

AWAITING THE

# King

*The Promise of Advent*



THE  
HALLOWS  
CHURCH



# *Awaiting The King*

## **THE PROMISE OF ADVENT**

2020 Devotional

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**THE  
HALLOWS  
CHURCH**

## ◆ INTRODUCTION

Dear Hallows Family,

The word advent literally means ‘coming.’ **The season of Advent is an opportunity for us to consider and to celebrate together the ‘comings’ of Jesus.**

On the one hand, we reflect upon His first coming. We consider how the Old Testament prophets predicted His coming long before He came. We celebrate how He came, why He came, and what His coming means for us.

On the other hand, we also take time to focus our faith upon the promise and inevitability of Jesus’ return a second time to finish his work of making all thing new. Jesus came the first time in humility (Philippians 2:8). He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom to secure our salvation through his life, death, and resurrection (Mark 10:45). But when he comes again, he promises to return as the conquering King to settle our salvation once and for all. As we reflect upon the two ‘comings’ of our King, we will find our lives adorned with humility and hope in the here and now.

We designed this year’s devotional to include passages intending to demonstrate the power of God’s Old Testament promises fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament. This side-by-side comparison is intended to reflect on the reality of the ‘comings’ of our King and Savior.

When Christians read the Scriptures in light of Advent, we are posturing ourselves in a place of waiting and expectation. We are awaiting the King, but we are not the only people in history to do so! This year's devotional has a new unique element inside. Each day you will see a quoted reflection from an author, pastor, theologian, or poet on the Scripture passage or theme for that day. Our desire is to join other saints in the church, both contemporary and historical, in God's grand redemptive story of the coming King. On the last page, we have compiled a *recommended reading list* of books we used for these quotations. We hope you enjoy this new addition and find some new favorite authors along the way! For each day leading up to Christmas, you will find discussion questions that we encourage you to reflect on individually, or talk through with a friend or spouse.

We love you and pray that this resource will serve you well this Christmas season. **Merry Christmas!**

- Pastors Mark and Andrew, and Stephen (Church Planter in Residence)

## ◆ A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAYLIST

When I (Mark) was a teenager, there was no greater excitement than receiving a mixtape from a friend. This was before playlists and easily accessible digital music, so the mixtape was a mishmash of songs carefully organized to emulate a cohesive album. In this season of quarantine, I found joy in arriving home to my wife Amy listening to music while making dinner or playing with the kids. This everyday blessing of normalcy sparked the idea of taking a new approach to our Advent playlist this year. Instead of pairing songs with the weekly days, I've made you cohesive Christmas playlist. See it as a Christmas mixtape of sorts. This was the music I listened to while writing the devotional, and that I believe colors the content of the daily devotional well. So instead of listening to songs *individually*, I hope you listen to the playlist *collectively*. The songs follow the weekly themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. You can play them while you read the devotional, make dinner, play with kids, or drive in the car. Enjoy and make sure the "shuffle" option is off. **Happy listening!**

- Pastor Mark

# *advent playlist*

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Scan for the  
Spotify playlist

*The Light Came Down* - Josh Garrels  
*Joy to the World (Joyful, Joyful)* - Phil Wickham  
*God With Us* - All Sons & Daughters  
*Light Of The World* - Lauren Daigle  
*Hark The Herald Angels Sing* - Phil Wickham  
*Winter Snow* - Audrey Assad  
*O Holy Night / Ave Maria* - The Piano Guys (feat. Lexi Walker)  
*Shepherd's Song* - Josh Garrels  
*O Come All Ye Faithful* - Hillsong Worship  
*Advent Hymn (Renewed)* - Christy Nockels  
*Angels We Have Heard On High* - Tori Kelly  
*What Child Is This* - Sleeping At Last  
*O Holy Night* - Hillsong Worship  
*Star of Wonder* - Phil Wickham  
*Silent Night (Holding Us Now)* - Christy Nockels  
*The Son of God Came Down* - Sovereign Grace Music  
*Come Behold The Wonderful Mystery* - Matt Boswell  
*Mission Not One (Perfect Love of Christ)* - Immanuel Worship  
*The First Noel* - Phil Wickham  
*Come Thou Fount* - Audrey Assad  
*There Is A King* - Elevation Worship  
*The King Is Coming* - Christy Nockels





