



An Advent Devotional

Hello Friends,

2018 has absolutely flown by and we are staring at less than a month before the inauguration of 2019. We have loved and lost over the past 11 months, but the same charge is upon us - go and make disciples. Jesus himself said this at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Although it was spoken so long ago we get to do this every single day.

Advent marks the beginning of something new. Our liturgical church calendar is built upon it - the very first season in the church year is that of Advent.

What is Advent? It has to do with anticipation, expectation, and redemption. Even though we celebrate the life of Jesus every minute of every day of the year this time of year we really narrow our focus on what His birth means for us all.

Jesus being born, and how it happened, is something that is well known, regardless of your spiritual upbringing. But what about the clues that God gave us hinting at how it would happen, to whom it would happen, and what would happen because of it? These things are a little less well known.

This year we put together this Born to Us Advent Devotional. Each day has a short Bible reading, meditation, and prayer for you, your family, and significant other to consider. Dedicating enough time each day to do these daily devotions should be less than five minutes. Will you consider joining us?

God peppered-in tons of clues to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus throughout the Old Testament and that is what we're going to study this Advent. Born to Us explores 24 of the prophecies within the Old Testament and shines the light on how God has fulfilled them. How He has kept His promises.

Advent can be a time when people struggle. Struggle with life, faith, relationships, you name it. May this small booklet be a help in showing you and those around you that in a world that continually lets us down that there is a God who doesn't break His promises.

Have a blessed Advent. Time for us to dive in.

**December 2. Sunday.**

Read:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” - Genesis 3:15.

Meditate:

And we're off! Of course we are going to kick off this Advent Devotional by taking a quick look at the first prophecy about Jesus. Context for this verse is both Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit and are being confronted by God. In all of the anger and terse verbiage the Gospel seeps through, even at such an early point as this.

What you have just read is the fire that ignited the faith of the entire Old Testament - the faith that God will send a Messiah to save us from our haphazard ways. One who will take care of sin and cast Satan into the abyss.

This prophecy is so important to us because if God had not sent someone to take away our sin that means that we would have to deal with it ourselves! It would mean true and permanent death. Advent, the celebration of the impending birth of the Messiah, is the beginning of the Savior's earthly story, the one where He goes to the cross for us.

Not only is Advent a celebration of the birth of the Messiah that was prophesied throughout the 4000 years of the Old Testament but it's a magnification of the life that He is going to live.

Pray:

God our Father, thank you for sending us your Son that we might be saved from ourselves. Please help us to take the focus from us and put it on Him during Advent. Once Advent is over, we ask that it will remain on Him and that we realize and give thanks that Jesus has crushed the ability of sin. Amen.

**December 3. Monday.**

Read:

“Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.” -Genesis 4:25-26

Meditate:

With the murder of Adam and Eve's son, Abel, by his brother, Cain, they chose to have another child. When he was born, Eve remembered the Lord's promise of a Savior. At first she believed that this child who they named Seth might be that Savior, since his name means anointed or

compensation. Her hope and belief was so great; she believed God's promise was fulfilled in Seth. Is our faith that strong? Are we willing to put all our trust in God and His promises? As Seth grew up, he married and his wife bore a son, who they named Enosh. By the time Enosh was born, there were enough people to cause all kinds of mischief, evil, and plot wicked deeds against each other. It really doesn't take many people together in a group before our original sin raises its ugly head and we start swinging at each other, both literally and figuratively. But, once again, hope arises in God's promises. God's love and light were evident in those who believed His promises, as they began to call on the name of the Lord. In other words, they started in the habit of worshipping and praying to God. This is God at work in their lives. He can work this same love and light in our lives – we call on Him and He answers. His promises are sure and real. We do have a Savior who is Jesus Christ born to live, die, and rise again, all for us. As we reflect on the promises fulfilled, let us call on the Lord, always.

Pray:

Dear Lord, thank You for fulfilling the promise of a Savior. Your love lights our way in these days of uncertainty and confusion. You are our eternal hope; keep us close to You that we may always call on You in every time and need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### **December 4. Tuesday.**

Read.

"I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." - Genesis 12:3.

Meditate.

Selective hearing. We all deal with it. Some things we like to hear and others we don't. Other times we block things out to where we just ignore them. When we ignore such things they can escape to the back of our minds and be lost.

Our prophecy today comes from the initial calling of Abram (the guy who would soon become Abraham). God specifically called out Abram for the special purpose of continuing in faith and trust. Here is where he is commanded to leave everything that is normal and comfortable to go to an area that God has set aside.

Has anyone ever asked you to do something but didn't share all of the details? When you inquire further they respond with a "just trust me". Yeah, those can be nerve-racking and that's exactly what Abram is experiencing right here. God even follows it up with the promise that Abram will be blessed, a great nation, and that those who treat him with contempt will be cursed.

Sounds like a great deal to me! But it's going toward something here. It would be great and pleasing to us if it just stopped at the cursing of our enemies, yet there is something more. Most importantly comes the fact that the entire world will be blessed through this man named Abram.

