



NEW LIFE CHURCH
2018 ADVENT GUIDE

Experiencing Christ through Advent

The Advent season begins on the 4th Sunday before Christmas and continues through Christmas Eve. Advent has been observed as early as the 6th century. Many Christians celebrate with the lighting of the 5 Advent candles – 1 per week and the final candle lit on Christmas Eve.

The word Advent derives from the Latin word meaning “coming”. In this case, “the Lord is coming”. The idea is that during this season of the year we celebrate His coming. Especially as believers we can celebrate His first AND second coming! This is really preparation for important days – especially Easter and Christmas – and it allows us to “tune in” at a deeper level into what these days are all about.

During Advent we recall the history of God's people and reflect on how the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled. This gives us a background for our present celebration of the day of Christ's birth. Today we can reflect on God's work in human history and begin to understand what it means for us now, for our own future and that of our world.

As an added worship experience for Advent you can use this booklet of daily reflections to help you focus on Christ throughout this season.

Many Christians use a traditional Advent wreath and light candles each evening as they count down the days until Christmas. The candles represent a 5-step progression within this time period. This allows for a physical picture of the truth being reflected upon. It is fun too—especially when children are involved—so let them be a part of the candle lighting! The candles represent....

1st Candle (purple) – HOPE

2nd Candle (purple) – PREPARATION

3rd Candle (pink) – JOY

4th Candle (purple) – LOVE

Center Candle (white) – CHRIST

So our daily reflections, prayers, scriptures, etc. will be focused on these topics. Take a few minutes to do this together each day with your family, roommates, children, or friends. Use it as part of your personal quiet time. The point is simply to give FOCUS throughout this season in expectation of Christ's coming!

The First Day of Advent – Sunday, December 2, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the*

Gentiles will hope in him.' May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:12-13)

Scripture

Psalm 72:1-8

Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

⁵ May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!

Isaiah 2:1-5

² It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.

Matthew 24:37-39

³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Hymn/Song

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus *by Charles Wesley*

Come Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring
By Thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

Meditation

The Lord is holy. Do I worship the Lord in the fullness of His holiness, knowing that He is the ultimate judge of sin?

Prayer

Lord God, I acknowledge your power, your might and I stand in awe, painfully aware of how poor and weak I am before you. You are holy and just. Only in you can I know true holiness and find true justice. As I begin this Advent journey, teach me to turn to you in my fear and sorrow. Let me remember that you look deep into my heart and that you will keep me in the safety of your love. I lift my soul to you with my weak hands and beg for your help and forgiveness. And I feel joy!

The Second Day of Advent – December 3, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)

Scripture

Psalm 147:1-7, 11-12

Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

² The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

⁴ He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.

⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.

⁶ The LORD lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

¹¹ but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

¹² Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!

Isaiah 7:13-15

¹³ And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.”

Luke 20:9-18

⁹ And he began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. ¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ ¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ ¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to

others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!”¹⁷ But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

“‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’?”

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

Hymn/Song

Rejoice, Rejoice Believers *a German Hymn from 1854 by Laurentius Laurenti*

Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear.
The evening is advancing, and darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising, and soon He draweth nigh.
Up, pray, and watch, and wrestle: At midnight comes the cry.
See that your lamps are burning; replenish them with oil.
And wait for your salvation, the end of earthly toil.
The watchers on the mountain proclaim the Bridegroom near.
Go meet Him as He cometh, with alleluias clear.
O wise and holy virgins, now raise your voices higher,
Until in songs of triumph ye meet the angel choir.
The marriage feast is waiting, the gates wide open stand;
Rise up, ye heirs of glory, the Bridegroom is at hand.
Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear!
Arise, Thou Sun so longed for, over this benighted sphere!
With hearts and hands uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth’s redemption that brings us unto Thee.
Ye saints, who here in patience your cross and sufferings bore,
Shall live and reign forever, when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory the Lamb ye shall behold;
In triumph cast before Him your diadems of gold!

Meditation

God is to be honored and feared (taken seriously).

Do I see this aspect of my Father, or just the parts that I like to think about such as “He is my friend” or just the “baby in the hay”?