## WEEK ONE

# *hope*

Where can the weary look for hope? This is a question that seems to saturate the Scriptures. People living in a fallen world, suppressed by circumstances, long for the relief of suffering and cast their eyes to God for hope. God's people look to Him for the hope of redemption, and God graciously provides. The Scriptures are saturated with weary souls, it is also saturated with the promise of hope. Hope is given by Himself, who will send His one and only Son, to redeem the weary and heavy laden.

This week's theme is hope. Over the next five days, you will read Old Testament passages of hope promised to God's people and New Testament passages of those promises fulfilled in Jesus. The prophets were determined to remind Israel of the coming King, the Messiah, who would save them from sin and suffering, and though we have been shown who that King is, we join with our brothers and sisters of Scripture in our anticipation of the King's second coming. Hope is found in Christ the King; let us be renewed in that wonderful reality.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

## *hope promised*

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Old Testament

**Isaiah 11:1** *Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

## *hope fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Revelation 5:4-5** *I wept and wept because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or even to look in it. Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

## REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

*The messages of the prophets and psalmists are whispers which merge into perfect music only when the Son who is in the Father declares the God who has never been seen. All the highways through the centuries lead on towards the city, but the city itself, the city of God, can only be built by the King Himself. From the darkness, through the twilight, men moved towards the perfect light. Through all the ages God followed His perpetual method, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.*

*Through all the centuries He said in effect to men what Christ actually said to His disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Thus, quietly and surely, if slowly, God moved on to the final Word, Who was made flesh.*

*At the heart of the Old Testament may be found the insignificant "What is man?" At the heart of the New is the great exclamation, "Behold the Man!" Yet the Old is of value as it reveals clearly the true principle of human life, the real reason of human sorrow, all the highways that lead towards human redemption.*

- G. Campbell Morgan

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » What is the significance of Scripture's multi-definitions of Jesus? Why do you think He is called the branch, the root, and the lion of Judah?
- » Looking forward to your potentially busy schedule this week, what rest can you find in the assurance of Christ's Kingship and authority in the heavens and earth? Does this reality bring comfort to you?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

## *hope promised*

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Old Testament

**Ezekiel 34:23** *I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them. He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd.*

## *hope fulfilled*

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New Testament

**John 10: 11** *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

## REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

*Jesus, the Good Shepherd... No picture of Jesus was more dear to the early church. By Jesus the human flock finds pasturage. The grass seems greener beyond the hedge of his care, but that appearance always deceives, for man's self-will leads only to the wastelands.*

*Our hymnals ring with the praise of Christ, not in any self-hypnotism, but because the generations of those who have loved him have found fulfillment in his shepherding care. He has kindled the mind, enriched the emotions, and nerved the will. By Jesus the human flock has found shelter. Thus he meets life's demand for both adventure and refuge. The yearning for the fold is no cowardice; those who jibe at religion as an "escape" do not choose the beating of the storm when their own door is near at hand.*

*Pain is only slow death unless interpretation is given, sorrow is only a hopelessness unless some rainbow is flung across it, and sin is a worse despair unless there is assurance of pardon. Jesus leads the flock out of the storm of sorrow, and sin, and guides it into his fold.*

- John Knox

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » What is the primary characteristic of Jesus the Shepherd? Do you struggle to instinctively believe Jesus is the good Shepherd?
- » What joy and thankfulness will you find today in resting in the fold of Christ?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

## *hope promised*

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Old Testament

**Zechariah 3:8-9** *Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your colleagues sitting before you; indeed, these men are a sign that I am about to bring my servant, the Branch... and I will take away the iniquity of this land in a single day.*

