

Advent Devotions

2018



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL
40 West Nicolai Street
Hicksville, NY 11801

Provided by your Board of Christian Stewardship

Introduction

These meditations are centered on the traditional Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Our prayer is that these attributes will fill and sustain us all as we live out our faith in the midst of the temptations and distractions of the world. In the season of Advent we focus on the first coming of the Lord Jesus, born as a man to die for our sins. Yet we also look forward to His second coming at the end of time when He will make all things new and we will be with Him in His Kingdom forever. We must live in that daily reality of that joyful expectation.

The Board of Stewardship



Saturday, December 1

by Deacon Doug Brosky

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Jeremiah 33:14-15

The prophet Jeremiah in these verses proclaims words of comfort and hope to a people who were feeling anything but hope. Israel was facing the destruction of their nation by Babylon and exile from their homes. When Israel look around all they saw was everything that they held precious falling apart. What could possibly be good about their situation?

In the face of all that gloom Jeremiah reminds them and us today of God’s promise to deliver his people, and that he is sending “a righteous Branch”, a Redeemer, a Messiah. The Advent Season that begins today is a time of anticipation, but unlike Israel in Jeremiah’s time we are not anticipating destruction, but rather the sure and certain assurance that the long-promised messiah, God’s own Son, our Lord Jesus will be with us. As we began this season of Advent may we always keep before our eyes the promise of the sure and certain reconciliation with God by our faith in our Lord Jesus.

Sunday, December 2

by Kim Merz

“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.

Luke 1:30-31

HOPE. The dictionary defines *hope* as: “to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment.” The Bible is filled with words of hope, in the Old Testament and New. But here, in the New Testament, we read about these words of hope becoming a reality. Jesus is coming! Mary is approached by the angel Gabriel and is told that her Savior and ours will be made manifest through her. Expectation is going to be fulfilled!

During the Advent season, we spend time preparing to remember and celebrate Jesus’ birth. Each day is filled with excitement and expectation. Why? Because we have the certain knowledge of Jesus’ birth and everything that it means. HOPE has been fulfilled. Jesus was born and Jesus died for our sins. Forgiveness we could not have obtained on our own was won for us by our Savior, assuring us a place at His side for eternity.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for sending your son Jesus to die for our sins. Be with each one of us during these days of Advent as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of your Son. In His name we pray, Amen.

HOPE



Monday, December 3

by Deacon Betsy Lazarek

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:8-9

Peter teaches that we do not look at time in the same way that God does. We are finite beings, bound by time, but God is not. As a result, our perspective is naturally short-sighted, while God keeps a long-range view beyond our ability to comprehend. Remember, these verses appear in the context of Christ's return, so what the Father and the Son consider to be a short time before the Kingdom is established can seem like an eternity to us—or as if He delays His coming.

The apostle also indicates Christ's longsuffering as a reason that the end has not yet come. In our opinion, He should have returned already and put a stop to all the world's wrongs. However, His longsuffering is not due to slowness or tardiness, as the carnally-minded think. Rather, His longsuffering is a gift to us, so that we do not have to perish in His judgment.

Our focus tends to be on how bad the world is getting, yet Peter subtly draws us back to our own spiritual condition. Jesus is longsuffering toward us so that we have ample time to repent, not in the sense of initial conversion, but to turn fully and have our hearts completely changed. In its fullest sense, repentance is not complete until we are finally in His image.

Even though we may be frustrated that we do not see more end-time prophecies coming to pass, Peter explains it as a blessing to us because it means that Christ will not wrap things up before we have had a full and complete opportunity to repent. We can be thankful for God's timetable, not because it means we have more time to flirt with this world, but because He is providing everything we need to follow our salvation to its conclusion, including the time.

Tuesday, December 4

by Lorraine Fogarty

Return, O Lord! How long?

