verse 12. Why will this transformation and abundance occur? Because the water comes from the sanctuary of the Temple. Living water from the living God!

Are you grieving from losses in your life? Are you in a crisis of faith? You are not alone! And many have been there before you. While waiting in your difficult situation, hold onto a hopeful anticipation for our Lord. He is the living God, the light of the world, the One who transforms, heals, and gives abundant life.

Kristine Leinart



# DAY 18

Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34, Zechariah 8:1-17, Psalm 42

Where is your focus this Advent season? In today's message from Matthew, we read about the demons that Jesus sends from the men at the tombs into a nearby herd of pigs. My first thought with this passage had always been, "Did the pigs have to all rush to their death? What about the owner of those pigs? What did they do to deserve losing their livelihood?"

I go right to the negative part of the story. Isn't that true for most of us? Your child brings home their report card and the grade that jumps out to you is the lowest grade. It's a beautiful sunny day as you go for a walk with your friend, but you spend the whole walk complaining about the 10-mph wind. We go to a job every day noticing all the negative things that are happening, but forget that we are blessed to have a job. Let's use today's passages as a reminder for us to focus on all the good that God is doing in our life and in the world and not on the pigs that go over the cliff.

Jeremy Skoglund



# DAY 19

2 Samuel 7:1-17, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Galatians 3:23-29

For those of you who have spent significant time reading the Old Testament, I suspect you were burdened with the recurring theme of God's people turning away from Him despite His redemption. The manna is described as bread of tears in Psalm 80. Yet, it is the prophesying words of Psalm 80:18 that cause my heart unrest as I study today, "Then we will not turn away from you." Oh, how I wish this were true! Yet, I turn away despite His many rescues that rival the Israelites.

Galatians shines the light of truth, however. It is God that has always been faithful. Through Christ and His grace on the cross, the law was overturned. "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." (Galatians 3:26) Not only are we forgiven, we are now part of God's family.

Whether you and I more resemble the Israelites with short memories of God's gifts than those of obedience like Abraham, we can claim the same inheritance: the love and forgiveness of Christ, the Holy Spirit to comfort us, and a heavenly home of eternal peace. Let not your heart be troubled, rejoice. God bless your days this week as Christ has called you to be a light.

Kenton Carlson





# DAY 20

2 Samuel 7:18-22, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Galatians 4:1-7

2 Samuel 7:20-21, “What can I possibly say in the face of all this? You know me, Master God, just as I am. You've done all this not because of who I am but because of who you are - out of your very heart!- but you've let me in on it” (Message).

This season of the year can be a time of comparison and image presentation. We rush around trying to find gifts for our family that will meet society's quota for what an adequate Christmas looks like. We make sure we have the most beautiful tree, the most festive wardrobe, the cleanest house, and the perfect family picture for the Christmas card. But in 2 Samuel, we're reminded that God didn't send Jesus because of who we are or how we look or even anything we had done. God sent Jesus because of who He is...love. God knows us just as we are without the image we try to create, but He sent Jesus anyway. He sent Him out of love, out of His very heart. And regardless of how together our lives are, we get to be in on it. We can have Jesus and God's love in our hearts, without any pressure to be better in order to deserve it. He knows us just as we are and loves us anyway. Bask in that sense of relief and freedom this holiday season.

Bethany Whitworth



# DAY 21

2 Samuel 7:23-29, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, John 3:31-36

Recently some pre-teens and I watched the Hiding Place, the story of Corrie Ten Boom. Even though Corrie has passed away, her testimony still lives on. We discussed how God is so amazing that something as horrible as her Nazi concentration camp experience is now being used to save millions from hell.

We discussed that the situation in the camps — a literal Hell on Earth, is nothing compared to eternal Hell. How even in the concentration camps, there was still hope. Hope of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus. Hope knowing that the last breath on this earth, would be the first in the arms of a loving Savior, and being part of the eternal kingdom (as discussed in 2 Samuel 7).