## *hope fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Hebrews 7:26-27** *For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do — first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all time when he offered himself.*

## REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

*It took a great many days to pile up the sin, but one day sees it removed. Throughout the hundreds of years of the judges, the kings, the captivities, and so on, they continued to revolt of the divine authority, they heaped up transgression till it stood aloft in mountainous height, and yet when the dreadful pile was completed the Lord made it to disappear in one day.*

*Yes, and our sins have taken a long time to heap up, they comprise the sins of our youth, the sins of our adulthood, the transgressions of our riper years and it may be we have added to these the sins of our old age. One may say as he looks at his sin, "That is forty years' work." Another may mournfully confess "that is seventy years' accumulation." If each sin deserves a tear, O to be a Niobe<sup>1</sup>; for we have need that clouds and rains dwell in our eyes, our souls have need of all the watery things nature can produce.*

*But we may dry our tears, for though many days were taken for the formation of the sin, the Lord saith He will remove it all in one day. In one single day seventy years of sin are forever put away by our Lord Jesus; truly for this His name shall be called "Wonderful."*

- C.H. Spurgeon

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » Is there a burden in your life that is causing you suffering? How does the hope of Christ's redemption bring you relief?
- » How do the first and second coming of King Jesus bring you hope?

<sup>1</sup>The term Niobe is derived from a character in Greek Mythology. Niobe was the Queen of Thebes, who, weeping for her slain children, turned into a stone from which tears continued to flow.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

## *hope promised*

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Old Testament

**Micah 5:2-3** *Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth.*

## *hope fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Matthew 2:1-2** *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."*



## REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

*He who existed as the Son of God before all ages, without a beginning, deigned to become the Son of Man in these recent years. He did this although He who submitted to such great evils for our sake had done no evil and although we, who were the recipients of so much good at His hands, had done nothing to merit these benefits. Begotten by the Father, He was not made by the Father; He was made Man in the Mother whom He Himself had made, so that He might exist here for a while, sprung from her who could never and nowhere have existed except through His power.*

- Augustine of Hippo

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » How do the passages above speak to Jesus' divinity as the second person of the Trinity? How should we consider this in light of Advent?
- » What is the significance of the wise men's worship of Jesus? How do they demonstrate the fulfilling promise of Micah?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

## *hope promised*

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Old Testament

**Malachi 3:1** *See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me.*

## *hope fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Luke 1:68-69, 76-77** *Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... and you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways.*

## REFLECTIONS ON HOPE

*Behold the kings of the earth, how they oppress  
Thy Chosen, to what height their power unjust  
They have exalted, and behind them cast  
All fear of Thee; arise, and vindicate  
Thy glory; free thy people from their yoke!  
But let us wait; thus far He hath performed-  
Sent his Anointed, and to us revealed him  
By his great Prophet pointed at and shown  
In public, and with him we have conversed.*

*Let us be glad of this, and all our fears  
Lay on his providence; He will not fail,  
Nor will withdraw him now, nor will recall-  
Mock us with his blest sight, then snatch him hence:  
Soon we shall see our hope, our joy, return.*

- John Milton in *Paradise Regained: The Second Book*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » What is the significance of John the Baptist as Christ's herald? What does his part fulfill in the Old Testament promise?
- » John the Baptist was called by God to declare the coming King Jesus. How might we find hope in this story?



