EDGEWATER CHURCH

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



ADORE

A CHRISTMAS OF WORSHIP

ADVENT 2026

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November 29th: Recognizing God in Quiet Moments

22 Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. 23 The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord ." 24 So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord-"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. 30 I have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared for all people. 32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!" 33 Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. 35 As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul." 36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. 38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. Luke 2:22-38 (NLT)

In this scripture, we encounter two faithful servants of God, Simeon and Anna. They had spent years praying, waiting and trusting in the promises of the Lord. Then, one day, Mary and Joseph brought a baby into the temple. To many, this may have appeared to be nothing more than a young couple bringing their baby to the Lord. There was no fanfare, no angels singing, no celebration. Just the Son of God being carried by His mother.

But Simeon recognized Him. The Holy Spirit had prepared Simeons' and Anna's heart to see what others didn't see. Simeon held Jesus and praised God, declaring that he had seen the salvation promised by the Lord. Anna gave thanks to God and told others about Jesus and His redemption. In their faithfulness, they were ready to recognize Him, and God came near them.

How often might God come near us in ways we may not recognize? We can see miracles or unmistakable signs as answers to prayer, but what about when He comes to us in the quietness of our hearts, a moment of peace, or gives us just a gentle reminder of His faithfulness? That's why the words of Psalm 46:10 are so important: "Be still and know that I am God." And when we recognize God's presence, our response should be adoration.

Simeon praised God. Anna gave thanks and shared the good news. They recognized who was before them. We

and we may not always recognize His presence, and that's okay. We are called to love, thank, worship, and adore anyway.

Today, slow down. Be still. Listen. Pray. Trust. Open your heart. You may not see a sign, hear thunder, or get a miracle, but know He is there, in the quietness, with you. Thank God for who He is, not only what He provides. Think about how He has been faithful in your life. Ask Him to help you recognize His presence in the quiet moments. And through this season, slow down. Enjoy. Remember. Be blessed.

November 30th: Surely the Lord Is in This Place

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” 17 He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” Genesis 28:10-17 (NLT)

God may already be present in places we have dismissed as ordinary.

Jacob was not in a temple. He was on the run, alone with a stone for a pillow. Nothing about that place looked holy — until God opened his eyes.

That is Advent truth. God does not wait for the spectacular to meet us. He comes to the ordinary road, the ordinary night, the ordinary act of lying down to sleep. Centuries later He would do it again in Bethlehem — the King in an ordinary stable on an ordinary night for ordinary shepherds.

As a task-oriented person, I can sometimes rush from task to task, hyper-focused on a list too great to pause. Sometimes it is not until I lay my head down at night that my mind is finally quiet enough to hear what God had been saying all day. I joke that sometimes sleep and my dreams are the only way God can get my attention.

But like Jacob, that moment can become sacred. In the stillness I hear the Father sing over me and remind me of what was true all day: His presence — "I am with you"; His protection— "I will watch over you"; His purpose — "I will not leave you until I have done what I promised" (Gen. 28:15).

We can live everyday ordinary lives and still see the extraordinary ways God is with us in each day, in all circumstances. Advent invites us not to do more, but to notice more — to pause long enough to recognize the One who is already there.

Tonight before you sleep, instead of scrolling on your phone, I encourage you to take the time to name three ordinary moments today where God was present. Thank Him for being there all along. And maybe be thankful we don’t have to lay our heads down on a stone tonight.

December 1st: Holy Ground

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" "Here I am!" Moses replied. "Do not come any closer," the LORD warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.
Exodus 3:1-6 (NLT)

"Pastor, why do you preach with your shoes off ?" I hear that question a lot. It makes sense; it's kinda weird. I started this practice early on as an intern youth director after a mentor challenged me through this very encounter of Moses with the Living God. Moses had been tending sheep for decades. He had wandered those wilderness areas time and time again. But on this day, he noticed the bush "engulfed in flames." He had to see this thing and figure it out. Another translation says "he turned aside." It's amazing to think that this one pause in the ordinary would change Moses' life and the course of history.

With the holiday season racing around us, I love seeing the same decorations in my house and hearing the familiar music playing all around me. There is something comforting about returning to these familiar sights and sounds. But familiarity can also make it easy to stop paying attention. What if this year, among all the familiar things, I choose to "turn aside" and take a different kind of look?

As we see with Moses and as Advent reminds us, God may already be present in places we dismiss as ordinary. Our invitation is to notice—to turn aside long enough to see. Today, look for that person, place, or moment where God might be inviting you to pay attention. The ordinary may be holy ground. And when we recognize his presence, perhaps the only fitting response is to stop, wonder, and adore.

Prayer
Holy God, thank you for a season full of memories. Today, help me turn aside from the rush and meet you in the ordinary. And when I do, let me be amazed by your presence. Thank you. I adore you. Amen.

December 2nd: Listening

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. 2 One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle[a] near the Ark of God. 4 Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!" "Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" 5 He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did. 6 Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!" Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed." 7 Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. 8 So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. 9 So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. 10 And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (NLT)

One of the things I have learned in leading worship is that not every moment needs to be filled.

Sometimes the most important thing we can do is stop, be still, and listen.

In 1 Samuel 3, Samuel hears God calling him, but he doesn't recognize His voice at first. He keeps running to Eli because he assumes that must be who is calling him. Eventually, Eli realizes what is happening and tells Samuel how to respond: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening. "

I think a lot of us can relate to Samuel. God may be speaking, leading, or trying to get our attention, but there is so much noise around us that sometimes we can miss it. Even in worship, it can be easy to focus on what comes next—the next song, the next lyric, the next transition, the next moment. As a worship leader, I have had to learn that sometimes the best thing I can do is not rush to whatever is next. Some of the most meaningful moments happen when we simply leave room for God to speak.

Learning to recognize His voice takes time. It takes Scripture, prayer, patience, and sometimes faithful people around us who help us recognize what God is doing, just like Eli did for Samuel. Advent is a season where it can be really easy to get caught up in the noise, busyness, and everything that needs to get done. But maybe adoration sometimes looks like getting quiet. Maybe it looks a little less like filling every moment and a little more like making Room for Jesus.