Little did Abram know is that many great things would happen including being the basic father of the Old Testament and he would be a significant factor in the lineage of the prophesied Messiah.

This promise of the world being blessed through the lineage of Abram doesn't just mean that Jesus will be born but it also means that everything that Jesus has to do is on its way. Preaching, teaching, embracing the lepers, turning peoples eyes away from the world of men and pointing them toward the world of God, dying on the cross, and rising from a cold dark grave are all things that come on the heels of this promise.

Living in the shadow of the empty tomb allows us the ability to look back and see that God has blessed us and He has kept His promise. Let's give Him thanks that He hasn't given up on us.

Pray.

Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thank you for not relenting in your mercy despite the fact that we sin much daily. We look forward to each new day with you and to see where you are working in our lives and in the lives of others. Bless us, forgive us, and lead us in Your way and not the ways of the world. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### **December 5. Wednesday.**

Read.

"And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command." - Genesis 22:18.

Meditate.

A question that is common in our household is this: what will the girls be when they are older? Will they be doctors? Will they be teachers? Will they be law-abiding citizens? Will they keep us close? What will they teach their children?

The list could continue on for pages and pages.

For Abram and Sarai these questions weren't even an option. Sarai was barren - she couldn't have kids. Abram was too old. Excuses could mount one on top of the other.

Then God stepped in. Kids came. Abram became Abraham and Sarai became Sarah. God then wanted to test their faith.

"Take your son, your only son Isaac ... and offer him there as a burnt offering..." Genesis 22:2. Basically God is saying to them that they need to kill their only child. Trusting in God Abraham prepared all of the kindling, the wood, and the pyre. Not telling Isaac what was happening or what was going to be sacrificed that day Abraham says that God will provide.

God - again - steps in right before the the knife was to deepen itself in Isaac's flesh. A nearby ram was sacrificed in his stead. Because of his faithfulness God promised Abraham that not only will Isaac be blessed by God but his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and they will bless all of mankind.

Mankind is blessed by the descendants of Abraham and Sarah in many ways, some could argue, but the blessing to focus on is the fact that Jesus came through their lineage. What would have happened had Abraham not trusted God enough to place Isaac's life in His hands?

Advent 2018... is this a time where you will focus on trusting God? Do you trust Him with your patience? Your finances?

And do you trust Him with the lives and futures of your kids? Abraham's trust in God and its result should give you just a tad of hope from history.

Pray.

May we come to you and trust you, Lord, even when it's something that is unthinkable. You are not hindered by earthly thinking and earthly boundaries. Thank you, Lord. Make us to be trusting people and not just when it's comfy. Amen.

### **December 6. Thursday.**

Read.

"Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring." - Genesis 28:14.

Meditate.

Next summer is the one of the great events sponsored by The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, that event being the National Youth Gathering. Usually this is held in warmer areas such as Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, but this time around it is being held in Minneapolis/ St. Paul, Minnesota. Because it is so close we are able to drive, yay!

Gatherings like this don't come free. There is a cost and the students plan to fundraise nearly all of it. But there is always one question that always comes to the forefront whenever we're planning a trip like this.

Why spend money to go someplace far away instead of ministering right in our back yard, right in our community?

It's a legit question. Why not stay in Gladwin and concentrate our efforts on those right out our backdoor? Today let's consider two reasons for traveling to Minnesota for the Gathering.

First reason is that getting people out of state (i.e. away from home by a large margin) allows them to let down their guard. Walls that have been built up get let down. They become more open.

Second reason - and the most important reason - is that getting 30,000 fellow believers from all across the USA together for worship and service is breathtaking. Hearing the Word, singing praises, and fellowshiping with people from Hawaii who believe in the same Triune God as you goes to show that Jesus' mission is beyond our community boundaries.

Jacob is told here that his family tree will spread out over the entire earth. Today we can go to all seven continents and see evidence of God's people working alongside Jesus for the Kingdom of God.

We can also log on to the Bible App on our phones and connect with believers who live in areas outside of our normal time zone and climate.

We live in an age where we see this prophecy fulfilled. We know that the message of Jesus has already gone far and continues to reach even further.

Pray.

Lord Jesus, please challenge us each day to not sit back and think that we've done enough. May we see that there is one more person who needs to hear your word, experience your love, and grasp the gift of eternal life that you won on the cross. Amen.

### **December 7. Friday.**

Read.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel." - Isaiah 7:14.

Meditate.

St. Augustine of Hippo knocked it out of the park when he said that "men go abroad to wonder at the heights of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motions of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering." Genesis lays the foundation that God was most impressed by His creation of humans. Yeah, we're dirty and broken, but surely we can see the majesty of God's design even in our bodies.

Our noses are able to smell the sweet smells of onions sautéing in the pan, our eyes are able to see the snow melting after the seven month Michigan winter, and our ears are inclined to hear those around us in corporate worship singing praises to our Lord and Savior. In addition to all of these we know that we as humans can take part in the creation of new humans which is a sacred gift from God.