Have pity on your servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with

Your steadfast love, that we

may rejoice and be glad all our days. Psalm 90:13-14

Psalm 90 was penned by Moses on the occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief and rebellion. People felt hopeless and longed for the Lord to return. It emphasizes God's greatness and our human weakness and need for the Lord to provide grace for our daily needs. It is applicable to the frailty of human life in general then and now in the wilderness of this world. With the trials, temptations and pain of this life it could be easy to feel weary, discouraged, depressed and hopeless. No matter what our trials, temptations or pain we may suffer, we can always hold on to the hope that God extends to us. Holding on to hope takes practice, faith and work. Hope must be practiced by praying without ceasing, reminding yourself that you are a child of God, counting your blessings and thanking God for them, praising God in word and in song, reading and memorizing scripture. Friends, we must set our hearts and our minds on things above and not focus on earthly things. When we do this we are practicing hope. And for us believers there is the hope of eternal life because Jesus Christ has triumphed over evil, death and hell and opened the door to Heaven for us by His death and resurrection. Let us rejoice and be glad for the hope we have knowing that Jesus Christ will return and we will have eternal life. Alleluia!



Wednesday, December 5

by Denise Fields

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

Revelation 22:12-13

The Advent season anticipates the joy we experience on Christmas morning and celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is a season of hope. So, also is the return of Christ (the second coming).

There is a reward of punishment which will be given for wickedness and there will be a reward of grace, the recompense of reward. The reward will be the gift of eternal life with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega.

How can people do this? First, place your trust in God, put God’s Will first and put God’s Son first. God came as a baby, giving Himself to us. He expects our life to be a “Bethlehem”, a new beginning where we will grow and become more like His Son with His help and guidance.

Lord, we have always lived in troubling times where evil is rampant but allow us to remember that you are with us always and will return to create a new earth. Thank you for the hope you give us. Lord, please allow my natural life to be transformed by the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit and conform to your Will. Amen.

Thursday, December 6
by Deacon Lynn Waldeck

***"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins," Luke 1:76-77***

In these verses Zechariah was prophesying about his son, John the Baptist.

John was sent before Jesus was born to prepare the world for his coming. Isaiah (40:3) promised that John would come before Jesus. He came to give knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. John could prepare the world but it is only Jesus who could provide it. John understood that his role was to point to Jesus but once Jesus was born his role was over. Gabriel appeared to Zechariah before he appeared to Mary. Zechariah did doubt that such a thing was possible and was struck mute because of it. We may also at times doubt that such a thing is possible. But as Zechariah did we also see the light that is coming. We already have seen Jesus and now must patiently wait for his coming again to shine his full light on us.

Christ-mas celebrates this prophesy that Christ is coming. Advent is a time of waiting and can seem long and discouraging. We wait for Jesus to return, to shine fully. We wait sometimes impatiently for his full measure of love we will receive when he returns.

Until then, live during Advent and everyday with peace and joy knowing that Jesus will return for us to shine his full light and radiance and love upon us.

**Dear Jesus,
Please help us to patiently wait for your return. Until then let us live our lives as you would want us to. Let Advent be a time of joy and a season of light for all of us. Amen.**

Friday, December 7

by John Mohlin

Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Malachi 3:16-17

Have you ever been lost? Perhaps you got separated from your parents as a kid. Or, maybe it was driving in a big city with no GPS. I remember hiking once and losing my way. I knew I could not be far from the nearest road but I was starting to lose hope. Being out in the woods, and not knowing which way to go was an awful feeling.

Perhaps your loss is not as literal. Maybe you are lost in a strained relationship or a loved one has health problems that do not seem to have answers. It may be difficult to have hope that the situation will improve.

The Israelites in the time of Malachi were feeling the same way. In the previous passages, God points out all the ways that they have been failing to serve God and how they had turned away from Him. It even gets to the point where the Israelites question the use of serving God when they are not profiting from their “obedience”, while wrongdoers seem to have it made. Lost in sin, they had lost hope, and were giving up.

But some did hear God. They turned their hearts back to God, and repented, and God paid attention. In fact, God spared his people their deserved punishment even as he did not spare his own son, who paid the price for our unfaithfulness. In doing so, we may not be as lost as we think we are. There is a way out of the woods. For on the last day, we have a Savior who has already secured for us a place in heaven. We belong to God. May this promise give us hope and guide our lives.

Saturday, December 8

by Nancy Burpee

***I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.***” Genesis 3:15

God tells Satan that there will be enmity or "conflict" between him and the woman or "God's people", and, ultimately her seed, especially Jesus Christ. This verse is the Gospel's first proclamation that the Messiah's coming. God will bring a Redeemer through the seed of the woman so that he will be completely human yet divinely begotten. Though Satan would strike at his heel, Christ's foot shall descend and crush his head, ultimately defeating evil once and for all.