Prayer

Lord God, today I acknowledge your awesome greatness. And yet you came in the form of a servant. You were rejected as though you had no power, no authority. I want to live in a full understanding of the truth of who you are. I am the servant. I bow before your throne. I worship you and you alone. Nothing else, but you Lord. Keep my heart in an attitude of humbleness. May I not think more highly of myself than I ought to think. I want to be longing for your coming. You alone are God.

The Third Day of Advent – December 4, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 95:1-2

¹ Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Amos 9:13-15

¹³ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when the plowman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
¹⁵ I will plant them on their land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land that I have given them,”
says the LORD your God.

Hebrews 11:13-16

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Today’s Hymn/Song

One Day (Glorious Day) by John Wilbur Chapman, 1910 / Casting Crowns, 2009

One day when heaven was filled with His praises,
One day when sin was as black as could be,

Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin—
Dwelt among men, my example is He!

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming—O glorious day!

One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain,
One day they nailed Him to die on the tree;
Suffering anguish, despised and rejected;
Bearing our sins, my Redeemer is He.

One day they left Him alone in the garden,
One day He rested, from suffering free;
Angels came down o'er His tomb to keep vigil;
Hope of the hopeless, my Savior is He.

One day the grave could conceal Him no longer,
One day the stone rolled away from the door;
Then He arose, over death He had conquered;
Now is ascended, my Lord evermore.

One day the trumpet will sound for His coming,
One day the skies with His glory will shine;
Wonderful day, my beloved ones bringing;
Glorious Savior, this Jesus is mine!

Today's Meditation

Life is filled with dark and confusing times. Do I fully trust God in these times, knowing that ultimately all will be made right?

Today's Prayer

God of forgiveness, I turn to you in my great weakness and beg for your help. It is so often hard to trust you, but my desire is to stand firm in my faith. Let me feel the joy growing in my heart as I anticipate your coming. I hear the message of the prophets and know that Jesus, the Messiah will bring new life and new ways of living. Build belief from my unbelief, faith from my lack of it, trust from self-focus. Your coming is near and I look with anticipation to that glorious day!

The Fourth Day of Advent – December 5, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah*

says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.' May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:12-13)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah
³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Isaiah 1:11-17

"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of well-fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

¹² "When you come to appear before me,
who has required of you
this trampling of my courts?

¹³ Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts
my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
¹⁵ When you spread out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
¹⁷ learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.

Luke 1:26-31

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

Today's Hymn/Song

Come Thou Fount, Come Thou King *by John Wyeth, Robert Robinson, Thomas Miller*

Come Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise
Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy redeeming love

I was lost in utter darkness
'Til You came and rescued me
I was bound by all my sin when
Your love came and set me free
Now my soul can sing a new song
Now my heart has found a home
Now Your grace is always with me
And I'll never be alone

Come Thou Fount come Thou King
Come Thou precious Prince of Peace
Hear Your bride to You we sing
Come Thou Fount of our blessing
Come Thou Fount come Thou King
Come Thou precious Prince of Peace
Hear Your bride to You we sing
Come Thou Fount of our blessing

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let Thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee
Prone to wander Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart Lord take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above

Today's Meditation

True faith comes when we trust those things we do not understand. True holiness comes in recognizing and repenting of our sin.

Today's Prayer

Father, let me be truly trusting in your ways and your plans for me. Let me not get caught up in comfort and desire it more than I desire You. Let me be truly holy as you have called me to be. Let me see my sin and repent, living fully in the righteousness that is mine in Jesus.

The Fifth Day of Advent – December 6, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 65:3

When iniquities prevail against me,
you atone for our transgressions.

Psalm 14

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
there is none who does good.

² The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.

³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.

⁴ Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread
and do not call upon the LORD?

⁵ There they are in great terror,
for God is with the generation of the righteous.

⁶ You would shame the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is his refuge.