## WEEK TWO

# *peace*

What is peace? We pray for it often. It has a universal hand signal. It's used as a greeting in churches and a goodbye for us 90's kids. Also, if we learned anything from "Miss Congeniality," it's that the correct answer to the question "What is the most important thing our society needs?" is *world peace*. So, what is it? In the gospel of Mark chapter 4, we see an interesting and challenging definition of this term. A storm is bombarding the boat the disciples and Jesus are in, and the disciples, understandably, start to fear. Meanwhile, Jesus has found a cozy place to rest his head. The disciples awaken Jesus, and ask Him if He would be interested in drowning. Jesus politely declined by speaking into the storm and causing it to cease. Ah, there it is, peace. The storm finally being calmed. However, Jesus then asks the disciples why they were afraid, did they not have faith? And therein lies the true meaning of peace. Jesus seems to tie peace into having faith. Jesus knew that his Father's purpose would be fulfilled and in that promise He rested, even in the middle of a storm. So, what peace has been extended to us? That same purpose Jesus rested in, His sacrifice for us. The whole world is looking for peace and yet it was delivered as a promise and an infant in a manger in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

## *peace promised*

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Old Testament

**Ezekiel 37:26-27** *I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be a permanent covenant with them. I will establish and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

## *peace fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Matthew 26:27-29** *Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

## REFLECTIONS ON PEACE

*Jesus is a Redeemer, that is his name; he came into the world on this very business, to redeem his people, to redeem them from all iniquity (Titus 2:14), from this present evil world, from our vain conversations. He hath shed his precious blood to purchase us, we are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). We are none of our own, we are his, the purchase of his blood; and we may be confident that he dearly loves us, for he dearly bought us; and if he had not dearly loved us, he would never have given himself for us (Galatians 2:20). That was the highest testimony of his love; he loves us, and washed us from our sins in his blood (Revelation 1:5). He will redeem us from the wrath to come.*

- John Bunyan

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » As you consider what Jesus came to accomplish for our salvation, how does that truth and gracious act stir your affections towards Him?
- » What peace can we find, as believers, in the good news of Jesus' permanent covenant?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

## *peace promised*

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Old Testament

### **Isaiah 53:5-6**

*But he was pierced because of our rebellion,  
crushed because of our iniquities;  
punishment for our peace was on him,  
and we are healed by his wounds.  
We all went astray like sheep;  
we all have turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has punished him  
for the iniquity of us all.*

## *peace fulfilled*

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New Testament

**1 Peter 2:24-25** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*



## REFLECTIONS ON PEACE

*Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die? This is a heavy question. I don't know if questions get much heavier than this. Christ lived a perfect life, the life you and I should have lived. He lived a life of love, of service. He lived an amazing life of trust in his heavenly Father. So the question is a pressing one. Why should one like that die? Why was it morally necessary?*

*Well, he didn't have to die for his own sake. If we were thinking just about Jesus, there would be no necessity for the cross. No, he died because he would be the Redeemer. It was his will, and also his heavenly Father's will, to redeem us. It was his will to lay down his life, to sacrifice himself by dying on the cross in order to rescue us from the penalty that we deserved. You see, because God is good, he will punish sin. That wrong thing that you or I have done in secret—God knows about it. God's real. He's not just an idea. He's not just a figment of our imagination. And this God is so thoroughly committed to what is good and right that every sin will be punished. And this is where Jesus comes in.*

*Jesus determined to be our Redeemer. It was the will of his heavenly Father that he would give himself as a sacrifice in substitution. That's the word that's often used—as a substitute, in the place of, instead of you and me. Jesus is our substitute if we repent of our sins, turn from them and trust in him.*

*So why did the Redeemer need to die? Because that's the only way you and I would live.*

- Mark Dever

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » If Christ's death has brought us healing and redemption, how does it bring you peace?
- » When is the last time you repented and felt thankful for Jesus being your substitute?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

## *peace promised*

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Old Testament

**Isaiah 57:19** *The Lord says, “Peace, peace to the one who is far or near, and I will heal him.”*

## *peace fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Ephesians 2:17-20** *He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*

## REFLECTIONS ON PEACE

*Jesus is the embodiment of who God is. He is the tangible epitomization of God. Jesus Christ is the visible manifestation of the invisible God (2 Cor. 4:4-6). In him we see heaven's eternal heart walking around on two legs in time and space. When we see the heart of Christ, then, throughout the four Gospels, we are seeing the very compassion and tenderness of who God himself most deeply is.*