Heavenly Father, as we prepare to celebrate and remember Christ's birth, help us to realize that no matter what trials we may face, it is through Christ that we are more than conquerors. Thank you for loving us so much, that you sent your only Son into the world to redeem us. Keep our minds focused on the true meaning of Christmas this Advent season. In Christ's unmatched name we pray. Amen.



Sunday, December 9

by John Doughty

“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the LORD, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation.’” Luke 3: 4-6

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 40: 3-7

Herein we hear John the Baptist preaching the Message from GOD the Father, as spoke to and prophesied by Isaiah in the Old Testament. These words speak importantly about preparation for the coming and birth of our beautiful Savior who is Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As like those in Biblical times who would always prepare the way for any king, here especially for the Lord God, so too Advent is a time to prepare and get ready for this wonderful season to celebrate Jesus’ birth, the beginning of His long journey as both Man and GOD leading to crucifixion and rising from the dead as payment for all of our sins. What a great gift we, who live in faith, are able to enjoy and look forward to upon earthly death followed by eternal life in Heaven.

During this very busy Christmas season let us not forget to prepare ourselves fully for Jesus’ birth by way of a spiritual “check-up” and “fine tuning” of our FAITH in the triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May peace be with you always!

A personal note: Today, December 9, is my wife Nancy’s birthday. She is missed very, very much but rests comfortably now and forever in the Loving Hands of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Monday, December 10

by Trinity's Comfort Dog Ministry

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Isaiah 40:1-2

Each of us needs a healthy dose of comfort from time to time. The child at play who trips and scrapes her knee badly needs comfort from a parent or other caregiver. The young man or woman at college with its unfamiliar surroundings needs someone to talk to. Consider also the young couple whose first child was stillborn, the middle-aged couple whose son died in an accident, and the elderly man whose wife of 60 years is slipping away because of Alzheimer's. Who will comfort them?

Thank God that there is good news in Isaiah's song. God himself says, "Comfort, comfort my people. . . Speak tenderly. . ."

When we need comfort, we must remember, first, that God is the Sovereign Lord. He will meet us in every situation with His powerful arm.

Second, our Father is a loving, compassionate God. No matter what adversities you may be going through today, you can take comfort. Like a shepherd with his sheep, God carries us close to His heart. Remember Jesus' parting words: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Thank you, Lord, that you are our powerful God of comfort. Even as you carry us close to your heart, so too may we joyfully carry each other's burdens as we live for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, December 11

by Elaine Koop

***"Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like streams in the Negeb!
Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!
He who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
bringing his sheaves with him."*** Psalm 126:4-6

We've all heard this many times, "You reap what you sow". It reminds me of my mother. Especially later in her life when it became more difficult for her to get around. If someone offered her a ride to church or to get her a cup of coffee at coffee hour she would always tell me how kind someone was to go out of their way for her . . . and I would always say, "Mom, you reap what you sow."

My mother always put others before herself.

I dread going through tough times. Who doesn't? But, I have and you have and it surely will happen many more times throughout our life. It's just part of life.

I think the message in this passage is that there will be difficult circumstances, times of sorrow, times of hurt, times of loss, but the psalmist lets us know that we have hope and peace because the Lord will turn our tears into joy.

Thank you Lord Jesus!



Wednesday, December 12

by Jane Kramer

"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." Isaiah 35:3-4

Have you ever had an "ear worm?" It's a song that keeps repeating in your mind over and over. It can be a common occurrence with choir members with certain anthems or hymns. That is what happened to me as soon as I read Isaiah's words in verse four. "Be Strong, Fear Not" by Thomas Keesecker is a well-loved Trinity choir anthem based on this verse.

"Be strong, fear not. Here is your God. He comes to save us."

As we embark on this annual Advent journey, I am uplifted and encouraged as these words repeat in my head. Strength of faith is needed as the world commercializes Christmas around us. News headlines work to instill fear in us about every aspect of our lives on this earth. But as our celebration of the birth of Christ comes near we are reminded that God came, God is here, God will come again!

He has saved us: our salvation is secure.