⁷ Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

2 Peter 3:3-13

³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Today's Hymn/Song

All I Have Is Christ *by Jordan Kauflin*

I once was lost in darkest night
Yet thought I knew the way
The sin that promised joy and life
Had led me to the grave
I had no hope that You would own
A rebel to Your will
And if You had not loved me first
I would refuse You still

But as I ran my hell-bound race
Indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state
And led me to the cross
And I beheld God's love displayed
You suffered in my place
You bore the wrath reserved for me
Now all I know is grace

Hallelujah all I have is Christ
Hallelujah Jesus is my life

Now Lord I would be Yours alone
And live so all might see
The strength to follow Your commands
Could never come from me
O Father use my ransomed life
In any way You choose
And let my song forever be
My only boast is You

Today's Meditation

God has called me to faithfully live in personal holiness, trusting that one day, He will come and make all things right. Am I living this call in faith each day?

Today's Prayer

Father, You cannot stand unrighteousness and so you have placed in me the Holy Spirit to live your righteousness in and through me. At your coming, all unholiness and all unrighteousness will be consumed by fire in your sovereign judgment! Let me come to you hungry each day, bowing at your throne, with a desire to know you and honor you with my life until you come and take me home.

The Sixth Day of Advent – December 7, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 86:5

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

Isaiah 12:1-4

You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

² “Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day:

“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

2 Corinthians 4:6

⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Today’s Hymn/Song

Sing *By Israel Houghton, Aaron Lindsey*

Now is the time for all people
From every land to come together
Now is the moment for worship
We enter in withholding nothing

He is worthy exalted
He's high and lifted up

Sing, sing unto the Lord
Open up your heart
Make a joyful noise
In the sanctuary
Sing, sing unto the Lord
Lavish Him with love
Let the praises ring
In the sanctuary
Sing

Gotta open up your mouth and give Him praise
Open up your heart and give Him praise
Lift up holy hand unashamed
In the sanctuary

Today's Meditation

It is only in Christ that we can find salvation. He alone is to be praised. Do I give ALL my praise and devotion to Jesus, or have other things taken first place in my life?

Today's Prayer

Thank you Jesus for being my salvation, my only hope, my life. I give total praise to You alone. Nothing that I do, nothing else that I put my faith in will ever be enough to change me, save me, rescue me, or make me like You. Today, in this week of HOPE, I declare that my ONLY HOPE is in YOU!

The Seventh Day of Advent – December 8, 2018

1st CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE** – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 5:1-4

Give ear to my words, O LORD;
consider my groaning.
² Give attention to the sound of my cry,

my King and my God,
for to you do I pray.
³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

Isaiah 29:11-14

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD...

Matthew 1:22-23

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

Today's Hymn/Song

I Sing the Mighty Power of God *by Isaac Watts, 1715*

I sing the almighty power of God,
That made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at His command,
And all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord,
That filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His Word,
And then pronounced them good.

Lord! How Thy wonders are displayed
Where'er I turn mine eye!
If I survey the ground I tread,
Or gaze upon the sky!

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;

And clouds arise and tempests blow,
By order from Thy throne.

Today's Meditation

Our God is powerful and yet He lets Himself be known. He wants to know me, His creation. How much do I truly want to know Him? Do my daily actions prove that?

Today's Prayer

Powerful, wonderful God! God who created all things and controls all things, and is worshipped by all things. I want to be a worshipper who desires to draw close to you and know you. Thank you for letting me know you. Let me not take this for granted and worship other gods – nothing else, but You.

The Eighth Day of Advent/Second Sunday – December 9, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION—This begins the second week of Advent. God kept his promise of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! *“As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘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 mankind will see God’s salvation.’ ”* (Luke 3:4-6)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 26

- Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.
- ² Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and my mind.
- ³ For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in your faithfulness.
- ⁴ I do not sit with men of falsehood,
nor do I consort with hypocrites.
- ⁵ I hate the assembly of evildoers,
and I will not sit with the wicked.
- ⁶ I wash my hands in innocence
and go around your altar, O LORD,

⁷ proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

⁸ O LORD, I love the habitation of your house
and the place where your glory dwells.

⁹ Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,
nor my life with bloodthirsty men,

¹⁰ in whose hands are evil devices,
and whose right hands are full of bribes.

¹¹ But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
redeem me, and be gracious to me.