Team Notes

- Don't be afraid of quiet moments with God.
- Ask yourself today: Am I actually listening, or am I just waiting to speak?

Prayer

Jesus, help me slow down enough to hear You. Teach me to recognize Your voice and give me the patience to listen before I rush into what is next. Help me make room for You in the middle of all the noise. Amen.

December 3rd: Eyes Opened

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” 4 Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.” Isaiah 6:1–5 (NLT)

There is something so beautiful about the moment Isaiah sees the Lord. In a season of uncertainty and loss, his eyes are opened to the holiness and glory of God. And the first thing Isaiah recognizes isn't the brokenness of the world around him, but the condition of his own heart.

I think sometimes we become so consumed by our circumstances that we forget to look up. We focus on our fears, our disappointments, and everything that seems to be going wrong. But I love that in the very year an earthly king died, Isaiah saw the King of Kings still seated on His throne.

What a beautiful reminder that even when everything around us changes, our God never does.

And what moves my heart most is that Isaiah didn't see God's holiness and become prideful. He became humble. He recognized just how desperately he needed the Lord.

I pray that we never become so comfortable in our faith that we lose our awe of Jesus. That we wouldn't just seek His blessings, but genuinely desire His presence. That our hearts would fall more deeply in love with Him every time we recognize just how holy, merciful, and worthy He truly is.

Because when our eyes are opened to who God is, our hearts begin to change. We stop making everything about ourselves and start making everything about Him.

May our eyes always be fixed on Jesus, our hearts surrendered to His will, and our lives a reflection of His glory.

Reflection Questions

1. What distractions or circumstances have been keeping your eyes from fully recognizing God's presence and holiness in your life?
2. How would your relationship with Jesus change if you approached Him each day with the same awe, humility, and reverence that Isaiah experienced?

December 4th: Recognizing Promise

25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. 30 I have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared for all people. 32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!" Luke 2:25–32 (NLT)

Much like us, Simeon was awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. He knew what God had promised him and remained faithful as he waited for that promise to be fulfilled. We find ourselves in a similar place this season. Not only are we celebrating Advent, a season of waiting and anticipation, but we are also awaiting the return of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. Something that stands out to me about Simeon is his connection to the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us that the Spirit was upon him, had spoken to him, and ultimately led him to the temple where he encountered Jesus.

Think about how many days Simeon waited. How many times did he hope that today would be the day? It would have been easy to grow impatient or complacent, much like we sometimes do when waiting on God. Yet Simeon remained faithful. I think there are two things we can learn from Simeon. First, God keeps His promises, even when the waiting seems long. Second, we must remain attentive to the Holy Spirit as we wait.

What I find especially beautiful is that God's promise arrived in the form of a baby. Simeon recognized that this child was the salvation God had promised, not only for Israel but for all people. This Advent season, as we celebrate Christ's first coming and anticipate His return, may we be people who wait faithfully, remain attentive to the Holy Spirit, and recognize God's faithfulness even when His work looks different than we expected.

Reflection Questions

1.Are there areas of your life where waiting on God has caused you to become impatient or complacent?

2. What does it look like for you to remain faithful and attentive to the Holy Spirit during seasons of waiting?

3. How might your expectations of what God should do prevent you from recognizing what He is already doing?

December 5th: Recognition becomes witness

36 The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died. 37 And now she was 84 years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.
38 At this time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free. Luke 2:36-38

An 84 year-old widow who spend her days in a temple probably doesn't sound like someone you'd have much in common with. Different century, different world, different everything.

But look at what Luke says about her. Anna didn't recognize Jesus because she was smart, powerful, or well connected. She recognized him because she knew God. Night and day, she prayed. She showed up early when nobody was watching. Years of that quiet relationship trained her to know God's voice and God's work when it walked right past everyone else.

And God noticed. Out of all the people in Jerusalem, God made sure Anna's name ended up in the Bible. Not a king. Not a celebrity. A woman whose main accomplishment was staying faithful. The things you do that no one else sees, the prayers, the choices to do right when it costs you, are not invisible to Him.

What might surprise you is that the hope Anna had been waiting for didn't look like what people expected. Many hoped for Jerusalem to be set free in a political, military way. Instead, freedom, true freedom, arrived as a baby in the arms of a poor young couple. It didn't look like victory. It looked small and unimpressive.

Anna saw it anyway, and she told the people who were hoping for freedom. Not strangers, her people. The ones who needed it.

You may feel like you don't have a platform, or that your faith is too small to matter. Anna says otherwise. If you know God, you may recognize him in places others miss. And the people around you, friends who feel stuck, anxious, or alone, are longing for freedom too. God's answer might not look like what they expected. Tell them anyway.

Reflect

• Where might God be working in a way that looks small or unexpected?

• Who around you needs hope right now? What is good news for them?

Prayer

God, help me know you the way Anna did. Thank you that you see the things I do that no one else notices. Open my eyes to recognize your work, especially when you show up in unexpected ways. And give me the courage to share your hope with people who need it. Amen.

December 6th: Rejoicing in the Midst of Uncertainties

39 A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town 40 where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. 43 Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? 44 When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. 45 You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise 46 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. 50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. 51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. 52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. 54 He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. 55 For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." Luke 1:39–55 (NLT)

Devotional Reflection

There have been so many times I have been uncertain about what God is doing in my life. House moves, job changes, health issues, car troubles, lost friendships, struggles with parenting... and the list goes on and on. Through each of these circumstances, God keeps teaching me that I can't do it on my own. True peace comes when I trust in Him, knowing He is by my side every step of the way.

Now, put yourselves in Mary's sandals for a moment. The changes happening in her life? Unreal. Unimaginable. Can we all say life-changing? How did people look at her? What did they say about her? Did her family believe her? Just imagine the questions and uncertainties she may have faced!