Dear God, Give us strength, free us from fear, remind us of our salvation. Let us rejoice and sing. Amen



Thursday, December 13

by Linda Hoerberlein

Then you will say on that day, “I will give thanks to You, O Lord; for although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. ²Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.”

Isaiah 12:1-2

Thanksgiving has passed. But thanks-giving is every day! The Lord has done so much for us, and He is the one who deserves our unending thanks and praise. We were deserving of death because of our sin, which separated us from His perfect love. But Jesus obediently left His throne on high to be born as a baby. He grew to be a man, faithfully showing the world the love of the Father. In obedience, He took the anger of God upon Himself when He took our sins and laid down His life on the cross. But He defeated death by rising on the third day and He ascended to Heaven, making a way for us to have the hope of eternity with Him in glory. God is truly our salvation! We have nothing to fear if we trust in Him. He is our strength in weakness.

The word “salvation” seems like such a theological word. So many are lost and ignorant of their need for salvation. The Bible repeatedly reminds us of God’s love and desire for a relationship with us. Jesus provides the way for that to happen. If we will only trust and not be afraid and allow Him to become our salvation.

Trinity’s NDW band recently started leading worship with a song by Keith and Kristin Getty, “The Lord Is My Salvation.” The chorus is as follows:

Who is like the Lord our God? Strong to save, faithful in love. My debt is paid and the victory won! The Lord is my salvation!

Let’s make every day a day of thanks-giving, thanking God for cancelling our debt of sin, by covering it in Jesus’ blood. He is worthy of our praise. The Lord is our salvation!

Friday, December 14
by Deacon Doug Brosky

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

Romans 8:19-21

Paul in this passage encourages us to look forward to a new and glorious beginning. God's perfect creation was ruined by the rebellion against God's will by Adam and Eve. Since that time sin has corrupted the world in which we live, as well as our relationships with our fellow human beings. God however did not just walk away, leaving us to our rebellion. He set in place a plan to send his only Son to take upon himself the penalty for our sin in order that we by faith in Jesus would be made acceptable to God. This is what Paul is talking about in these verses, our being set free from the bondage of sin and once again regaining that perfect relationship with our God. In this Advent season may we again look forward to a new beginning and Emanuel, God with us.



Saturday, December 15

by Helen Peter

***“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,”***

Luke 1:68-70

During the reign of King Herod, Zechariah was a Jewish priest who worked in the Temple. Every day he prayed for a son. One day Angel Gabriel appeared to, him and told him his wife Elisabeth would bear him a son. Zechariah did not believe him. Because of his unbelief, God prevented him from speaking until his son was born. Then God not only restored his speech, He filled him with the Holy Spirit and gave him the gift of prophecy. Zechariah immediately began to praise God for sending the Messiah who would free us from our sins and grant salvation to all who believed in Jesus. Knowing this brings peace to us because we have the assurance of eternal life.

Dear Lord, thank you for sending your son to bear our sins, dying on the cross and having victory over death. Because Jesus rose from the dead we can have peace knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we shall also rise from the dead and enjoy eternal life everlasting with You. Amen.

Sunday, December 16

by Lauren Straub

“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgements against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more.” Zephaniah 3:14-15

The advent season is certainly a season of Joy! As Christians our focus all year should be that Jesus was born -- for us! But more often than not the yearly build up to Christmas is needed for many to be reminded of this greatest gift.

Our homes take on a festive appearance with treasured decorations and ornaments. We attempt to find that perfect gift for family and friends to show them we care about them whether we are sharing the holiday together with them or separated by many miles. Friends and family further afield may receive cards with family updates or simply notes of remembrance and love. Our Church services echo with songs of Christmas' past, the choir and congregation “singing aloud” as stated above in Zephaniah 3, “Joy to the World, the Lord has come.”

But under all of the outward celebration we need to remember that Jesus' entry into our world is a very joyous event indeed. The birth of this precious baby gave us eternal life. The most awesome gift we could ever receive. No longer would the evil in the world have power over us. God's love secured our freedom. And while the Advent season is a season of Joy we can wake each morning knowing we have the gift of Jesus from our God of mercy, peace and love. “Rejoice and exult with all your heart!”



Monday, December 17

by Deacon Anthony Cavaliere

***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.***

At the birth of Jesus, the angels who appeared to the shepherds in the field proclaimed joyful news of peace on earth and God's good will to all men. God had promised long ago to send a Messiah and in the birth of Jesus that promise was fulfilled.

