

KINGDOM COME



Advent 2019



**Saturday devotions are intended for young readers*

Sunday, December 1 - Eph. 2:14-18

Peace is more than the absence of conflict. Peace is destructive. Peace tears down hostile walls that enable false truces while preventing true reconciliation.

Peace is more than uniformity. Peace welcomes the mess of diversity for the promise of unity. Peace is neither fragile nor fearful.

Peace is more than order. Peace prefers the chaotic life of the Spirit to the deadly letter of the law.

Peace is a Person. *For [Jesus] is our peace...And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, so that through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

Tom Mitchell

Monday, December 2 - Isaiah 12:2

Isaiah 12:2 is part of a song of praise for the time when Jesus Christ shall reign over the earth. We can rejoice in the knowledge that we are His, and He will protect and keep us as a good earthly father would do. He brings a song of joy and hope to our hearts, and a life that is so much better with His presence. We have assurance that we will someday be fully with Him in His kingdom. With this peace and hope comes our purpose – to share the good news about His grace with others, to live a life that would please Him and further exemplify His name, to be kind and mindful of the needs of others, and to serve Him all of our days. What a joy and what a privilege!

Rose Regni

Tuesday, December 3 - Psalm 143:8

My great-grandfather, a circuit rider, traveled on horseback sharing the gospel of Christ. But he became unable to travel. My mother recalls a group of young ministers visiting and sitting on the floor around his chair, questioning him on the Scriptures. Upon leaving, one stated that it was like sitting at the feet of the Master. Why? Because he had been faithful to begin each day in prayer, entrusting his life to God.

When we experience God's love, not only are we blessed, but those around us are able to sense the loving presence of the Holy Spirit.

As we enter this busy season of Advent, may we not forget to begin each day in communion with Him.

Elizabeth Windom

Wednesday, December 4 - Gal. 2:20

Are we making room for Christ to reign in our hearts? What must we die to in our hearts? Is it an attitude, a behavior, something we allowed to become an idol? Are we desperate to maintain control? Are we living in fear?

Jesus paid the price for all of this and more. Entrusting ourselves to God is not a one-time action, but a daily choice going beyond our own abilities. Take comfort, God never asked us to do this alone! God's ears are always open to hear our prayers. His Word is wisdom and truth. God sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper. God calls us into Christian community to encourage one another. What better time than now to prepare room for Christ to reign in our hearts! Won't you trust Him with yours?

Hope Melton

Thursday, December 5 - Lam. 3:21-24

Over the course of our lives, there are countless situations in which we feel hopeless. Losing a loved one, job, new opportunities, and difficult family situations – we have all faced circumstances feeling there is no hope. Through our darkest hours, our God is faithful and loving, and walks with us.

In the Old Testament, we see that the Hebrew people often failed to meet God's expectations. Knowing that they would never succeed, Isaiah's prophecy of a Messiah offered them hope that one day they would no longer be separated from Him by their sin. As believers, we take refuge in God's faithfulness, even in our darkest hours. During this Advent season, let us remember the HOPE of a Savior, born on that night so many years ago.

Suzanne Speer

Friday, December 6 - Psalm 103:8-11

While serving in one of the places in Upper Egypt, I met a brother who shared with me how he had met the Lord in prison. He was a drug addict and a heavy drinker who had neglected his family. His life was extremely messy.

He was arrested with a large amount of drugs and taken to jail. While he was waiting for a court date, he sat down on the cell floor and said to himself, *There's no one to help me now*. He heard a loud voice in the room saying, "Jesus." He was horrified, and looked around, but no one was there. He said to himself again, *Not only am I in jail but I'm also going to hell*. He heard the same voice say, "Jesus." He shouted with tears and said aloud: "I accept you, Jesus, in my heart, as Lord and Savior." God got him out of jail in a miraculous way and now he's a faithful servant to God.

Yes, God is merciful and patient and has much mercy to offer!

كنت أخدم بأحد الأماكن في صعيد مصر وتقابلت مع أحد الاخوة والذي شاركني كيف تقابل مع الرب في السجن. كان شريب مخدرات وقد أهمل أسرته وأصبحت حياته في الضياع وقد قبض عليه ومعه كمية منها وبينما كان في السجن ينتظر الحكم جلس علي الأرض واحني راسه بين رجلية وتكلم الي نفسه قائلاً: الان انا أنتظر حكم بسنوات بسبب المخدرات ، من ينقذني ؟ فسمع صوت عالي في الغرفة يقول يسوع فأرتعب ونظر حولة ولم يجد أحد ، فقال ايضاً في نفسه ليس هذا فقط بل محكوم علي بجهنم والعذاب الابدي ، من ينقذني ؟ فسمع نفس الصوت يسوع. فصرخ بدموع وقال بصوت مرتفع: أمين وانا اقبلك يا يسوع في قلبي رباً ومخلصاً وقد انقذه الرب من السجن بطريقة معجزيه وأصبح خادماً رائعاً ليسوع المسيح. نعم انه رحيم وطويل الروح وكثير الرحمة

Agayby Shehata

****Saturday, December 7 - John 3:16-17***

This Bible verse tells us that every day we can know God loves us and wants us to know of His love. He sent Jesus to earth with this message.