*As you consider the Father's heart for you, remember that he is the Father of mercies. He is not cautious in his tenderness toward you. He multiplies mercies matched to your every need, and there is nothing he would rather do. "Remember," said the Puritan John Flavel, "that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself." Your gentlest treatment of yourself is less gentle than the way your heavenly Father handles you. His tenderness toward you outstrips what you are even capable of toward yourself. The heart of Christ is gentle and lowly. And that is the perfect picture of who the Father is.*

- Dane Ortlund

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » In what ways does this passage of promised peace from our Father of mercies resonate with you? Have you been harboring an internal discord or disagreement you need to confess?
- » Does Flavel's statement "your Father is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself" bring you peace? Why or why not?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

## *peace promised*

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Old Testament

**Jeremiah 33:6** *Yet I will certainly bring health and healing to it and will indeed heal them. I will let them experience the abundance of true peace.*

## *peace fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Romans 5:1-2** *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

## REFLECTIONS ON PEACE

*We must realize that Christianity is the easiest religion in the world, because it is the only religion in which God the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit do everything. God is the Creator; we have nothing to do with our existence, or the existence of other things. We can shape other things, but we cannot change the fact of existence. We do nothing for our salvation because Christ did it all. We do not have to do anything.*

*In every other religion we have to do something... but with Christianity we do not do anything; God has done it all: He has created us and He has sent His Son; His Son died and because the Son is infinite, therefore he bears our total guilt. We do not need to bear our own guilt, nor do we even have to merit the merit of Christ. He does it all. So in one way it is the easiest religion in the world.*

- Francis Schaeffer

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » Does Schaeffer's statement "we do not have to do anything" challenge you? How so?
- » How is God calling you to rest in his peace right now? Is there a situation or circumstance you have yet to surrender in faith?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

## *peace promised*

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Old Testament

### **Psalm 85:8-9**

*I will listen to what God will say;  
surely the LORD will declare peace  
to his people, his faithful ones,  
and not let them go back to foolish ways.  
His salvation is very near those who fear him,  
so that glory may dwell in our land.*

## *peace fulfilled*

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New Testament

**John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.*

## REFLECTIONS ON PEACE

Psalm 85 (First version)

*Lord, Thou hast set Thy people free;  
A brighter day begins;  
And mercy, flowing full from Thee,  
Has covered all their sins.*

*Thy anger, Lord, is turned to love;  
O turn Thy people too!  
A blest revival let us prove,  
And health and joy renew.*

*Thy full salvation bid us see;  
Thy perfect peace restore:  
And bind our souls with love, that we  
May ne'er desert Thee more.*

*The Gospel sounds; the Lord descends;  
The sinner's fears may cease.  
Mercy and Truth have met as friends,  
And Justice kisses Peace.*

- Henry Francis Lyte

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » How does it encourage you to know that Jesus “does not give to you as the world gives” and that our “sinner’s fears may cease?”
- » As you consider your life and plans this weekend, what God-given peace are you anticipating to see? Is there someone in your life who needs to experience this peace—someone you need to share the gospel with this weekend?





## WEEK THREE

# *joy*

Joy is a constant theme in scripture. From Genesis through Revelation we see this tiny three letter word. Most often it is presented in a cause and effect type scenario. The interesting thing is it seems to be one of those strange transitive property type things. You remember the transitive property from algebra right? If  $A=B$  and  $B=C$  then  $A=C$ ? Now, I (Stephen) got a solid “C” in College Algebra—the last math class I will ever take—so I’m more than qualified to explain this to you.