When we hear that Jesus was born from a virgin we know that something about it is different compared to every other pregnancy and delivery known to man. Here are a couple of ways to look at it.

1. Is it something that is physically impossible? Looking simply at the tangible evidence might point you in this direction - BUT that is just looking at what is plain and simple in front of you.
2. Is it possible because God stepped in?

Here's a prime example of where faith goes beyond our comfort zones. Comfort zones are typically defined by what we usually see and by what has been consistent in our lives. Virgin birth, not so much.

Virgin birth is possible when you realize that God himself, the creator and designer of our bodies is involved. Authors can make slight adjustments on books in order that the best result be presented. Doctors can replace joints to improve the quality of life for their patients. Certainly God, the designer of our bodies, the One who knows our bodies best, can step in, make an adjustment, and fulfill the Old Testament prophecy.

Pray.

Dear Jesus, even when we consider things such as your virgin birth that move us out of the normals of life we ask that you make our faith in you even stronger. You tell us yourself that with God all things are possible. During Advent this year let's not only marvel at your birth but the power and majesty behind it. Amen.

### **December 8. Saturday.**

Read:

"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his." - Genesis 49:10.

Meditate:

In this section we are looking in on a conversation that Jacob is having with his 12 sons. Nearing the end of his life, Jacob is essentially blessing each of them. He gets to Judah and gives him something that seems extra special - a prediction and prophecy.

Judah is to be the son who has the ultimate ruler as a descendant. Some might ask this - is Jacob talking about an earthly kingdom? In today's society many seem to think that Christianity is out to rule politics or to impose earthly expectations on countries, but that's far from what is mentioned here.

Living in the shadow of Jesus' resurrection we know that Jesus didn't come to lead an earthly kingdom but to establish an eternal heavenly kingdom and make sure that His children will be there with Him. And this all goes back to Jacob prophesying to Judah that the One to establish and rule this heavenly kingdom will come out of his line.

Pray:

God it is sometimes hard for us to see the big picture. Downright impossible. May we always strive to see things as you see them and to never give up hope that You are always working. Thank you for keeping your promise of sending Jesus through the line of Judah. Amen.

**December 9. Sunday.**

Read.

“A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will smash the frontiers of Moab and strike down all the Sethites.” - Numbers 24:17.

Meditate.

Happy Thursday, everyone. Hopefully Thursdays during this time of year are a bit easier as we march closer and closer to the holidays and family gatherings. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Sometimes it is super hard to see what is coming. After the time change in the fall we see it getting dark earlier and it makes driving at night a whole lot harder. We can't see.

Balaam had the same problem. Balaam could sense that the Messiah was going to come but didn't know when. Actually he knew something, he knew that it wasn't going to happen right when he was writing. Just that sometime in the future the Savior was to come.

As we've discussed in this devotional already this is the faith of the entire Old Testament: be patient because God will send the Holy One.

Balaam continues. A star will come from Jacob and a scepter from Israel. First thing to note is that Jacob and Israel are the same thing. At various points in the God's Word Jacob is called "Israel" and Israel is called "Jacob". For Biblical evidence please see Genesis 32:28.

The second thing to point out is that this is on the heels of what we discussed the other day in that Jacob was the son of Isaac who was nearly sacrificed by his own father, Abraham.

We see Jesus and His lineage stated in Matthew 1:2 that Jesus was a direct descendant of Jacob. Balaam wasn't able to see who or what was specifically going to happen. Today we have the advantage of being able to look back and see how things took place. We have the vantage point of looking back and seeing that Jesus is the scepter and star from Jacob.

Have a great rest of the week.

Pray.

Father, forgive us when we fail to see what it is that you're doing. For so long you told our ancestors to be rooted in you and to not give up. Let that be our prayer today and forevermore. Thank you for your love and forgiveness that is with us each new day and may we always see to it that those are the first things on our tongue in the morning and the last thing we say at night. Amen.

**December 10. Monday.**

Read.

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.” - Deuteronomy 18:15.

Meditate.

Our buddy Moses is speaking here on the future of the Israelites - God's people. It's a long section that gives many ins and outs as to what they are to do and what they aren't to do. Then comes this line where the prophet is predicted and promised.

One of the key elements to this prophecy that makes it different from many others is the comparison of Moses and Jesus. Take a moment and look at the similarities between the life of Moses and the life of Jesus is fulfilled below.

1. Both Moses and Jesus had bounties out for their heads at birth.
2. They grew up in households that were not of their natural parents.
3. Moses and Jesus were sheltered in Egypt for a time.
4. Were considered dangerous to traditional Israel.
5. Commanded the waters.
6. Had a relationship with God that was more unique than any other.
7. Rejected by their people and accepted by another.
8. Sent to reveal God to His people.
9. Brought deliverance to the Jewish people.
10. Had an angel guard their grave.