Shortly after receiving the life-changing news from the angel Gabriel, Mary traveled to visit her relative Elizabeth. When Mary arrived, Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy in her womb! Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, encouraged Mary with these words: "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." (Luke 1:45, NLT)

What comes next is my favorite part! In the midst of all these uncertainties... Mary worships!

December 7th:Turn Our Attention

1 I will praise the Lord at all times.
I will constantly speak his praises.
2 I will boast only in the Lord;
let all who are helpless take heart.
3 Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness;
let us exalt his name together.
Psalm 34:1–3 (NLT)

I think one of the easiest things for us to do during the Christmas season is to lose sight of what we are actually celebrating. Between the shopping, decorating, Christmas parties, family gatherings, and everything else that comes with this time of year, it can become incredibly easy to allow our attention to be pulled in a hundred different directions. Now, don't get me wrong, none of those things are inherently bad, but I wonder how often we become so focused on celebrating Christmas that we forget to focus on Christ.

In Psalm 34, David gives us an incredible reminder of where our attention should be. He says, "I will praise the Lord at all times. " Notice that David doesn't say he will praise the Lord only when things are going well, when life is easy, or when everything is going according to plan. No, he says at all times! This is especially powerful when we consider that David wrote this psalm in connection with a time when he was fleeing for his life. Even in the midst of uncertainty, his attention was turned toward the Lord.

I think there is something we can learn from that. So often, our praise and worship can become dependent on our circumstances. When things are going well, it is easy to praise God, but when life becomes difficult, we can allow our circumstances to become bigger in our minds than the God we serve. Yet David reminds us that God is worthy of our praise regardless of what is happening around us.

The second thing I want us to notice is that David doesn't stop with his own praise. In verse 3,
he invites others to join him, saying, "Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together. " Our worship was never meant to be something we keep to ourselves. We have an incredible opportunity to encourage others to turn their attention toward the goodness and greatness of God.

So this Advent season, I want to challenge you to be intentional about where you place your attention. Don't allow the busyness, distractions, or even difficulties of this season to overshadow the incredible truth that our Savior has come. May we be people who continually praise the Lord and invite others to do the same.

Reflection Questions

1. What distractions or circumstances have been pulling your attention away from the Lord during this Advent season?
2. How can you intentionally turn your attention toward God and encourage someone else to praise Him this week?

December 8th: Grace Recognized Together

39 A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town 40 where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. 43 Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? 44 When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. 45 You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." Luke 1:39-45 (NLT)

Following Mary's encounter with the angel, she heads to see Elizabeth and Zechariah. Based on the previous verses, we can presume that Mary is going to see Elizabeth because of what the angel told her about both of their pregnancies. Little did Mary know that upon her arrival, she would be encouraged and reminded of the incredible work God was doing.

We first see Elizabeth's baby leap in her womb and Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit at the sound of Mary's greeting. Elizabeth then shares both an encouragement and a truth. Mary is blessed among women, and the child she carries is blessed. What a beautiful affirmation of the work God was doing in Mary's life! But that isn't all Elizabeth had to say. She ends this section by saying, "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." I think this is where we can glean one of the greatest truths from this passage.

Mary wasn't blessed because she was the greatest, without fault, or even the best behaved. She was blessed because of God's grace, and she responded to that grace by believing God would do exactly what He promised. Her blessing wasn't something she earned through her actions, successes, or failures. It was a gift of God's grace, received with faith.Take this and hold tight to it. God's grace isn't something you earn by being good enough. It is something He freely gives, and we are called to respond by trusting Him.

But I don't want us to miss something else in this passage. Elizabeth recognized what God was doing in Mary's life and celebrated it with her. Mary didn't have to walk through this incredible moment alone. God used Elizabeth to affirm His work and encourage Mary's faith.I think sometimes we need someone to remind us of God's faithfulness. Someone who sees what God is doing in our lives, even when we are struggling to see it ourselves. But we are also called to be that person for someone else. We should be people who not only recognize God's grace in our own lives but celebrate His grace in the lives of others. Maybe today you need someone to remind you of God's promises, or maybe God is calling you to be that encouragement for someone else. Remember this: God's grace is not something you earn, but something you receive through faith. And His grace is something worth celebrating together.

Reflection Questions

1. Like Mary, we sometimes face circumstances where we don't fully understand what God is doing. How can we continue trusting God's promises during those seasons?
2. Elizabeth recognized and celebrated what God was doing in Mary's life. Who in your life could use encouragement or a reminder of God's faithfulness today?

December 9th: A Larger Story

46 Mary responded, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl and from now on all generations will call me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. — Luke 1:46–49 (NLT)

Mary’s story reminds us that God is writing something much larger than any one of us.

Imagine being Mary: young, living in an ordinary town, with little social standing or influence. Then an angel announces that you have been chosen to bear the Son of God. Your life will never be the same. You have received an extraordinary calling, but you cannot know how it will unfold or what it will cost you. Mary responds with a song: “My soul magnifies the Lord.” To magnify God means to recognize His greatness and help others see it, too. We cannot make God greater than He already is, but we can turn our attention away from ourselves and toward the One worthy of our praise.

I understand something of what it feels like to feel insignificant. As a child, I often felt lost, unseen, and forgotten. My father had an intellectual disability, and my mother likely was on the autism spectrum. We had little money, little food, and little attention. I often felt unworthy, as though I didn't matter. Sometimes, even now, those feelings return.

Perhaps that is why Mary's song speaks so deeply to me. She knew her humble circumstances, yet she knew God had seen her. The world might have overlooked her, but God did not. Mary understood that her story was part of God's larger story. Her significance came not from her achievements, but from the God who chose to work through her. Those who seem insignificant can become instruments of extraordinary grace because of the greatness of the God who calls them.

Mary's joy wasn't rooted in knowing everything would be easy. Her future was uncertain, but she trusted God's faithfulness. She called Him “God my Savior,” recognizing her need for His grace. I need that reminder, too. When old feelings of unworthiness return, I can remember that being overlooked by people doesn't mean being forgotten by God. My circumstances do not define my worth. God's love gives me reason to hope.