In the Bible, when good things happen we have joy. When trials come we are commanded to count it as joy. When we receive blessings we have joy, but also in loss and sadness we can find joy. In fact, in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 Paul gives a big directive to the people when he says, “Rejoice always!” Maybe everything just equals rejoicing. In good times, rejoice. In sadness, rejoice. In a pandemic, rejoice. At the birth of a child, rejoice. Scripture seems to tell us rejoicing isn’t just an effect of joy it is also a cause for joy. Rejoice whether we feel it or not for the King has come and is coming again. In *that* rejoicing we find joy, both the feeling and the man (refer back to the transitive property thing).

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

## *joy promised*

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Old Testament

### **Habakkuk 3:18b-19**

*I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!  
The Lord my Lord is my strength;  
He makes my feet like those of a deer  
And enables me to walk on mountain heights!*

## *joy fulfilled*

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New Testament

### **Luke 1:46-49**

*And Mary said,  
My soul praises the greatness of the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
because he has looked with favor  
on the humble condition of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations  
will call me blessed,  
because the Mighty One  
has done great things for me,  
and his name is holy.*

## REFLECTIONS ON JOY

*“A Christmas Question”* Delivered Sunday morning, Dec. 25, 1859

*Why are we sad? I am looking upon faces just now that appear the very reverse of gloomy, but mayhap [perhaps] the smile covers an aching heart. Brother and sister, why are we sad this morning, if unto us a child is born, if unto us a Son is given?*

*And what, brothers and sisters, have we the bread which endureth to eternal life and are we unhappy? Hark yonder! Why all this ringing of bells in the church steeples, as if all London were mad with joy? There is a prince born; therefore there is this salute, and therefore are the bells ringing.*

*Ah, Christians, ring the bells of your hearts! Fire the salute of your most joyous songs, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.” Dance, O my heart, and ring out peals of gladness! Ye drops of blood within my veins, dance every one of you!*

*Wipe that tear away! Come, stop that sighing! Hush yon murmuring. What matters your poverty? “Unto you a child is born.” What matters your sickness? “Unto us a child is born.” What matters your sin? For this Child shall take the sin away, and this Son shall wash and make you fit for heaven... O beloved brethren, yield yourselves up this morning. Give thyself to Christ.*

- C.H. Spurgeon

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » As you reflect on our Savior and the joy He brings you today, what is the current posture of your heart you bring to Him?
- » In what part of the day will you find joy? Who will you rejoice with?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

## *joy promised*

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Old Testament

### **Psalm 67:4-5**

*Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with fairness  
and lead the nations on earth. Selah  
Let the peoples praise you, God,  
let all the peoples praise you.*

## *joy fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Matthew 2:9-11** *After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

## REFLECTIONS ON JOY

Humiliation and Praise (Olney Hymn, verses 2-3)

*When the wounded spirit hears  
The voice of Jesus' blood,  
How the message stops the tears  
Which else in vain had flowed!  
Pardon, grace, and peace proclaimed,  
And the sinner called a child;  
Then the stubborn heart is tamed,  
Renewed, and reconciled.*

*Oh! 'twas grace indeed, to spare  
And save a wretch like me!  
Men or angels could not bear  
What I have offered thee:  
Were thy bolts at their command,  
Hell ere now had been my place;  
Thou alone couldst silent stand,  
And wait to show thy grace.*

- John Newton

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » In what ways are the magi a representation of the nations? How might this inspire our church to witness to the nations through missions?
- » Why were the magi overwhelmed with joy when they saw the star? Did their joy lead to worship? Does yours?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

## *joy promised*

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Old Testament

**Zechariah 2:10** *“Daughter Zion, shout for joy and be glad, for I am coming to dwell among you” — this is the LORD’s declaration.*

## *joy fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Luke 1:64-66** *Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came on all those who lived around them, and all these things were being talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard about him took it to heart, saying, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the Lord’s hand was with him.*

## REFLECTIONS ON JOY

Hymn of Praise

*Praise the Lord! Ye heavens, adore Him;  
Praise Him, angels, in the height:  
Sun and moon, rejoice before Him,  
Praise Him, all ye stars and light.  
Praise the Lord! For He hath spoken;  
Worlds His mighty voice obeyed;  
Laws which never shall be broken,  
For their guidance hath He made.*