Isn't it amazing to see the similarities of the two lives? Obviously Moses wasn't the Savior and Jesus was/is.

The people of Jesus' day would have been versed in the life of Moses and would have been familiar with this prophecy. Because they were aware of what it said they probably would have been able to make the connection and see how the life of Jesus was similar to that of Moses, thus fulfilling Deuteronomy 18:15.

Pray.

Father, keep our eyes on what is happening all around us. Keep them filled with missional urgency. We know that you are coming again and that we will live in Heaven with you for the rest of time but we want our friends and family to be there as well. May we use your word and share it in ways where people can connect. Thank you for us being able to look in on the life of Moses and the life of Jesus and see how they both make your glory and plan known to all the earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**December 11. Tuesday.**

Read.

"I will declare the Lord's decree. He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." - Psalm 2:7.

Meditate.

What happened on February 6, 1952? Do a quick Google search and you'll come to find out that King George VI of England died on that date, but that's not what we're getting at. Something else happened on that date - Prince Charles became the heir apparent to the British Throne. Can you imagine the responsibility that was potentially being placed on his shoulders? Wow!

Let's get one thing straight before we go any further. Jesus is not the heir apparent to the Kingdom of God, Jesus is the King! Just wanted to clarify.

The big part of this section is where we see the words "You are my Son". Where else does God say something similar? Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17. God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father knew that Jesus was God the Father's Son, but how awesome is it that a declaration was made to the people at the baptism and we're able to read it centuries later? God the Father speaking this to Jesus ushered in what many have styled the Messianic Age.

Further down the road the New Testament uses this verse to help describe Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. It is a coronation of sorts, but it really has already happened because Jesus was already King. It's probably more of a formality citing Jesus and His officially taking the throne at the right hand of His Father.

We see the prophecy of the foretold King being God's Son and being enthroned next to His Father and we can see it fulfilled through what was mentioned at Jesus' baptism and His ascension into Heaven.

Pray.

Dear Jesus, we are so very thankful that in such a chaotic world as this that you are on the throne. No matter what is going on around us, nothing is going to take away the fact that you are right next to Your Father and You are in control. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

**December 12. Wednesday.**

Read.

“May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him..” - Psalm 72:10-11.

Meditate.

Want to know what might be the greatest show on TV right now? Undercover Boss. Undercover Boss is centered around the basic scheme of executives in large companies disguising themselves as entry level employees and working in those positions for a week or so. It's funny at the onset but at the end lasting connections are made and adjustments in the company are taking root.

Who is your boss? Unless you are self-employed you have a boss.

Pride can easily get the best of us and sometimes it's our bosses who have to bring us back down to earth. Bosses have a keen sense of reconnecting us with the base.

Today's prophecy has to deal with kings and people of power humbling themselves. Being willing to admit that though they might have some power they don't have all of it. Three kings whom history has labeled Melchior, Gathspar, and Baltheshezar leave their dominions, follow this miraculous star in the night sky, and descend upon a little child to give Him honor and bestow upon Him presents.

People might say that it's no different than going to see your friend's newborn, but here is the famous verse that these kings offered when questioned by Herod:

“Where is He, born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east.”

This claim alone puts the baby in an entirely different light. What they are doing is confessing something major. Three kings/magi/wise men are claiming that the One they're going to see is the One that Israel has been waiting for centuries upon centuries.

By bringing Jesus these gifts these kings are making the statement that although they do have some power but not all of it - the Baby in the manger has all of it. They bring gifts to Jesus which shows that they see Him as somebody important - someone to whom they bow.

Pray.

Holy and Blessed Jesus, we thank you for how your power was working even in the very beginning. Help us to look at the Gospel and share it as history, and to also see all of the themes woven throughout. Christmas is nearly here, may we make known the beauty of Your love. Amen.

**December 13. Thursday.**

Read.

“...no harm will come to you; no plague will come near your tent. For he will give his angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. They will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” - Psalm 91:10-12.

Meditate.

A common phrase in society today is to see the forest instead of the individual trees. What this challenges the hearer to do is to look at the bigger picture and see what all is happening instead of the nitty gritty. Let's consider this in the context of the Psalm 91 section listed above.

The Psalmist says it quite bluntly - no harm will come to you. Wow, that's pretty solid right there. Time to pack up and be done with all of this. But what do they mean when they use the word "harm".

So often do we consider harm as something that hinders us or hurts us in this earthly life, yet is that true harm? Is that harm lasting? A stub of the toe, slip on the ice, a toothache... though these are bothersome we know that they are temporary.

How about harm in an everlasting sense - a harm that might change where we will spend eternity. Is that what is being discussed here? Let's take our lives and use them as the plumb line, the litmus test to see how this is being written:

Did something of bodily harm or pain happen to you today? Unless you're physically perfect (which no one is), the answer is yes. Leaving the only other option that the Psalmist is talking about spiritual and eternal harm.

When Jesus was on this earth he dealt with temptation face-to-face. Satan tempted him with these very verses. Yet Jesus stood his ground and won.