This Advent, we remember that Jesus' birth began God's great work of redemption. We are invited into this larger story—not simply to receive God's grace, but to reflect it. When we show compassion, lift up someone who feels forgotten, or share the hope of Christ, we magnify God to those around us. Our ordinary lives become opportunities for others to glimpse His extraordinary love.

The question isn't whether we are impressive enough for God to use, but whether we are willing to make ourselves available to Him.

Prayer

God, thank You for seeing me when I feel forgotten. Help me trust Your faithfulness, rest in Your grace, and reflect Your love to others. May my life magnify You and draw others toward Your hope. Amen.

Carry this thought with you

My life does not have to be impressive for God to use it. When I make Him my everything, I can magnify Him and invite others to see His greatness, too.

December 10th: Mercy Reorders the World

50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. 51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. 52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. Luke 1:50–53 (NLT)

Mary's song reminds us that God's mercy doesn't simply comfort us; it reorders the world. The ways of God are often very different from the ways of the world. He lifts the humble, shows mercy to those who fear Him, and fills those who recognize their need for Him. Verse 53 gives us a beautiful picture of God's heart: "He has filled the hungry with good things."

But what kind of hunger is Mary talking about?

It is more than physical hunger. It is a longing deep within our souls for the peace of the presence of God. It is recognizing that nothing this world offers can satisfy what only He can fill.

Advent season can get busy, but can also call us to examine our hearts. In a season filled with preparations, traditions, shopping, and celebrations, we can become so consumed by everything else that we forget to make room for the One who holds it all.

God fills the hungry heart. Not the heart that believes it has everything figured out, but the heart that comes humbly, desperately, and expectantly seeking Him, in all things.

His mercy reorders the world by reminding us that our greatest need is not more of what the world offers, but more of the One who loves us and came to save us.

As Christmas draws near once again, may we become hungry for more of Him. Hungry for His Word. Hungry for His presence. Hungry for His righteousness. Hungry for more of Him.

Reflection

1. Am I truly hungry for God, or have I allowed the things of this world to satisfy me?

2. Am I making room for His presence in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season?

3. What would it look like to seek Him with a heart that is completely dependent on Him?

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your mercy that reaches from generation to generation. Forgive me when I allow the things of this world to satisfy me while neglecting the hunger in my soul. Give me a deeper longing for You. Make my heart hungry for Your Word, Your presence, and Your righteousness.

As I prepare for Christmas, help me remember that the greatest gift is not what I receive, but the One who came for me. Fill me with the good things that only You can give. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A thought to carry this Advent season

The hungrier we become for God, the less we will settle for what the world has to offer. His mercy meets our hunger and fills us with what our souls truly need.

December 11th: God Remembers

54 He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.
55 For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”
Luke 1:54-55 (NLT)

One of the things I love about worship is that it helps us remember.

There are times when it is easy to see the faithfulness of God. Prayers are being answered, doors are opening, and we can clearly see what He is doing.

Then there are other times when we are waiting. Waiting on an answer. Waiting on direction. Waiting for God to do something we have been praying about for a long time.

In Luke 1, Mary is worshiping God and says that He has remembered His mercy and the promise He made to His people.

God had not actually forgotten them. He had been faithful the entire time. But after generations of waiting, the promise was finally being fulfilled through Jesus. I think we need that reminder sometimes too. Worship has a way of helping us remember what is true, especially when our current situation makes it hard to see.

We remember the prayers He has answered.
We remember the doors He has opened.
We remember the times He carried us when we didn’t know how we were going to make it.
Advent reminds us that God keeps His promises, even when the waiting feels long.

So today, maybe worship looks like stopping for a moment and remembering. Remember what God has already done. Because the same God who was faithful then is still faithful now.

Team Notes

- Take a moment today and remember one specific way God has been faithful to you.
- Ask yourself: Am I letting what I’m waiting on make me forget what God has already done?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for always being faithful. Help me remember what You have done, trust You in the waiting, and worship You even when I cannot see what You are doing yet. Amen.

December 12th: Remember His Benefits

1 Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
2 Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. 3 He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. 4 He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. 5 He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! Psalms 103:1-5 (NLT)

Reflection

For me, there is little else that helps me feel as connected to my Lord as singing joyful praises to Him. Music in general has the ability to elicit an emotional response, but David reminds us that true worship is so much more than a feeling. When we remember all the things the Lord has done for us, we connect this feeling to real tangible things.

Like many of us, when I look at my life I feel well and truly blessed. When I'm surrounded by the beauty of nature, hugging my daughter, cuddling down in my comfortable bed, or remembering the times the Lord made a way for me when I couldn't see one for myself, how could I not feel blessed. Remembering all that I've been forgiven, all the times I turned away from the Lord and He came running after me, and the price He paid to redeem me, how can I not feel loved beyond all understanding. When we remember all the very real ways the Lord has blessed us, our joyful noises are no longer based on a superficial feeling, but become deeply rooted in our very being, aligning our hearts with His, showing us how He loves us and how we should love others.

While worship is something that God asks us to do for Him, like so many of the things God asks, it also benefits us. In today's world, it is very easy to become so busy and rushed that we forget to look beyond our to do list. In our rush, the fears of what is to come, and of all the things outside our control in a world full of evil, our many blessings are quickly forgotten. When this happens, our feelings of gratefulness and unexplainable love are eclipsed by our worries and anxiety and our joyful praises can quickly become cries of complaint and blame.

With these verses, David reminds us how to leave the stress and anxiety of the world behind, to return to the warm embrace of our father. When we turn our focus away from earthly troubles and back to the good things the Lord has given us, how much we have been forgiven, the pain, sickness and hardships the Lord has helped us to overcome, the suffering Jesus endured so we could be with Him always, his unfailing love and mercy that strengthens and carries us through, how can we not shout with joy. A joy that is so deeply rooted in all that we are, all that we have and all that the Lord is helping us to become that we no longer cry out with just our voices but with praise that comes from so deep in our souls it has the ability to align our hearts with His.