*Praise the Lord! For He is glorious;  
Never shall His promise fail:  
God hath made His saints victorious,  
Sin and death shall not prevail.  
Praise the God of our Salvation;  
Hosts on high, His power proclaim;  
Heaven and earth and all creation,  
Laud and magnify His name!*

- Henry Francis Lyte

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » How is Zechariah's praising a symbol of God's promise to bring the Messiah?
- » When was the last moment you praised Jesus for the evidences of grace in your life? Reflect on that moment with the Lord.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

## *joy promised*

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Old Testament

**Isaiah 29:19** *The humble will have joy after joy in the LORD, and the poor people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*

## *joy fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Matthew 5:3-5** *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.”*

### REFLECTIONS ON JOY

Who am I? (A poem written in prison)

*Who am I? They often tell me  
I step from my cell's confinement  
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
Like a squire from his country-house.  
Who am I? They often tell me  
I talk to my warders  
Freely and friendly and clearly,  
As though it were mine to command.*



*Who am I? They also tell me  
I bear the days of misfortune  
Equably, smilingly, proudly,  
Like one accustomed to win.*

*Am I then really all that which other men tell of?  
Or am I only what I know of myself,  
Restless, and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,  
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,  
Yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,  
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,  
Tossing in expectation of great events,  
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,  
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?*

*Who am I? This or the other?  
Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?  
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
And before myself a contemptibly weebegone weakling?  
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,  
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?*

*Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- » Is it challenging for you to find joy in difficult circumstances? How does Jesus' promise in the beatitudes provide you comfort today?
- » Is there a current circumstance that needs to be brought to Jesus? How might He help ease your sorrows and replace them with joy?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

## *joy promised*

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Old Testament

**Isaiah 55:12** *You will indeed go out with joy and be peacefully guided; the mountains and the hills will break into singing before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.*

## *joy fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Ephesians 5:18b-21** *Be filled by the Spirit: speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music with your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.*

## REFLECTIONS ON JOY

*God has given us, throughout the whole frame-work of this world, clear evidences of his eternal wisdom, goodness, and power; and though he is in himself invisible, he in a manner becomes visible to us in his works.*

*Correctly then is this world called the mirror of divinity; not that there is sufficient clearness for man to gain a full knowledge of God, by looking at the world, but that he has thus so far revealed himself, that the ignorance of the ungodly is without excuse. Now the faithful, to whom he has given eyes, see sparks of his glory, as it were, glittering in every created thing. The world was no doubt made, that might be the theatre of the divine glory.*

- John Calvin

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » How does all creation testify to God's character? What characteristics of God as Creator does the earth rejoice in?
- » How does singing and speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs bear witness to Jesus' second coming?



# WEEK FOUR

# *love*

Our last week of Advent is centered on the theme of love. As we have seen thus far, it is God's love for us that compels Him to send His Son to be the Savior of the world. Jesus was born in complete humility as his earthly parents had nothing to provide Him but simple love and adoration. Isn't that the beauty of Advent—Jesus coming to us when we have nothing to give?

The great mystery of fallen humanity, after all, is that this is exactly how God planned it to be. Advent is love coming as our Savior and demonstrating God's perfect character. As Pastor Dane Ortlund says, "The Jesus given to us in the Gospels is not simply one who loves, but one who is love; merciful affections stream from his innermost heart as rays from the sun."