We see the eternal protection fulfilled through Jesus in the demons shattering at the sound of his name, His ability to exercise authority over them, and his resurrection from the dead/defeat of death itself.

Demons have no power over Jesus. The protection that was once promised in Psalm 91 has been fulfilled through Him.

Pray.

O Holy Spirit, help our eyes to see that Jesus' power is stronger than all of the powers of Satan, evil, and harm. We are truly thankful that as we proceed in these final days leading to Christmas that we are celebrating not just the birth of a baby but the birth of the One who would defeat true harm itself. Amen.

**December 14. Friday.**

Read.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel..” - Isaiah 7:14.

Meditate.

We've already discussed the first half of this prophesy regarding the virgin giving birth and how it is only possible when you involve God, the creator of our bodies and the One who designed them to be able to reproduce. Today let's talk about the term "Immanuel".

If you haven't already heard, this specific name means "God with us". Quite often do people ask how Jesus is God's Son yet he is God as well? Here's a quick way to break it down. We know that God the Father doesn't have a wife and He is the great designer so He could easily have a Son without a spouse. From there we can conclude that a duck isn't going to give birth to a rooster. Without a spouse involved we know that God's Son logically is also God. That's how Jesus can be with us and that's how we can sufficiently say that He is God.

Now that we've gotten the logical portion of Jesus being God out of the way, was He actually God? Did He show us Godly powers? Let's take a look at a few of the times that Jesus flexed His muscles.

1. John 4:46-54. Jesus heals the official's son from afar. This points out to us that Jesus' powers are not hindered by distance - they are beyond the material world.
2. Matthew 9:1-8. Jesus forgives people of their sins. He is speaking with authority but He is able to back it up. The man takes his mat and walks away.
3. John 20:1-18. Jesus defeats death. His body wasn't there. Somehow he had bribed his way past a slew of Roman guards and broken the official Roman seal or He was simply raised from the dead. A person who is able to defeat death has power greater than anyone in history.

God with us? Is it possible? Yes.

God with us? Did Jesus give us any evidence to His divinity? Yes. The examples we just heard are only a tiny offering of the mountain of evidence from His earthly life.

Was this prophesy fulfilled through Jesus? Yes.

Pray.

Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thank you for not relenting in your mercy despite the fact that we sin much daily. We look forward to each new day with you and to see where you are working in our lives and in the lives of others. Bless us, forgive us, and lead us in Your way and not the ways of the world. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**December 15. Saturday.**

Read.

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.” -Genesis 49:8-12.

Meditate.

Imagery helps us to get a visual picture of a concept, which then helps us recall the teaching or concept. Just as Jesus is called the Lamb of God, He is also called the Lion of Judah. Looking back to the Old Testament, where our prophecies originate, Jacob, the father of all the Tribes of Israel, talks to his son, Judah. Jacob has a talk with Judah telling him that he, Judah, is a lion’s cub, imitate what a lion and lioness do. This is where our visual picture comes in. The lion has always been compared to the king of animals; he rules the land where he lives. Jacob is prophesying that from the family of Judah a King will come that will conquer His enemies. This King to come will, not on a horse, but with a donkey and his clothes will be washed in wine, the blood of grapes. What a picture! What a prophecy!

Jesus did ride into Jerusalem on a donkey colt and He did offer at Passover the blood of grapes, which He said was His blood. Then just a mere few hours later He would die on the cross, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. Triumphant, He rises from the grave of death and once again reigns as King and Savior. Jesus is our Lion of Judah. Keep this image close to your heart and mind, whenever you have fear and trials. Jesus, the King, the Lion of Judah, has conquered everything just for us.

Pray.

Dear Lord, keep us close to You, as we reflect on the image of the Lion of Judah. You are all-powerful, the King and Ruler of all. You have conquered death, the devil, and the sin of the world – all for us. We praise You, as You are King of All. We pray all this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Song – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xeLgkpcpM0>  
The Lion and the Lamb, by Big Daddy Weave

**December 16. Sunday.**

Read.

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” - Hosea 11:1.

Meditate.

Hopefully you know the story of the Israelites and how they were brought out of slavery in Egypt. If not, do yourself a favor and read the first chapters of Exodus. You will not be disappointed. You see God's hand at work.

Now let's look at the Hosea verse above. This one seems a bit different compared to the prophecies that we've already looked at.

Matthew 2:13-15 gives you the evidence of fulfillment. It might seem in passing, but here is how it breaks down. Here is how we can connect with it this Advent season.

The reason why this prophecy is different compared to others is that it's what we call a pictorial prophecy. What happens in a pictorial prophecy is there are similarities in an Old Testament passage to a New Testament truth about Jesus of Nazareth.

Matthew is writing here in a way that can connect with the people around him. People of the Jewish faith.

Although it might not be a star or scepter style of prophecy it does have its own merit in the fact that it connects the Savior with the people of God's promise - God's chosen people. God's people were called out of Egypt into the land of Israel. God's Son did the same thing.