Prayer

Lord, help me to pause during my busy day to remember you and cry out with joyful praises of gratitude. Please help the memory of the blessings you've bestowed upon me and the times you have carried me through, strengthen and encourage me as I face the hardships of the world.

December 13th: Shepherds

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly the angel was joined by a vast host of others-the armies of heaven-praising God and saying, Glory to God in highest heaven and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherd's story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. Luke 2:8-11 NLT

God selects people with limited social significance to be the messengers of miracles. We can look to the shepherds and Mary Magdalene and see that at His birth and resurrection there were angels present, allaying fear, giving comfort and announcing the entrance and re-entrance of Jesus into our world.

It is rather surprising that shepherds would be entrusted with the sacred announcement of the long-awaited Messiah's birth. Can you imagine them settling their sheep in for the night; probably sleeping in shifts, and suddenly, a radiant light pierces the night sky? One angel is overwhelming, but suddenly there is an army of angels joining in this glorious birth announcement. The shepherds waited until the angels had ascended back to heaven and then went to seek the child that was foretold. Upon finding baby Jesus with His parents swaddled in a manger, they praised God and went to share the news that the Messiah had been born in Bethlehem. All who heard the shepherd's story were astonished, but the message was not universally believed, as shepherds were considered marginalized members of society.

Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd, born into humanity and robed in humility. He identifies with the lowly. God tends to select witnesses with questionable credibility, devoid of political power and social prowess. This should inspire and encourage us all to share our faith not only during this Advent season, but every day.

December 14th: Light into Darkness

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressors. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his Kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on an forever. The zeal of the Lord almighty will accomplish this." Isaiah 9:2-7 (NLT)

When I was much younger, someone had told me that they were in a place that was so dark that you couldn't even see your hand in front of your face. As a kid growing up in Los Angeles, I had never experienced that much darkness, so it was sort of hard to believe. However, many years later while on board a United States Navy destroyer in the middle of the Indian Ocean, as I stepped out on the deck one night to get some fresh air, it was dark! I mean real dark! Remembering, I placed my hand in front of my face, and I could not see it.

Of course, we're talking about literal darkness, and we have comfort knowing that soon the light will come, and we will be able to see, but what if the light wasn't coming. What if it was so dark that you couldn't see anything in front of your face or didn't even want to, and the darkness was distress, hunger, fear, gloom. Some turn to anger and fight amongst each other and curse, knowing that light will never come.

But as Isaiah writes, a great light has come, a child is given to us, the Son of our God to deliver us from the darkness and in this, the people will rejoice. This will not be just a happy dance but a full-on, full-blown celebration, the people that walked in darkness are now in light, always! The ones who carried heavy burdens will don a much lighter yoke. Their spirits will be lifted with the promise of the Kingdom of heaven, their mourning shall be comforted, their hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled, they will show and receive mercy, as witnesses to God their hearts will be pure, there will be peacemakers, and ones who are persecuted, but all who follow, will be given the Kingdom of heaven.

Sometimes, it's hard to be in the light all the time, but it's not impossible. So, I would like to leave you with a key thought, Christian joy begins with light breaking into actual darkness, so next time you find yourself in a dark place call upon your father, his face will light your path and it will be joy you have.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for lighting my life, for giving me comfort and directing me on the path of righteousness. For being with me in the valleys and lifting me up when darkness gets a little too close. AMEN

December 15th: A New Song

1 Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord!
2 Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
3 Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
4 Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods.
5 The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the Lord made the heavens!
6 Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.
Psalm 96:1-6 (NLT)

Psalm 96 starts with a really simple command: "Sing to the Lord a new song."
As a worship leader, I love that phrase because it reminds me that worship was never meant to just be about repeating what God did yesterday.

We absolutely should remember His faithfulness. We should look back and thank Him for the prayers He answered, the doors He opened, and the ways He carried us.

But God is still moving.
He is still speaking.
He is still revealing more of who He is.

That means our worship should never become stuck in yesterday's memory. A new song doesn't always mean a brand-new song we have never sung before. Sometimes it means singing the same words with fresh gratitude because God has shown us something new about His goodness.

Psalm 96 tells us to declare His glory and proclaim His salvation day after day. Day after day. There is something new to praise Him for because His goodness never runs out.

That is part of what Advent reminds us of. Jesus wasn't just God doing something good in the past. His coming changed everything, and His presence is still changing us today. So maybe today, don't just worship God for who He was to you yesterday.

Ask yourself: What is God showing me about Himself right now? Then let that become your new song.

Team Notes
• Take a moment today and thank God for something fresh He is doing in your life.
• Ask yourself: Am I worshiping from today's relationship with God, or only from yesterday's memories?

Prayer
Jesus, thank You that Your goodness is never limited to what You have already done. Open my eyes to what You are doing today, and give me a fresh song of gratitude, trust, and adoration. Amen.

December 16th: Good News for Ordinary People

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Luke 2:8-12

I love how real the Bible is. It would have been easy to sanitize it and make it polished and clean, but instead, the story we get from the Bible is really earthy…almost grimy. For as long as I can remember, my favorite part of the story of Advent and Christmas has been the Shepherds. These guys are just out minding their own business when the sky rips open and "the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them." These guys were nobodies in a culture where social standing and religious purity often determined who was in and who was out. Many would have considered them not just ordinary but people to avoid at extraordinary costs.

Yet, the news that God was breaking into history was so momentous that it couldn't be contained. This news had to be shared…even if the only people awake were ordinary people who never received good news.

Oh, and we can't forget that the word this messenger shared with these ordinary people begins with a call to "don't be afraid." Angels and radiance in the middle of the night most certainly were alarming and unsettling. And God's messenger acknowledges it. But the messenger doesn't leave it there. No, the messenger shares good news that is specifically for ordinary folks. The promised Savior wasn't just for the high and mighty. The Messiah wasn't for the rich and wealthy.