¹² My foot stands on level ground;
in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

Isaiah 11:1-5

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² 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.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Luke 1:57-66, 80

The Birth of John the Baptist

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." ⁶¹ And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." ⁶² And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. ⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, ⁶⁶ and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Today's Hymn/Song

Glorious by *BJ Putnam, Doug Engquist, Israel Houghton, Laurie Engquist*

Glorious shout it out
And glorious make it loud
And Jesus we shout Your name
Jesus we make Your praise glorious
You are glorious

My God You reign forever and ever
How great Your name
Your love remains forever and ever
You stay the same

Shout it out shout it out
If you know He's good
Sing it out sing it out
For the Lord is good
Shout it out loud You are glorious

Shine Jesus You shine for all the world to see
You are glorious

Today's Meditation

You are our coming King, Jesus! In ages past, John the Baptist came to prepare people for your coming the first time. Am I helping to prepare people for your next coming?

Today's Prayer

King of glory, Jesus, Emmanuel, come for us! I worship you! I honor you by being like John, a preparer of people for your Kingdom! Let me proclaim it loudly so all may hear the Good News of Jesus Christ!

The Ninth Day of Advent – December 10, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION**—Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! “*As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘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 mankind will see God’s salvation.’*” (Luke 3:4-6)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 111:2-9

- ² Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them.
- ³ Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.
- ⁴ He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.
- ⁵ He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.
- ⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.
- ⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy;
- ⁸ they are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.
- ⁹ He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!

Isaiah 55:3-5

- Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
- ⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
- ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

Matthew 21:18-22

¹⁸ In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

²⁰ When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?"

²¹ And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. ²² And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

Today's Hymn/Song

Awesome Is the Lord Most High *by Jon Abel*

Great are You, Lord
Mighty in strength
You are faithful
You will ever be

We will praise You
All of our days
It's for Your glory
We offer everything

Raise your hands, all you nations
Shout to God all creation
How awesome is the Lord most high

Where You send us
God, we will go
You're the answer
We want the world to know

We will trust You
When You call our name
Where You lead us
We'll follow all the way

We will praise You together
For now and forever
How awesome is the Lord most high

Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
How awesome is the Lord most high

Today's Meditation

The faith that we are to live in is a faith grounded in THE ONE in whom we live with in Covenant relationship. Is my faith totally in Christ or is it in anyone or anything else?

Today's Prayer

Lord, Your works are marvelous. You are my provider. You are THE Covenant Keeper. Allow my faith to grow more deeply in You and You alone. I will trust you and follow you...all the way.

The Tenth Day of Advent – December 11, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION**—Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! *“As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘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 mankind will see God’s salvation.’ ”* (Luke 3:4-6)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 31:19-24

Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of the children of mankind!
²⁰ In the cover of your presence you hide them
from the plots of men;
you store them in your shelter
from the strife of tongues.

²¹ Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was in a besieged city.

²² I had said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from your sight.”
But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy
when I cried to you for help.

²³ Love the LORD, all you his saints!
The LORD preserves the faithful
but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD!

Isaiah 55:3-5

The Lord's Eternal Covenant with David

¹⁴“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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’

Matthew 3:1-6

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Today's Hymn/Song

The Saving One by Jon Neufeld, Mia Fieldes, Tim Neufeld

And heaven can't contain
The glory of the Son
Jesus is the Christ
The Saving One
His love has made a way
The grave is overcome
Jesus is the Christ
The Saving One

What mercy was revealed
What selflessness and peace
My fate was surely sealed
Until He rescued me
His pardon for my sin
His bounty for my need
From slavery and shame
I am redeemed

No fear can hold me down
No darkness steal my joy
For blood has been poured out
The enemy destroyed
Death could not hold Him down
The cross was not enough
To steal away His love
For He is God

And anyone who calls upon His name
They will be saved

They will be saved
Anyone who calls upon His name
They will be saved
They will be saved

Today's Meditation

You are my salvation, Lord. You have called me to "prepare the way of the Lord." How do I do that God?

Today's Prayer

Lord, let us be strong and take courage as you deliver your children. You are our righteousness. We repent and ask that you be pleased to use us to prepare the way for your truth. Let us live in truth, declare truth as a worship to the one worthy of that worship.