Joseph and Mary waited until Herod had died and the killing stopped. Then they returned. What started centuries before Christ was completed by Christ.

Traditional Jews of the time would be able to recognize this similarity between Jesus and what Moses led. They would be able to see that there were inroads between Jesus and the ancient faith that they had followed. Doing this would open the door for people to step out of the dark and into God's light.

Nine days 'til Christmas. Ready yet?

Pray.

Lord, sometimes we struggle with your words. As we've said in days past it is sometimes hard to see where you are working, today we say that it is sometimes hard for us to understand what you mean. We work to not see things as the opposite of what you want us to. Help direct our vision and open our hearts to your plan. Amen.

### **December 17. Monday.**

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."  
-Isaiah 1:1

Read.

When a tree is cut down, with a stump left behind, an amazing phenomenon can happen. After a period of time a branch can grow out of that old stump. New life appears with that branch growing into a mighty tree once again. Having witnessed this twice within several years, it is incredible, providing hope for the future. God, through Isaiah, tells us this exact phenomenon will happen: a shoot or branch will grow up of an old stump from a tree that was chopped down and made low.

Meditate.

At the time Jesus was born, the mighty kingdom of David was chopped down and was no longer the mighty kingdom it once was. It was a lowly stump. But, out of that line of Jesse, King David's father, a branch would grow – a Branch that was alive with new life for us. Baby Jesus is that Branch, a living tender branch, who would grow as the Son of God to provide us new life. As that living Branch, Jesus would minister to that old stump of Jesse, the Children of Israel, living throughout the land of Palestine. Some would cling to that Branch and become infused with the life of salvation. Others rejected the Branch, and sadly withered and died. We have a choice to cling to that living Branch. We can experience new life through Jesus our Branch. We are alive in Jesus, alive to be His followers.

Pray.

Dear Lord, Thank You for becoming the living Branch of Jesse, to bring us new life. Your life gives us a new life, a life that makes us a part of You. Help us to continue to live in You, through prayer, devotions, and fellowship with other Christians. Give us the tools to share this new life with others, that they, too, would become infused with new life in Christ. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8abb42\\_oPIk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8abb42_oPIk)  
“Behold a Branch is Growing” performed by Koine

## **December 18. Tuesday.**

Read.

“He grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He didn't have an impressive form or majesty that we should look at him, no appearance that we should desire him.” - Isaiah 53:2.

Meditate.

Take a good long look at the world and tell me what you see. One of the first things that comes to mind is that it is broken. Next thing that comes to mind is that it is obsessed with money and fame. Ask a kid what they want to do in life and a good chunk of them will tell you that they want to become rich and famous.

Is that what life is all about?

One of the many outstanding attributes of the Bible is the life it describes for us. Especially Jesus' life. We have a prime pick of celebrity babies that were born into privilege and prosperity, but let's take a look at the life that Jesus was born to.

First off is that Jesus was born in circumstances that today would be frowned upon: born in an unplanned pregnancy and to an unmarried, teenage mother. On top of all this the birth happened in the equivalency of a nook in a back alley. He would then grow up to be a carpenter, a profession that wouldn't gain a ton of money. Maybe just enough to get by.

Even in his adult years Jesus didn't possess much, if anything at all. In fact Scripture paints the picture of Jesus going from place to place and subsisting off of the generosity of others.

The King of the Universe comes to earth and doesn't even glance longingly at earthly wealth and earthly fame. He knew what wealth and fame could do to people - that's why he would preach on balancing earthly gifts and heavenly gifts.

Jesus lived what we would label a lower middle class life - maybe even scratching the barrier of poverty. But did that define Him? Isaiah predicted that Jesus wouldn't be a person of earthly means, but he would have a life to which others could relate. He was able to be one with everyone because He came for everyone.

Pray.

God, please help us to not be fooled by temptations of the world and what the world might expect of us. Guide us along the path that is set out by you. May the desires of our hearts and minds be pleasing to you and only complimentary to your mission. Amen.

**December 19. Wednesday.**

Read.

"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and you holy city - to bring the rebellion to an end, to put a stop to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. Know and understand this: from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an Anointed One, the ruler, will be seven weeks and sixty two weeks. It will be rebuilt with a plaza and a moat, but in difficult times. After those sixty two weeks the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the coming ruler will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come with a flood, and until the end there will be war; desolations are decreed. He will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And the abomination of desolation will be on a wing of the temple until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator." - Daniel 9:24-27.

Meditate.

Long reading. Different message.

Theologians for centuries have wracked their brains over what this section of the Bible actually means. Does it mean that we can count out seventy weeks and pencil it in? What about sixty two weeks?

Sure does seem confusing.

Often times do we skip over simple hints that are right in front of us. What we just read is no different. While we're all trying to figure out the numerical portion the ethical slips right under our noses. Here are three key areas where we can see how Jesus fulfills this.