We discussed how important it is to daily choose which kingdom will we serve. If left to ourselves and our own desires, where we reject God for eternity and receive the fruits of that choice, the result is eternal hell. Or we serve Christ, accept him into our hearts, and act as the ambassadors of his eternal kingdom.

It is important to remember that each person in front of us, may not yet know or have chosen to believe in the Son, and is destined to live in a way worse place than the WWII concentration camps—an eternal hell which has no end if they do not say yes to a relationship with Jesus.

Do you know this Savior who died for you so that you may have eternal life in a kingdom that is established forever? Friends, Christ came to us to testify of what he saw (John 3:32) and when you accept that testimony, you will have eternal life. If you already know this, that is wonderful, but do your family and friends?



# DAY 22

Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, Luke 1:46b-55, James 5:7-10,  
Matthew 11:2-11

Can you think of a time (and maybe that is now) when you have asked God for a sign? When will things get better, God? How long must I wait? Why me? Why now?

Isaiah 7:10-16 says “Later, the LORD sent this message to King Ahaz: ‘Ask the LORD your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want—as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.’ But the king refused. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I will not test the LORD like that.’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Listen well, you royal family of David...the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God is with us’). By the time this child is old enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong, he will be eating yogurt and honey. For before the child is that old, the lands of the two kings you fear so much will both be deserted.” (New Living Translation)

At that time, this was a promise of good for Judah and Jerusalem from invading armies of Israel and Syria. God was giving them hope! We also see that promise ultimately fulfilled 700 years later in Jesus when he was born of the virgin Mary--Immanuel, God with us.

This promise of the Messiah for the people of Israel and all future generations is for us too! In Joshua 21:45 it says, “Not a single one of all the good promises the LORD had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true.” (New International Version)

Have you ever looked for promises from the Old Testament that Jesus fulfills in the New Testament? What are some of the ways that God has fulfilled promises for you? In whatever situation you may find yourself in today, may you remember that God is with us and will continue to be with us through it all.

Calli Hanson



# DAY 23

2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29, Galatians 3:6-14, Luke 1:46b-55

It has been a long time since a baby was expected in our family. My wife, however, works in labor and delivery and participates in exciting arrivals each week. The day of delivery is like no other, yet the anticipation is a purposeful rival. As described in today's reading from Luke, Mary and Elizabeth are sharing their excitement and anticipation.

While I can correlate the kicks in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:41) with my daughter's prenatal exuberance in bass guitar rehearsal for Sunday worship, it is difficult to fathom the comprehension of Mary carrying the Son of Man, Savior and Lord. Yet in today's scripture we hear her proclaim the work of the Lord and the impact her child would have in saving us all.

This advent season is purposeful too. Don't just show up for Christmas morning. Start now if you didn't earlier. No, not shopping! Preparing for Christ! How excited are you that he has come to forgive your sin, show you grace, and give you a new commandment about love?

If you are expecting a baby in the family, you might wonder what he or she will be like as an adult. With Christ we know his destiny; it was foretold in the Old Testament and scholars of His Word waited with eager anticipation for decades and generations. Take this time to hear God's word with enthusiasm.

Kenton Carlson





# DAY 24

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

I grew up on a farm where the yard light was not on during the night. On nights when the moon didn't shine, you could not see your hand in front of your face. But in the morning, I knew there would be light so I could see clearly.

For years, the Jews and Gentiles were living in the darkness. However, Isaiah gave them hope in Isaiah 9:2 saying, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light." And what was this great light? Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Jesus is this great light. In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

2020 has been a year of darkness. We question where God is during this time of uncertainty and chaos. During this time of darkness, we once again need to look for the light. Titus 2:12 reminds us that "we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God."

Know with certainty, as it says in Titus 2:14 that "Jesus gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds."

Because we are children of God, we need to be aware of the evil of this world but we do not have to live in fear because we know God is with us and His light will overpower any darkness.

Bruce Walth



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*To learn more about the Legacy Writers group or join in our next project, contact [Amanda@legacyumc.org](mailto:Amanda@legacyumc.org).*



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# WHAT'S NEXT?

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