Jesus the Messiah would make peace between God and mankind in Himself by bearing the sins of all mankind on the cross. In addition, His rule would bring peace among men. This peace was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah in his vision of the future. The shoot of the root of Jesse is none other than Jesus Himself.

The Messiah would bring peace to all humanity. In this age to come then there will be no strife, no war, no murder or bloodshed and no crime. All will worship Jesus and walk in obedience to Him. This is the age all humans long for and work towards but never achieve because many reject Christ. Thomas More wrote of Utopia, the ideal place, but one which, as the title suggests is no where. Many other authors, TV and film writers have written of similar paces where life is peaceful and ideal, but because sin is so firmly entrenched in our world that though we all long for peace, we find that we actually work against it. Violence and oppression will not cease until King Jesus recreates the earth and rules with justice, love and mercy. In that we can rejoice because it is a fact! God always keeps His promises.

Tuesday, December 18

by Janice Gentles-Jones

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;”

Philippians 4:4-5

The Advent season is a wonderful time to reflect on the deep love God has for us and His sweet plan of redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It's amazing that the same God who created the universe and all its marvelous, mysterious intricacies, created us too. And of all of His creations, He loves us most dearly. A love that runs so deep that even *before* creation, He had a plan of redemption for us. In His redemptive plan, we see that He is not an unemotional God, who cares little for our sufferings. On the contrary, we see that He sent his son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to take away our sins. He did this not because we deserved it but because it was His plan from the beginning of creation.

Despite His great power, God did not create us to be robots who obey Him through force, but children who obey Him through freedom. Not just any freedom, but freedom from the consequences of sin. This is our greatest gift whether we admit it, know it or accept it. Because of His deep love for us, God offers this gift of freedom, freely.

Our heart can shine like the rising sun. Our voice can rejoice like singing angels. Our life can renew like the early morn because unto to us a Savior is born.



Wednesday, December 19

by Deacon Anthony Cavaliere

***“In that day, declares the LORD,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven away
and those whom I have afflicted;
and the lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong nation;
and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion
from this time forth and forevermore.”*** Micah 4:6-7

Micah’s oracle about the coming Kingdom of God is similar to statements made by other prophets. Mount Zion represents the Kingdom of God, the greatest Kingdom that will ever exist. One day all nations will acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord. They will come to Him learn how to walk in obedience to all His commands. Because all will follow the Lord there will be no more wars or conflicts. People will treat others with respect and love. This is great news for the poor and downtrodden, for, as Isaiah points out, the lame, the weak, will comprise the members of God’s Kingdom.

The vision of God’s Kingdom keeps us going. We need this because life is filled with tribulation and sorrow. There are times when we question what God is doing and why, and it seems that He has forgotten us. We pray He would enlighten us through Scripture, so we may discern His will and His ways for ourselves and our loved ones. The Lord speaks to us and enlightens us along the way, but not always, and not immediately, and not always clearly. We learn His plans and His lessons usually only after we have endured for a while or even many years later. If we do not have faith in God’s goodness and wisdom, such circumstances will cause us to fall, turn to the world or do away with ourselves. Our faith in God’s ultimate triumph over evil, sin, and injustice can keep us on the right path. The celebration of the birth of Jesus is an important time to reflect on our faith because it reminds that Jesus is with us and His deliverance is assured.

Thursday, December 20

by Dolores Entenmann

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jeremiah 31:33

What joy in knowing that God has chosen me. I am His and He has “put His law within me and has written it on my heart”. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I am able to discern right from wrong according to God’s will. I can listen to an inner voice directing me in the way I should go.

However, there are times when I do not listen. Times when I choose to go my own way. It is then that God sends me a ‘letter’ in the form of someone whom He has chosen to deliver His message to me. I think of them as “letters from God”. Messengers of His Word, touched by the Holy Spirit... perhaps just passing through; entering into my life when I have needed them and sometimes exiting when their mission is through.

I have been Blessed by knowing these special people of God and I thank God for them, for they have left their mark, indelibly on my heart. They have been, according to Scripture, “letters from Christ..., written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not of tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” 2 Corinthians 3:3

Wishing you a Joyous and Blessed Christmas!