As you read and reflect on this week's passages, we pray you will be struck in awe of God's love for you in His Son. The God of the universe sent His Son to be our Savior, and in our fickleness and simple gratitude, we love Him for it.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

## *love promised*

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Old Testament

**Lamentations 3:22-24** *Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! I say, "The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him."*

## *love fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Luke 2:15-20** *When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger.*

*After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.*

## REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

Hear What He Has Done For My Soul (Olney Hymn, verses 3-4)

*Shame and wonder, joy and love,  
All at once possessed my heart;  
Can I hope thy grace to prove  
After acting such a part?  
“Thou hast greatly sinned,” he said,  
“But I freely all forgive;  
I myself thy debt have paid,  
Now I bid thee rise and live.”*

*Come, my fellow sinners, try;  
Jesus’ heart is full of love;  
Oh that you, as well as I,  
May his wondrous mercy prove!  
He has sent me to declare,  
All is ready, all is free:  
Why should any soul despair,  
When he saved a wretch like me?*

- John Newton

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » As you begin the last week of Advent, what treasures of God’s faithful love are you storing up in your heart?
- » As you reflect upon the many Old Testament passages fulfilled by Jesus, how has your heart and mind responded to the faithfulness of God’s love?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

## *love promised*

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Old Testament

### **Isaiah 53:2-4**

*He grew up before him like a young plant  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He didn't have an impressive form  
or majesty that we should look at him,  
no appearance that we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.  
He was like someone people turned away from;  
he was despised, and we didn't value him.  
Yet he himself bore our sicknesses,  
and he carried our pains;  
but we in turn regarded him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted.*

## *love fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Luke 2:11-14** *Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!*



## REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

*In the Incarnation, God the Son takes the body and human soul of Jesus, and, through that, the whole environment of Nature, all the creaturely predicament, into His own being. So that 'He came down from Heaven' can almost be transposed into 'Heaven drew up into it', and locality, limitation, sleep, sweat, footsore weariness, frustration, pain, doubt, and death, are, from before all worlds, known by God from within. The pure light walks the earth; the darkness, received into the heart of Deity, is there swallowed up. Where, except in the uncreated light, can the darkness be drowned?*

– C.S. Lewis

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » What is the juxtaposition of Christ's heavenly glory and humble humanity? How is His love made visible in these two realities?
- » How is God's love for Christ and His people exemplified in the prophecy of Isaiah and displayed in the praises of the heavenly host?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

## *love promised*

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Old Testament

### **Isaiah 25:8-9**

*He will destroy death forever.  
The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears  
from every face  
and remove his people's disgrace  
from the whole earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.  
On that day it will be said,  
“Look, this is our God;  
we have waited for him, and he has saved us.  
This is the LORD; we have waited for him.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”*

## *love fulfilled*

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New Testament

**Revelation 22:16-17, 20-21** *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to attest these things to you for the churches. I am the root and descendent of David, the bright morning star.” Both the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Let the one who desires take the water of life freely.*

*He who testifies about these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”  
Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*

## REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

Hymn: All Glory Be To Christ

*When on that day the great I Am, the Faithful and the True;  
The Lamb who was for sinners slain, is making all things new.  
Behold our God shall live with us and be our steadfast light,  
And we shall e'er His people be, all glory be to Christ!*

*All glory be to Christ, our King, all glory be to Christ!  
His rule and reign we'll ever sing, all glory be to Christ!*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- » How does Advent speak to Christ's second coming? What is the significance of Christ's return?
- » How has God shown His love toward us in His Son Jesus? How may we celebrate this on Christmas Day?

## ◆ CLOSING THOUGHT

Thank you for putting time aside each day to spend time with the Lord through this devotional. We hope you have been encouraged by the Scripture presented and the many voices reflecting their thoughts on God's Word. It is truly amazing to be wrapped up in God's redemptive story. We hope you have been reminded of the grace and wonder of our Lord Jesus who came to save us from sin and will come again to bring us into glory. While we continue to wait for our King's second coming, we can store these treasures in our hearts and meditate on Christ's first coming, when He arrived as an infant in a manger.

## ◆ CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son Jesus. He is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the One you sent to save us from our sins. We pray for this week, that your grace would satisfy and stir our affections to Christ. Help us remain focused on the true meaning of Christmas instead of finding discouragement during our unique time in history. And if we do become discouraged, remind us of Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor, Immanuel. Amen.

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