The Eleventh Day of Advent – December 12, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION**—Preparation means to "get ready". Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! *"As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, '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 mankind will see God's salvation.'*" (Luke 3:4-6)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 43:3-6

Send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;

let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling!

⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.

I Corinthians 4:5

⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Today's Hymn/Song

The Lord is My Light and My Salvation *by Jesse Manibusan*

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is my life, my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call;
be gracious and answer me.
For you, O Lord, my heart is longing.
With all my heart your face I seek.

Your presence, O Lord, I seek;
do not hide your face from me.
Do not in anger turn away your servant.
You are my help; do not forsake me.

I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Be strong; let your heart take courage.
Wait for the Lord, wait for the Lord.

Today's Meditation

Jesus was THE LIGHT of the World. We are called to be the light of the world. How is my light shining? Brightly? Weakly? Not at all?

Today's Prayer

We worship you Lord, God of Light and Truth. Let your holy light shine into my life and reveal areas of darkness that I have allowed to gain footholds. Let me see those places in the recesses of my life that I want to hide from you. I want to hear you say "well done" to me. Your opinion of me is all that matters.

The Twelfth Day of Advent – December 13, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION—Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! “*As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘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 mankind will see God’s salvation.’ ”* (Luke 3:4-6)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 25:20

Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!
Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

Isaiah 16:4b-5

...When the oppressor is no more,
and destruction has ceased,
and he who tramples underfoot has vanished from the land,
⁵ then a throne will be established in steadfast love,
and on it will sit in faithfulness
in the tent of David
one who judges and seeks justice
and is swift to do righteousness.

Luke 20:1-8

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up ² and said to him, “Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.” ³ He answered them, “I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, ⁴ was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?” ⁵ And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ ⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.” ⁷ So they answered that they did not know where it came from. ⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Today’s Hymn/Song

Great is Thy Faithfulness *by Thomas Chisholm*

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;

Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Today's Meditation

Our refuge – our place of safety – is in THE ONE whose reign and Kingdom have been established and promised by God Himself. No matter how the world may say differently, our God alone is God! He has ALL authority and He alone is judge. Do I live each day in the truth that THIS God is my Father?

Today's Prayer

You, O Lord have all authority. You alone sit on the throne! You are faithful! You are THE just judge! You are my safety and my protector! In you I take refuge. In you is my only dependence.

The Thirteenth Day of Advent – December 14, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION—Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! *“As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘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 mankind will see God’s salvation.’ ”(Luke 3:4-6)*

Today's Scripture

Psalm 115:9-18

O Israel, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.

- ¹⁰ O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.
- ¹¹ You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.
- ¹² The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of Aaron;
- ¹³ he will bless those who fear the LORD,
both the small and the great.
- ¹⁴ May the LORD give you increase,
you and your children!
- ¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth!
- ¹⁶ The heavens are the LORD's heavens,
but the earth he has given to the children of man.
- ¹⁷ The dead do not praise the LORD,
nor do any who go down into silence.
- ¹⁸ But we will bless the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore.
Praise the LORD!

Haggai 2:6-9

⁶ For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷ And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. ⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹ The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.

Luke 3:15-18

¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

Today's Hymn/Song

Sing to the King *by Billy Foote*

Sing to the King Who is coming to reign
Glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain

Life and salvation His empire shall bring
And joy to the nations when Jesus is King

Come, let us sing a song
A song declaring that we belong to Jesus
He is all we need
Lift up a heart of praise
Sing now with voices raised to Jesus
Sing to the King

For His returning we watch and we pray
We will be ready the dawn of that day
We'll join in singing with all the redeemed
Cause Satan is vanquished and my Jesus is King

Today's Meditation

God has always had a plan for His Covenant people. The purpose of His coming and His preaching of the Good News (The Gospel) was to gather to Himself, His children, His people, His tribe, His community, His Church. He is the Mighty One of Israel who came as a helpless baby, but will one day come again as King. Do I live each day in the reality that Jesus is King?

Today's Prayer

King Jesus, I declare with the Heavens Your sovereign and righteous rule over my life! May my life show that I am one of your "gathered ones." May my praise be to you alone. May my worship be a testimony to the nations of Your authority over all of creation.