**FOR TO US
A SON IS GIVEN**

Friday, December 21

by Kim Merz

“For thus says the LORD:

***“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;
and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip,
and bounced upon her knees.***

***As one whom his mother comforts,
so I will comfort you;***

you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;

your bones shall flourish like the grass;

and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants,

and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.”

Isaiah 66:12-14

I love reading through the book of Isaiah during Advent. Everything that was happening during Isaiah’s time is so relevant for our time. Disasters, sinfulness, and rejection of God has been the status quo through the centuries. Of course that’s not the part I love. What I do love are the words of comfort that can be found among those pages. There is comfort in Isaiah’s prophecy about the coming of a Savior, God’s Son who would be “pierced for our transgressions.”

Knowing God loves me that much, to be planning salvation for me so long ago, salvation that I do not deserve, brings me great joy! I see in the verses from the book of Isaiah above, the words *peace*, *comfort*, *rejoice*, *flourish*. . . Even though Isaiah is writing about Jerusalem, I think we can take his message personally. These are some of the things we can look forward to in eternity, as children of God. All because of Jesus, the Babe that was born in Bethlehem!



Saturday, December 22

by Terri Cavaliere

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. . . And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:1-2; 39-40

When I first pondered this scripture passage for this Advent devotional, I wondered about the connection between it and the theme of JOY. As you will see, I took a bit of liberty with my assignment. Most Christians recognize the 11th chapter of Hebrews as the great hall of faith. Paul also teaches us about the importance of faith, and Martin Luther, called by some the Apostle of Faith, built his theology about salvation through faith (Sole Fide).

After reading through the list of the faithful heroes described in the chapter, we see that none of them “received what was promised.” So, you may ask, what does this have to do with joy? We have to go into Chapter 12 and read more. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, ... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1

Jesus considered it a JOY to suffer and die for us, ultimately achieving His goal of salvation and resuming His place at the right hand of His Father.

Do we remember that God has something in mind for us that is better than what we have now? Or do we mope around, wallowing in disappointment and depression over trials and tribulations?

During this Christmas season we sing “Joy to the World” but, how quickly we forget Paul’s words to “... rejoice in the Lord **always**...” This means ALWAYS, all the time, every day, not just when things are going our way.

Lord, thank you for the grace that leads us to faith. As the father of the sick child (Mark 9:24) said to You: “I do believe; help my unbelief.” Help us to walk in faith, and grow in joy.

Best wishes for everlasting JOY and the faith that can move mountains.

Sunday, December 23

by Rita Liba

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation."* Luke 1:46-50

As I read this passage, I think how awesome it is that God looked upon Mary, a servant woman, with such favor, that he blessed her with the baby in her womb to be our savior. She was chosen because of her faith and steadfast love for him. God has abundant love for all who follow him, regardless of their means.

Dear Heavenly Father, as we come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us reflect on the love you have for each and everyone of us. Mary was proof that it's not about how rich or poor you are, you look up on us with equal and unending love. Blessed are all who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Psalms 128:1



Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

by Scott Galdo

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:14-15

Picture it. It’s Christmas Eve service. You just got done singing *Silent Night* and are starting to sing *Joy to the World*. There you are about to start singing the fourth verse and then CRASH! What was that you ask yourself? Once you have calmed yourself down, you remember that some guy just played the cymbals. Yup, that’s me. Every year I have the honor of scaring some congregation members. I apologize for that.

Now think about the shepherds over two-thousand years ago. They were minding their own business when suddenly an angel showed up telling them that a baby was born and saying this child is Christ the Lord. And to top it all off, more angels show up singing. I don’t know about you, but I would have been scared. These shepherds, even though they were frightened at first, decided to go and see Jesus. They put their fears aside and went to Bethlehem.

We as Christians are scared just as the shepherds were. We are frightened at what goes on in our lives and in the world; illness, war, and death to name a few. But because we search, find and trust in Jesus, we know, and can tell others, that no matter what happens to us, we will have eternal life and all will be well.

So, if you are at church tonight, consider this your warning. I will be playing the cymbals during *Joy to the World*. Three times to be exact. With each crash, remember the shepherds and how they overcame their fright and went to visit the baby Jesus.

Merry Christmas!



Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

by Pastor John Hopkins

“When the fullness of time had come...” Galatians 4:4-7

One of my family’s favorite breakfast items for Christmas morning is Monkey Bread. The recipe we like uses frozen dinner rolls. First, you put the frozen dinner rolls in a Bundt pan. Then you mix all the other ingredients together (See recipe link below). The most important thing about this recipe is that you need to prepare it the night before... typically right before you go to bed. Why? You need to allow time for the dinner rolls to thaw. Then after they have thawed, the dinner rolls will rise on their own. So then you put the pan in a pre-heated oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or so. When the fullness of time has come, you pull out the pan and turn it upside down on a plate and the amazing treat comes out is ready to eat.

The key thing about that recipe is patience. One has to prepare hours in advance in order for things to be just right to cook and then eat.

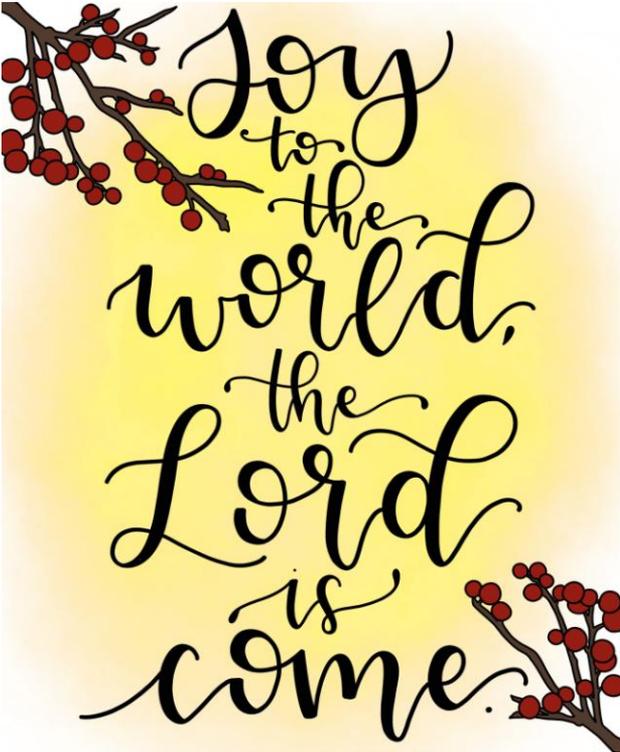
God has patience. God wanted to save His people from their sins. And in order for that to happen, many things like a recipe (scripturally, we call them prophecies) had to take place. Then when things were ready... *“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

That event took place at Christmas. It started with the birth of a Savior. Jesus Christ “born of a woman”... so that He could live a life as a human being like us. “Born under the law”... to live a perfect life never breaking the law so He could be sinless. “To redeem us who were under the law”... Jesus came to buy us out of our sins. Jesus bought us with His own blood, shed on the cross to earn our forgiveness of sins. “So that we might receive adoption”... Being forgiven sinners means that we who believe are adopted into God’s family.

When the fullness of time had come, God made an amazing thing happen. He forgives us and includes us in His family... an heir to the glory of heaven! It took patience and it happened just according to His plan. The best recipe ever for us – forgiveness and everlasting life. It all happened with one Jesus Christ!

Merry Christmas!

<https://www.bostongirlbakes.com/6-ingredient-caramel-sticky-buns/>



***We Invite You to Worship with Us
This Christmas Season!***

Trinity's Advent worship services will be held each Wednesday on
December 5, 12, and 19 at 7:15 pm. Regular worship is on
Saturdays at 6:30 PM and
Sundays at 9:00 and 10:45 AM.

Saturday/Sunday, December 22/23

6:30 PM Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
9:00 AM Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
10:45 AM Contemporary Worship/Holy Communion

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

6:00 PM Family Christmas Worship Service
7:30 PM Carols and Candles Service
9:00 PM Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
11:00 PM Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

9:30 AM Family Communion Service

Saturday/Sunday, December 29/30

6:30 PM Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
9:00 AM Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
10:45 AM Traditional Worship with Holy Communion

New Year's Eve, Monday, December 31

6:30 PM Holy Communion Service

We recognize that this time of year is a very busy time for all of
God's people. We invite you to take a moment in the midst of that
busy-ness to worship God, who gives us every gift. Come into His
Sanctuary, take refuge and rejoice!



O Come, Let Us Adore Him