1. Putting a stop to sin. Jesus took our sins to the cross instead of us. (Colossians 2:14)
2. Bring everlasting righteousness. By dying for our sins Jesus gave us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)
3. Consecration of the sanctuary/holy place. In His resurrection, Jesus made it so that we could approach God and have a relationship with Him. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Jesus is the only one who could bring this prophecy to fruition. He did all of these things! Let's not make the mistake of concentrating on only one part of God's Word. Who knows, maybe the point God is trying to make is in the pile of stuff that we don't think is important?

Pray.

Holy Spirit, curb our minds to take in all of your Word and the fullness of what you want us to know. Thank you for your influence and thank you for forgiveness. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

## **December 20. Thursday.**

Read.

"The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me." -Isaiah 1:1-2.

Meditate.

The first two verses of Isaiah's first book begin with a vision that paints a bleak picture, yet, still there is hope. Isaiah ministered to the people of Israel from the reign of King Uzziah through to King Hezekiah. This may have been a period of about 50 years. During this period, Isaiah saw that the people of Israel enjoyed God's blessings, yet, they were turning more and more to their own desires and will, forgetting that God is the source of all goodness and love. Isaiah wants everyone to listen and listen as though it were the voice of God. He tells the people of Israel that

God says He has raised His people as any good Father would. Yet, what do they do? They turn their back on God and rebel against Him.

Doesn't this sound familiar, as if it could be written for people living in this very moment of time. We no longer desire to lean on God, rather wanting to rely on ourselves, our own efforts. We are lulled into believing that God is not relevant or God is not almighty. We live with abandon, rebelling against the rules God has set for us. So it was in the time of Isaiah. People of all time are quite similar. Humans have always been rebellious, from the beginning. Yet, God is still here. He loves us, not because of ourselves, but because He is love. We can repeat and turn our hearts back to God, as He is always the same. His love never changes. Let us take stock of ourselves, listening to God's voice and returning our hearts to the God of heaven and earth, who continues to bless us each and every day.

Pray.

Dear Lord, we thank You for Your continued blessings. Turn our hearts and minds to You, that we would move ever closer, leaning on You. Give us hearts for those around us, that they, too, would turn to You for all things. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVU3wX7Sbog>  
“Only Jesus” by Casting Crowns

### **December 21. Friday.**

Read.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” - Micah 5:2.

Meditate.

{Take notice of the clans of Judah reference and add that to your quiver of support for yesterday's prophecy.}

How did we get to the specific town of Bethlehem Ephrathah for the birth of Jesus? Why such a small town for the birth of the Savior of mankind? As we move on in this devotional we will be able to piece together some of the additional reasons why.

Located approximately five miles from the bustling metropolis of Jerusalem Bethlehem has had a small imprint on history. Very few archaeological references exist that tell us about this quiet little town. It sounds very much like the three stoplight town we find ourselves in and around on a daily basis.

Can anything good come out of small towns?

King David was born in Bethlehem when the majority of the Kings of Israel were born in Jerusalem.

Jesus, the eternal king was born in Bethlehem as well. In this verse the usual word for ruler/king {melech} is not used but instead is the word mashal which is often translated as shepherd ruler. Are you beginning to see how Jesus being born in Bethlehem is significant to the life He would lead?

Again, can anything good come out of small towns? You bet it can.

Pray.

Father, thank you for giving us clues as to how you want us to live through the life of Jesus. You had a plan for Him and we look forward to the plan you have for us. Bless us now as we say goodbye to the month of November and enter into the month where we celebrate the birth of our Savior. Amen.

### **December 22. Saturday.**

Read.

“For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, ...” - Isaiah 9:6.

Meditate.

For the final days leading up to the celebration of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth we're going to simply analyze Isaiah 9:6 and the titles given. We are going to separate it into four parts. Today is Wonderful Counselor.

One of the biggest crimes humanity has committed in its history is the inclination to say what is easy compared to what is necessary. What if school counselors only advised what the student wanted to hear instead of what they needed to hear... would any progress be made? Not really.

Let's apply the simple adage of what would Jesus do: say what's easy or what needs to be said?

Look in on Matthew 19:16-22. Here Jesus is confronted by a wealthy young man who asks what he needs to do to get eternal life. Jesus answers by telling the man to keep the commandments - being a citizen in a Jewish society, the man probably knew them and knew them well.

The wealthy man claims to have kept them his entire life. Jesus one-ups him: sell everything, give to the poor, and follow me. Our buddy walks away sad because he had great wealth.

We don't hear from the rich young man throughout the rest of the Gospels. One of two things probably happened in the wake of such a conversation. First is that the man went away sad and

nothing came of it. Second is that the man went away sad, couldn't get it off his mind, and ended up doing something to rectify it.

We have zero evidence of what the man did, but we can trust that Jesus said what was needed to be said. He didn't beat around the bush, Jesus was honest and spoke to the heart of the man before Him.