The Fourteenth Day of Advent – December 15, 2018

2nd CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION**—Preparation means to "get ready". Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD! *"As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, '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 mankind will see God's salvation.'*" (Luke 3:4-6)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 37:24-25, 29-33

Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong,
for the LORD upholds his hand.

²⁵ I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging for bread.

²⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land
and dwell upon it forever.

³⁰ The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
and his tongue speaks justice.

³¹ The law of his God is in his heart;
his steps do not slip.

³² The wicked watches for the righteous
and seeks to put him to death.

³³ The LORD will not abandon him to his power
or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.

Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16

¹¹ For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Matthew 3:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Today's Hymn/Song

Holy, Holy, Holy *by Reginald Heber, 1826*

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Today's Meditation

Jesus, You are righteous. You are righteousness! In your righteousness you gave us the humble example of baptism in which we identify with you. Do I really want to be identified with you or do I often hide my faith in fear and self-preservation?

Today's Prayer

I praise you Lord, for your righteousness and holiness. You are the only true and full example of these attributes. You ARE these attributes! Make me bold AND humble as I follow you, live for you, and speak your Good News to others.

The Fifteenth Day of Advent/Third Sunday – December 16, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY**– The angels sang a message of JOY! “...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ (Luke 2:7-15)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 63:1-7

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.

³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.

⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,

⁶ when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

⁷ for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

Luke 2:33-35

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Hebrews 12:18-24

A Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Today's Hymn/Song

It is Well With My Soul by Horatio G. Spafford, 1873

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul,
it is well, it is well with my soul.

And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
even so, it is well with my soul.

Today's Meditation

I shout that you are King! King eternal! I am at peace because you rule...at least I should be.
Am I truly at peace with you as King or does worry and concern take me over?

Today's Prayer

Jesus, You are King! You have come to establish a Kingdom – not just a place – but a people! You have made me an heir to that Kingdom. I am a Prince/Princess in God's eternal kingdom. I am not a pauper, not a beggar, not a sinner – I am a saint. It is with joy that I sing, "It is well with my soul."

The Sixteenth Day of Advent – December 17, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) THE CANDLE OF JOY– The angels sang a message of JOY! "...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'" (Luke 2:7-15)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 93

The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
²Your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.

⁴ Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!

⁵ Your decrees are very trustworthy;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.

Isaiah 59:15-20

Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

The LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.

¹⁶ He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;
then his own arm brought him salvation,
and his righteousness upheld him.

¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

¹⁸ According to their deeds, so will he repay,
wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies;
to the coastlands he will render repayment.

¹⁹ So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west,
and his glory from the rising of the sun;
for he will come like a rushing stream,
which the wind of the LORD drives.

²⁰ “And a Redeemer will come to Zion,
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD.

Luke 1:39-45

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,

⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Today's Hymn/Song

Before the Throne of God Above *by Shane & Shane*

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea:
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise the One,
Risen Son of God!

Behold Him there, the Risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I am,
The King of glory and of grace!

One with Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God
With Christ, my Savior and my God

Today's Meditation

Jesus, in all His glory, enthroned in Heaven...gave it all up to come and be born of a virgin; born into extremely poor circumstance; in a time when there were few "extra comforts." But He came...how grateful am I for this?

Today's Prayer

Jesus, thank you for interceding for me – stepping into time – caring for me. I am grateful that you gave up everything to come and visit a poor young woman in the Middle East – because of your love. I bow before your throne and worship you! I give you praise! I adore you!

The Seventeenth Day of Advent – December 18, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY**– The angels sang a message of JOY! “...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’” (Luke 2:7-15)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 103:10-13

- ¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- ¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Daniel 9:18-19

¹⁸ O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. ¹⁹ O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

Revelation 3:10-13

¹⁰Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Today's Hymn/Song

There's a Song in the Air *by Josiah Holland, 1872*

There's a song in the air
There's a star in the sky
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a Baby's low cry
And the star rains its fire
While the beautiful sing
For the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Aye! the star rains its fire
While the beautiful sing
For the manger of Bethlehem
Cradles a King

In the light of that star
Lie the ages impearled
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world
Every hearth is aflame
And the beautiful sing
In the homes of the nations
That Jesus is King

We rejoice in the light
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the heavenly throng
Aye! we shout to the
Lovely evangel they bring
And we greet in His cradle
our Savior and King

Today's Meditation

We await His coming with joy, knowing that all things will be made new and right! Am I allowing Jesus to daily work in me and prepare me for His coming?