The Good News was and still is for ordinary people. That Good News continues to enter into the grimy places of my life…or your life. And even when we are tempted by havingthe "perfect-polished" Holiday season, we are still met with a story that invites us back to being real. After all, it's in the real that God does His best work.

Prayer

Holy God, thank you for a season that invites me into the "real." Thank you that you still arrive in ordinary moments with your Good News. Today, let me see the ordinary around me, and help me to see the glimpses of your glory in this season of sparkle. Thank you for bringing me your Good News today. Amen.

December 17: Heavens Praises

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” Luke 2:13–14 (NLT)

One of my favorite Christmas traditions was our church’s annual candlelight service. The sanctuary would glow, and the room would swell with the sound of "Silent Night." For years, I viewed these moments simply as a beautiful tradition—a nostalgic, emotional peak of the holiday season. It felt good, it felt like Christmas, but I completely missed the cosmic weight of what was actually happening.

When the angels broke into the night sky over Bethlehem, they didn't just give a private concert to a few terrified shepherds. They opened a window into the eternal, non-stop reality of heaven. The "heavenly host"—literally an angel army—was overflowing with an unstoppable urge to praise. Why? Because the Creator had entered His creation as a helpless baby. The Savior, Christ Jesus, was born.

When we gather during Advent and sing these familiar carols, something profound happens. It is more than just music, and it is far deeper than mere holiday tradition. We are stepping into that thin space where time and eternity blur. We aren't just singing about an event from history; we are actively joining our voices with that same heavenly choir that shook the hills of Bethlehem.

Every lyric of praise we offer is a declaration of victory and a proclamation of the Savior’s arrival. When you sing this season, don't just mimic a melody. Realize that you are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with angels, magnifying the King of Kings.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me see my worship as more than a routine or a seasonal mood. Open my eyes to the reality of Heaven's praise. As I sing your praises this Christmas, let my heart join the angels in declaring your glory and peace on earth. Amen.

December 18th: Wonder Moves Outward

15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, Luke 2:15-18 (NLT)

What an incredible move of God to use those who were often overlooked, looked down upon, and even forgotten about to share the Good News of Jesus. We see here a group of shepherds who had just experienced an incredible encounter with a multitude of angels praising God and announcing the birth of the Savior. I want to focus on two things today as we look at this Scripture.

The first is that they went. They were obedient to what God was revealing to them. I think we, as Christians, like to do a lot of listening to God, but for many of us, that is as far as we go. However, that is not where we are supposed to stop. We are supposed to be like the shepherds, who heard about the birth of Jesus and didn't hesitate. They went! Maybe in this season of Advent, as we celebrate the coming of our Lord and look forward to His return, we can be intentional about not only hearing what God is telling us but also doing what He is calling us to do. Our response to God should not end with listening but should move us toward obedience.

The second thing I want us to notice is that after encountering Jesus, they told others about what they had seen and heard. They became some of the first evangelists, spreading the Good News of our King.

This has been a mission on my heart over the last few years, and it is a mission securely grounded in Scripture. We are called to tell others about Jesus! This is not just a calling for pastors, teachers, or missionaries, but for every follower of Christ. And yes, that means you! What I love about the shepherds is that they didn't need to have all the answers or understand everything that had happened. They simply shared what they had experienced and what God had revealed to them. I think sometimes we make sharing Jesus more complicated than it needs to be.

So this Advent season, be encouraged that the Creator of all things came and made His home among us. But also be challenged to respond like the shepherds. Listen to what God is telling you, be obedient to His calling, and move outward, sharing the Good News of Jesus along the way.

Reflection Questions

1. Is there something God has been calling you to do that you have been listening to but have not yet acted upon?
2. Who is someone in your life that you can intentionally share the Good News of Jesus with this Advent season?

December 19th: Treasure and Testify

"But Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them."
Luke 2:19–20 (NLT)

Christmas can be filled with so much activity that we rush past the wonder of what we are celebrating. We hear the familiar account of Jesus' birth, sing the songs, exchange gifts, and move on to the next thing. But tucked into Luke's account are two responses to the birth of Christ that invite us to slow down and consider what God has done.

Mary had just heard the shepherds describe the angel's announcement about her child. Luke tells us that she treasured these things and pondered them in her heart. She did not yet understand everything that lay ahead, but she held closely what God had revealed. Rather than allowing the moment to pass, she made room to reflect on its meaning. The shepherds responded differently, but no less faithfully. After seeing the baby Jesus, just as the angel had said, they returned to their ordinary lives glorifying and praising God. Earlier in the passage, Luke tells us they had made known what they were told about this child. Their encounter with the good news did not remain private. What they had heard and seen became a reason to speak and a reason to worship.

These are not competing responses. Mary shows us the value of treasuring God's truth in our hearts; the shepherds show us the joy of testifying to what God has made known. We need both. If we only reflect and never speak, we may keep the good news to ourselves. If we speak without taking time to reflect, our words can become routine rather than the overflow of a heart amazed by Christ.

The good news at the center of this story is not simply that a remarkable baby was born. The angel announced "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Jesus came to save sinners. His coming is worth more than a passing moment of holiday excitement; it is truth to remember, believe, and share.

As Christmas approaches, make room for both responses. Pause to think about who Jesus is and what His coming means. Then look for a natural opportunity to tell someone why He matters to you. We do not need a perfect speech or an extraordinary experience. We can simply speak truthfully about the Savior revealed in Scripture and praise God for His faithfulness. May the wonder we treasure in private become the good news we gladly share in public.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Forgive me for the times I rush past the wonder of His coming. Help me, like Mary, to treasure Your Word and think deeply about what You have done. Give me, like the shepherds, a heart full of praise and the courage to share the good news with others. Let my words and my life point people to Christ this Christmas and every day. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 20th: God Is With Us

18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. 20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. 25 But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.
Matthew 1:18-25 (NLT)

Imagine the quiet shock crushing Joseph's world. He was a righteous man, deeply committed to his faith and his future bride, Mary. Then comes the news: Mary is pregnant, and he knows the child is not his. In their culture, this wasn't just a heartbreak—it was a public catastrophe. Seeking to balance the law with mercy, Joseph decides to divorce her quietly to shield her from shame.