If Jesus came to counsel us in the easy and comfortable His Advent wasn't necessary, yet if He came to counsel us in His ways we know that they're correct and beneficial despite whether easy or not. A Wonderful Counselor isn't necessarily one you get along with but One who cares enough to tell you straight and tell you what is best.

Pray.

Holy Trinity, guard our hearts and minds away from the habit of flocking toward what is easy and calm and guide us toward Your purpose. We give thanks that we are not only encouraged each day by Your Word but challenged by it just like the rich young man. Amen.

### **December 23. Sunday.**

Read.

"For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, ..." - Isaiah 9:6.

Meditate.

Mighty. What an adjective.

We use it in phrases such as "mighty fine" or "mighty nice" yet we can use it other ways. As such we know that it is meant to set something apart. As a word it tells us that its capabilities are above those of anything else.

If there is one thing that you get from this Advent devotional we hope you get this: God never forgets His promises and He is consistent. Prophecies were made in Old Testament times about Jesus and we've seen how they've come true. Our God is reliable.

How is Jesus the Mighty God? Let's look at one of the most significant promises that is made in the entirety of the Bible - a promise that requires pure and true strength:

"Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. Yeah, this isn't a five loaves and two fish kind of thing but it's dealing with the emotional and mental burdens we all carry.

In a world where someone commits suicide every 40 seconds this is huge. Nowhere is it said that Jesus will only take care of your burdens if they are under a certain weight, or He will only help get rid of your baggage from at most 10 years ago. No, Jesus tells us to come and He will

give us rest. I don't know about you but I can't take away the burdens from my friends. I can attempt it, but I know I will fail at some point.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this Mighty God prophecy because He is showing us here that His strength goes beyond the physical world and He doesn't stick any conditions on the end of this command.

Pray.

Holy Spirit, come into our lives and influence us in a way that helps to glorify the mercy, power, and might of your work. Thank you especially for giving us a second chance and reminding us in the Word to give everything to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **December 24. Monday.**

Read.

"For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, ..." - Isaiah 9:6.

Meditate.

Let's look at Eternal Father.

Christmas is the time of year where we celebrate Jesus' birth. How can He be eternal if He was born? Look at it this way, Jesus isn't defined by physicality. Just because He was born physically doesn't mean that that was His true beginning.

Isaiah lays claim that the child, the son, born to us would be many things including Eternal Father. Are there any verses in the New Testament that help support this claim? Many. Take a look.

1. Colossians 1:17 - "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." If Jesus is before all things that means He was there before anything else was created and if all things consist in Him that means He is present longer than the final things.
2. John 1:1 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus is the Word, therefore He was present in the very beginning.
3. Revelation 1:8 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ...". In a highly Greeked society people would understand this as a statement of being both the first and the last.

Multiple times do we see Jesus claiming to be eternal, but one that we can't forget as we look at the fulfillment of this prophecy is this one from Matthew 28: Behold, I am with you always even to the very end of the age.

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy and shows us many times throughout the Bible. In fact that is one of the most comforting things about Him because we know that He is always there with us.

Get excited. Christmas is almost here.

Pray.

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us so much that you revealed that You are eternal. May we always walk in ways that are pleasing to You. You are our fortress, redeemer, and ever-present leader. Amen.

**December 25. Tuesday.**

Read.

“For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” - Isaiah 9:6.

Meditate.

Last but not least is Prince of Peace.

All things considered, people hope for world peace. We hear it on Miss USA, we hear it on the news, and we see the need for it in our own lives. Yes, peace is something that we need more of.

When this says Prince of Peace does it mean earthly peace or ... ? Part of the mystery of Christ is deciphering what is truly meant behind His Word. When we think about it pertaining to earthly peace we know that that can only go so far because Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves but then tells us that He came to righteously divide. What is earthly peace if it's only done halfway?

Jesus came to give us heavenly peace. Peace that is not dictated by the world, but by Him. Us living in heavenly peace is us living in accordance with God's ways and not those of men. Us living by God's ways versus those around us might divide us in a temporary sense.

Earthly peace is only temporary. Heavenly peace is eternal.

Jesus calls on us to trust and follow Him. We are called to believe Him at His word. We are called to read His Word and see that He never gives up on His promises.

Considering His Peace goes beyond what we would label as normal. He's born in a slum, lives a life of poverty, and is murdered only to rise on the third day and ascend into Heaven. He doesn't hold back on calling a spade a spade and He doesn't have a problem with reminding people what they're supposed to be doing.

The Prince of Peace came to give us Heavenly Peace. And what is this Heavenly Peace? A rebuilt relationship with God - "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men ..."  
- 1 Timothy 2:5.

Merry Christmas.

Pray.

Father in Heaven, thank you that we have at last reached the celebration of Jesus' birth. Help us to always be people found in Your Heavenly Peace. We marvel at the fact that you remembered all of your promises about Jesus in the Old Testament and that we are able to see how you fulfilled them all. Thank you for loving us and may we always realize the challenge and encouragement to show that love to others. In Jesus' Name. Amen.