Today's Prayer

This world is a mess, Jesus. It is far from you and is filled with unholiness, sin, self-centeredness, men and women who seek everything except You. Yet, You are my LIGHT. You are my SALVATION. You do not see my sin, but Your sacrifice! Thank you for being gracious to us and not giving us our just payment for our sins. I look with anticipation to Your coming.

The Eighteenth Day of Advent – December 19, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) THE CANDLE OF JOY– The angels sang a message of JOY! “...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ (Luke 2:7-15)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 24:7-10

Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!
⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory!

John 19:25-27

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Today's Hymn/Song

Lamb of God *by Twila Paris*

Your only Son
No sin to hide
But You have sent Him,
From Your side
To walk upon this guilty sod
And to become the Lamb of God

Your gift of Love
They crucified
They laughed and scorned him as he died
The humble King
They named a fraud
And sacrificed the Lamb of God

Oh Lamb of God, Sweet lamb of God
I love the Holy Lamb of God
Oh wash me in His precious Blood
My Jesus Christ the Lamb of God

I was so lost I should have died
But You have brought me to Your side
To be led by Your staff and rod
And to be call a lamb of God

Oh wash me in His precious Blood
My Jesus Christ the Lamb of God

Today's Meditation

The King of Heaven came as a Lamb to be slaughtered for me so that I would honor Him as King? Is He in full control of me?

Today's Prayer

Jesus, sacrificial Lamb for my sin, I am grateful. You laid aside Heaven's glory and came to your creation. By Your stripes, by Your blood, I am forgiven and freed. Thank you. As I anticipate Your coming, I desire to more deeply know you and honor You as my only King.

The Nineteenth Day of Advent – December 20, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY**– The angels sang a message of JOY! “...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’” (Luke 2:7-15)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 112

Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,

who greatly delights in his commandments!

² His offspring will be mighty in the land;

the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in his house,

and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;

he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;

who conducts his affairs with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;

he will be remembered forever.

⁷ He is not afraid of bad news;

his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,

until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;

his righteousness endures forever;

his horn is exalted in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked man sees it and is angry;

he gnashes his teeth and melts away;

the desire of the wicked will perish!

Isaiah 40:9-11

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good news;

lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”

¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Mark 1:1-4

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

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Today’s Hymn/Song

How Deep The Father’s Love for Us *by Stewart Townend*

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the Man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished

His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything
No gifts no pow'r no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

Today's Meditation

God is always preparing a way for The Gospel. Our confidence is to be in Him and his plan.
Do I confidently live in obedience to Christ?

Today's Prayer

Let me be a "way preparer" too Lord. Let me follow your direction, knowing that it is You who draws men and women to yourself. I trust You to always make a way for your message. I want to be in the middle of all that You are accomplishing.

The Twentieth Day of Advent – December 21, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY**– The angels sang a message of JOY! "...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'" (Luke 2:7-15)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 62:6-14

He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

⁷ On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰ Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

¹¹ Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,

¹² and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work.

I John 5:1-4

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Today's Hymn/Song

Let Your Kingdom Come *by Bob Kauflin*

Your glorious cause O God
Engages our hearts
May Jesus Christ be known
Wherever we are
We ask not for ourselves
But for Your renown
The cross has saved us so we pray
Your kingdom come

Let Your kingdom come
Let Your will be done
So that ev'ryone might know Your Name
Let Your song be heard ev'rywhere on earth

Till Your sov'reign work on earth is done
Let Your kingdom come

Give us Your strength O God
And courage to speak
Perform Your wondrous deeds
Through those who are weak
Lord use us as You want
Whatever the test
By grace we'll preach Your Gospel till
Our dying breath

Today's Meditation

We show love to our Redeemer through our obedience to His commands. Am I an obedient follower of Jesus?