But God had a completely different blueprint.

While Joseph is wrestling with this devastation, an angel breaks through his grief in a dream: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

The angel didn't promise an easy path. Choosing to stay meant Joseph would willingly absorb the whispers and judgment of his community. Yet, when Joseph woke up, he didn't argue or demand a detailed roadmap. He simply obeyed. He took a leap of action, married Mary, and protected the child.

Through this disruption, God revealed two powerful names for the Savior:

• Jesus: Meaning "The Lord saves," because He came to rescue us from our sins.

• Immanuel: Meaning "God with us."

"God with us" means He meets us right in the middle of our mess. Immanuel doesn't wait for our lives to be neat and perfect. He steps directly into our sudden hardships, our broken relationships, and our shattered expectations.

When God interrupts your neatly packaged plans, your instinct might be fear or a desperate attempt to stay in control. Joseph teaches us that true faith isn't about avoiding difficult disruptions; it is about trusting God's presence within them. Whatever unexpected twist your life has taken today, remember that you do not have to walk through the chaos alone.

Prayer

Lord, when my plans are shattered and uncertainty sets in, give me the quiet courage of Joseph. Help me to lay down my fear of what others think. Thank You for being Immanuel—God with me in every season. Amen.

December 21st: The Sign of Immanuel

10 Later, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz: 11 “Ask the Lord your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want—as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.”12 But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I will not test the Lord like that.” 13 Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? 14 All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’). Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

Key verse: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14, NLT)

God promised a sign to a king who refused to ask for one, and that sign was a child called "God with us.

Setting the Scene

Around 735 BC, King Ahaz of Judah was afraid. The kings of Syria and Israel had joined forces and were marching on Jerusalem. Isaiah 7:2 says his heart and the hearts of his people trembled like trees shaken by the wind.

God sent Isaiah with a simple message: stay calm, trust Me, and this threat will not stand. Then God did something remarkable. He invited Ahaz to ask for any sign at all, as deep as the grave or as high as heaven.

Ahaz said no. His words sounded pious, but his plan was already made. He was about to send silver and gold to Assyria and buy protection from an empire instead of trusting the Lord (2 Kings 16:7–8).

Reflection: The Sign He Refused

Ahaz's refusal was not humility. It was a closed door. He did not want a sign because a sign would have called him to trust, and he had already decided to trust something else.

We do this too. We make our own plans for safety, for control, for a good Christmas, and then we politely keep God at a distance. "I won't trouble the Lord with this," we say, when what we mean is "I've got this handled."

Yet look at verse 14. The word "therefore" is full of grace. Because Ahaz would not ask, the Lord Himself would give a sign anyway. God's promise did not depend on the king's faith. It depended on God's faithfulness.

And what a sign it was. Not fire from heaven or a shaking mountain, but a child. A son named Immanuel, "God with us." The answer to Ahaz's fear was not a better alliance. It was God's own presence.

This is the heart of Advent. We wait for the One who came near when we were not asking, not looking, and not deserving. The same God who would not give up on the house of David will not give up on you.

December 22 – Name and Belonging

20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: 23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. 25 But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.Matthew 1:20–25 (NLT)

In Matthew 1:20–25, we see Joseph faced with a decision that required faith and obedience. After learning that Mary was pregnant, Joseph had every reason to walk away. But God spoke to him through an angel, telling him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife and to name the child Jesus.

Joseph obeyed. By taking Mary as his wife and naming Jesus, he faithfully accepted the responsibility God had entrusted to him. Through Joseph’s place in David's family line, we see God’s promises continuing to unfold.

But the name Joseph was instructed to give the child is especially significant.

The angel said, “You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Just a few verses later, Matthew reminds us of another name: Immanuel, meaning “God with us.”

These names reveal something incredible about who Jesus is and why He came. He is the Savior who came to rescue us from our sins, and He is God who came to dwell among us. Through Jesus, we are invited into something we could never earn on our own: a place in God’s family. Our identity is no longer defined by our past, our mistakes, or what the world says about us. Our identity is found in Christ. We are loved, redeemed, and welcomed into God’s family through faith in Him.

Because we have received this incredible grace, we are called to extend that same love to others.

There are people walking into our churches and communities wondering if they belong, if they are accepted, or if there is a place for them. As followers of Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect His love by welcoming others with grace, compassion, and kindness

Christmas reminds us that God did not remain distant from us. He came near. He came to save us. And through Jesus, He has made a way for us to belong to Him.

Be intentional about making room for someone this week. Whether it’s inviting someone into a conversation, welcoming someone new at church, or simply showing someone that they are seen and valued, let your actions reflect the grace and love Christ has shown you.

Prayer

Father, thank You for welcoming us into Your family through Jesus. Help us find our identity in You and not in the opinions of the world. Give us hearts that make room for others and show Your love to those who need to know they belong. Amen.

December 23rd: Receive Him

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. John 1:10-13 (NLT)

What an absolutely wonderful gift to be given! The right to become children of God! All who believed and accepted him received this gift. And we are still promised, given and receiving this gift two thousand years later.

By receiving Jesus, we are instantly received and welcomed into the family of God. We no longer live for ourselves but for Him. Galatians 2:20 says My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The recognition of something that is right in front of us is not always easy. In today's world we have so many distractions and are pulled in so many directions by work, family, commitments, etc. that very seldom do we slow down and see what God has brought before us. Whether by devil or our own design, we second guess, doubt, and even flat out deny what God is showing us, what He is whispering to us. Just remember, He is there. We are His children and He will never, ever leave or forsake us.