Today's Prayer

Father, let me today claim and live in the victory that you have secured for me. You are my Rock and Refuge. As a child of the Father, I desire for Your love to be seen in me each day.

The Twenty-first Day of Advent – December 22, 2018

3rd CANDLE – (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY**– The angels sang a message of JOY! “...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’” (Luke 2:7-15)

Today's Scripture

Psalm 145:1-13

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
²Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

- ³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- ⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
- ⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- ⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- ⁹ The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
- ¹⁰ All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!
- ¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
- ¹² to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

[The LORD is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.]

Micah 5:2-3

- ² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.
- ³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

Luke 1:76-79

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

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Today's Hymn/Song

When Morning Gilds the Skies *German, 1744*

When morning gilds the skies
my heart awakening cries:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer,
to Jesus I repair:
May Jesus Christ be praised!

The night becomes as day
when from the heart we say:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
The powers of darkness fear
when this sweet chant they hear:
May Jesus Christ be praised!

Let all the earth around
ring joyous with the sound:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
In heaven's eternal bliss
the loveliest strain is this:
May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, while life is mine,
my canticle divine:
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this th' eternal song
through all the ages long:
May Jesus Christ be praised!

Today's Meditation

Father, you planned the coming of Messiah, a Savior. You knew before I was able to know that there was a way to salvation. Let me trust you with all the other areas of my life that often burden me.

Today's Prayer

God, may you be praised for your plan to save! Your plan to offer man a way to know You. Let me follow you in obedience and trust each day. You planned Jesus' birth to the finest

detail. Certainly I can trust You to guide my paths each day in the way that pleases you. I fully commit myself to that journey.

The Twenty-second Day of Advent/Fourth Sunday – December 23, 2018

4th CANDLE – (purple) **THE CANDLE OF LOVE** – The angels announced the good news of a Savior. God sent his only Son to earth to save us, because he loves us! *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* (John 3:16-17)

Today’s Scripture

Psalm 72:18-19

¹⁸ Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.
¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

⁵ “The days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.
⁶ In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The LORD Our Righteous Savior.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Today's Hymn/Song

Fairest Lord Jesus (*unknown author*)

Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature,
O thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
robed in the blooming garb of spring:
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer
who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
and all the twinkling starry host:
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
than all the angels heaven can boast.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
now and forevermore be thine.

Today's Meditation

You are fulfilling your promise to Israel and to the nations to bring a deliverer, a savior to Your people. I wonder, if I had known you the first time you came, would I have followed you?

Today's Prayer

Thank you Father, as you have done what you said you would do – give us a way to know You – I am grateful. Your grace has changed me and made me new. Let me live in the freedom of that “newness”, fully living in gratitude for Your work, your sovereign work in me.

The Twenty-third Day of Advent – CHRISTMAS EVE - December 24, 2018

THE CENTER CANDLE – (white) THE CHRIST – Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:13-16)

Today's Scripture

Isaiah 7:10-14

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Today's Hymn/Song

Thank You God for Saving Me *by Chris Tomlin and Phil Wickham*

What can I give to You
What can I offer to a King

For all the love You've shown
For all Your mercy over me

I called Your name You heard my cry
Out of the grave and into life
My heart is Yours my soul is free
Thank You God for saving me
Thank You God for saving me
(Thank You God for saving me)

The Rock of Salvation
My hope is built on nothing less
Morning by morning
How great is Your faithfulness

You gave Your life upon the cross
You suffered once for all
You made a way
Jesus in victory You rose
You made us all Your own
Now we are saved

Thank You God for saving me
Thank You God for saving me
Thank You God for saving me, for saving me

Today's Meditation

Am I truly and deeply grateful for God coming in the flesh with the express plan to save me from my sin, from death, from hell? Do I fully understand the consequences had He chosen not to choose me to know Him?

Today's Prayer

Thank you God, for saving me. Thank you for the amazing process of redemption that you have worked in me. Thank you for coming to the earth in order to bring yourself Glory by redeeming your creation to your original and best intent. Be pleased and worshipped by my life as I give it fully to you as an offering.