Prayer

Thank You Father for Your Son that you brough into this world to save us. Thank You for the gift you've given us: to be children of God! Thank you for constantly pursuing us and never giving up on us, even though our brokenness. Please, help us to seek You in our times of uncertainty and doubt. Lead us thought confusion and into the truth. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

December 24th: Nativity and Incarnation

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them Luke 2:1-7 (NLT)

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. John 1:1-5 (NLT)

Today, the journey we started 26 days ago reaches its destination. It's Christmas Eve—the night the world was forever changed, and hope was born for a groaning creation. We've made it! We've arrived. We've experienced the holidays to their fullest. We've sung and listened to the carols and holiday cheer on repeat. We've watched our favorite holiday stories, and we've allowed the flickers of little bright colored bulbs to mesmerize us. And now that we're here, how is our soul? Have we simply just "made it"? Are we stumbling and exhausted because of the frantic pace of "getting ready"? If so, I understand. I used to hate the holidays.

Don't get me wrong, I have always loved the lights, music, movies, cookies. But the season's frantic pace routinely left me feeling absolutely depleted. I was happy to celebrate Jesus' birth, but where was my silent night? Where was my joy to the world? And to be clear, I was working as a pastor with these thoughts!

But then something happened. I started to wonder what it would be like to take Christmas back as a place of worship and not a season of overdoing it. I began to slow down…to say no to some invites and demands. I decided that less was truly more. And something amazing began to happen - I started to slip into wonder again. From that space, my Christmas Eve became a time of adoration and worship.

If you're stumbling into this Holy Night, can I give you a gift? First, because of what we celebrate tonight, no shame is allowed. Jesus' birth promises that shame is not God's intent. And since he came the way he did, that means we all are still invited, tired and worn out as we may be, to meet him where we are.

That's the gift. The Savior who was born in Bethlehem still comes near to hearts that are tired and worn out. His light still shines, giving hope to us all. The One who spoke light into existence stepped into our darkness. The One who made everything chose to make his home among us. And he didn't come demanding that we get everything right. He came offering himself. The incarnation, God made flesh, is still news that changes the world. So, at some point today, let me invite you to pause, stop, and receive the grace of Christmas. Light a candle and breathe. And, as you do, I pray you will find yourself getting a little wonder-eyed as you adore the Savior who came just for you and me. We've made it to Christmas Eve, but the wonder and the great gift of this night isn't that we've finally arrived. It's that God has come to us.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for moving into our neighborhood—for leaving heaven and choosing to be born on earth. Thank you for still being the Light in our dark world. Today, take my tired body and soul, and help me adore. Let the chorus of Joy to the World fill more than my ears, but my whole being. Thank you for meeting me right where I am, and loving me so much. Happy Birthday, Jesus. I love you. Amen.

December 27th: The Work of Christmas Begins

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. Matthew 2:1-12 (NLT)

The Work of Christmas:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.
Howard Thurman

In 1948, Pastor Howard Thurman wrote a poem entitled “The Work of Christmas.” I find myself drawn to this poem every year as a reminder that though for the masses the holiday season has come and gone, for the church it has just begun. Thurman reminds us that when the celebrations are finished, the real work of Christmas begins. The worship of the Christ child must become the way we live in the world he came to redeem. Adoration has been our goal during this year’s Advent Journey. We have wanted worship to be the invitation into the celebration of Christmas—of Jesus’ first coming. But now that the trees are starting to come down, and we are moving on to the New Year, we must remember that our adoration need not stop. It must not stop. Our worship of the One who was born in a manger is the way we thrive in such a dark world.

December 27th: The Work of Christmas Begins (Continued)

Traditionally, the church celebrates the arrival of the Magi, or Wise Men, on Epiphany, January 6, rather than Christmas Day. Matthew's Gospel suggests they arrived sometime after Jesus' birth, perhaps months or even longer. For this reason, their story is often preached as the Christmas season draws to a close.

The Magi discerned through study and exploration that a birth so remarkable had occurred that they must travel at great expense to encounter and worship the newborn King. Even they, who brought some of the first Christmas gifts, did not just stay kneeling. Eventually, they got up and went home - ignoring the commands of a murderous King Herod.

And Matthew tells us they went home by another road. I wonder if they also went home as different people? What was the work of Christmas for them? What did they do after they left that "holy day" behind?

As we begin packing up and moving on, how will the work of Christmas unfold in your life? How will adoration and worship continue in and around you? How will you approach the New Year so that our longing won't also be boxed up and stored till next Year?

Christmas celebrates Jesus' first advent, his first coming. But we know a second advent is to come. He will return. And in the space between these two arrivals, we have work to do. Not work to earn his love, but work that flows from having encountered his love. The work of Christmas is the work of people who have met Jesus and cannot simply go back to living as though nothing has changed.

So may we step into this new year with an ongoing anticipation, much like that of the Magi. May we pursue what Christmas means all year long. And may our adoration become the work of Christmas, carrying the life and love of Jesus into the world around Us.

Prayer

Jesus, I thank you for this season - for Advent and for Christmas. Help me carry its joy and hope all year long. Keep inviting me to adore you. Help me stay in a place of wonder. And like the Magi, may my encounter with you send me into the world by another road, carrying your life and love wherever I go. In Jesus' name, Amen.

One Church. One Body.

- 18 Different Authors
- 12 Different Ministry Teams
- 4 Generations
- 1 Church Body
- 1 United Faith
- 1 Mission
- 1 Purpose

EDGEWATER CHURCH

ADVENT 2026

Come and Adore

Christmas invites us to do more than remember the birth of Jesus. It invites us to worship.

Throughout the story of Christmas, we encounter ordinary people whose lives were interrupted by the extraordinary arrival of God among us. Mary and Joseph. Shepherds in the fields. Simeon and Anna. Wise men from distant lands.

Each encountered the wonder of Emmanuel—God with us. And each responded in their own way.

This Advent season, we invite you to slow down, turn your attention toward Jesus, and rediscover the wonder of his coming.

Through Scripture, reflection, and prayer, may these daily devotionals help us move beyond the busyness of Christmas and into the presence of the One we adore.

Come and see. Come and worship.
Come and adore.

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