God is eternal, meaning there is nothing before God nor after Him. He always is. God's Christmas gift for us was Jesus, who came to earth, died for our sins, rose from the grave, and is still alive. We receive this gift when we accept Him as our Savior and Lord. Jesus lives in us because we believe in Him and in God the Father who gave Him to us out of love. When we believe this truth and receive this gift, we live in Jesus and He lives in us - now and forever.

Virginia Moore

Sunday, December 8 - Acts 4:10-12

It is the season to celebrate - celebrate the greatest gift God has given to all people. "Savior" is the Old Testament word interpreted as "God's work." Jesus is God's work that gives us eternal salvation. Salvation is not what we do or have done. God made salvation, deliverance from sin and death, available to you and me. He began it through the birth of Jesus and finished it through Jesus' death and resurrection. Peter clearly states there is no way to gain salvation except through belief in the name of Jesus. The birth we celebrate is the greatest gift ever given to us and the greatest gift we can ever share in this season of Advent.

Darden Battle

Monday, December 9 - Psalm 100:1-5

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing..." We love to hear uplifting messages through our worship music and they are especially meaningful as we anticipate the celebration of Jesus's birth! What better way to express and honor God during Advent than to make your joy known through beautiful, jubilant music. The Christmas hymns we learn as children stay with us throughout our lifetimes just as God is with us through every day. May our hearts forever overflow with joy as we feel God's blessings each and every day!

Sallie Cook

Tuesday, December 10 - Philippians 4:11-13

The apostle Paul is not making a complaint, but merely stating his dependence on the Lord, aware of His necessary supply. Paul went through great difficulties, but was certain that divine protection was undoubtedly his safety. No matter how much bounty or limitation, he was sure that God's protective and merciful hand was upon him. Nothing matters - whether much or nothing - protection comes from above. It is the way the true Christian goes. Let us remember the story of Job. In the greatest anguish and under false accusations he did not deviate from the trust he placed in the hands of the creator God. I can have everything, I can have it and I may not have it, when I am in communion with the One who strengthens me in all situations of life.

O apóstolo Paulo não está fazendo uma reclamação, tão somente afirmando sua dependência do Senhor, consciente do seu suprimento necessário. Ele passou por grandes dificuldades, porém estava certo de que a proteção divina era sem dúvida sua segurança. Não importa se muita fartura ou muita limitação, ele estava seguro de que a mão protetora e de misericórdia de Deus estava sobre ele. Nada importa se muito ou nada, a proteção vem do alto. Este é o caminho que o verdadeiro cristão percorre. Lembremos a história de Jó. Na maior angústia e sob acusações falsas não se desviou da confiança que ele depositou nas mãos do Deus criador. Posso tudo, posso ter e posso não ter quando estou em comunhão com aquele que me fortalece em todas as situações da vida.

André Amaral

Wednesday, December 11 - Psalm 33:20-22

These days who doesn't have problems, sadness, hopelessness? We look for ways to get away from them, how to overcome despair. We look for someone to trust, we look for joy, we seek help. And we are not the only ones. Many years ago, King David felt the same, but he knew someone who could help him at any time and under any circumstances. That Someone was God. With all David's confidence, with all his hope, with that thirst for joy, he knew that only God could fill those gaps in his soul, in his life.

So do not look for the wrong things to give you hope; to people who can never give you what you lack. Instead let's look for God at all times.

En estos días quién no tiene problemas, tristezas, desesperanza, y solo pensamos cómo salir de ellas, cómo vencer la desesperación, buscamos en quién confiar, buscamos la alegría, buscamos ayuda. Y no somos los únicos, desde hace muchos años el Rey David sintió lo mismo, pero él conocía a alguien que le podía ayudar en cualquier momento y bajo cualquier circunstancia. Ese alguien era Dios, y con toda su confianza, con toda su esperanza, con esa sed de alegría, sabía que solo Dios podría llenar esos vacíos en su alma, en su vida.

Así nosotros, no busquemos en las cosas equivocadas, en las personas que nunca podrán darnos eso que nos falta. Busquemos de Dios en todo tiempo. Amén

Louis Orsatti

Thursday, December 12 - 1 John 1:5-7

Darkness cannot exist in His holy presence. Because God is holy, one could picture big bright lights such as spotlights or floodlights. However, when subjected to these harsh lights, one can feel alone, exposed, and paralyzed. But because of the blood of Jesus, we are not condemned.

His light is a beacon and points a way for us to walk in the light and out of the darkness. The sun rises each morning and the dark of night disappears. The entire sky glows, and we and all creation reflect the light.

We can walk in the light, in fellowship with Jesus and each other. We walk boldly, out of darkness, like each new day.

Suzie Park

Friday, December 13 - James 3:17-18

At the very first of James' letter, the author tells us "...If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

What a stunning promise, and one we all should be seeking daily. How much more a gift is it that the wisdom from God promised in the third chapter is a wisdom that is pure; free of contamination, without extraneous and unnecessary elements.

So, let us together seek this very wisdom as we attempt to exemplify the grace and love of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's take these verses apart word by word, and consider if and how we might live out these definitions of godly wisdom.

Beth Esleck

****Saturday, December 14 - Eph. 4:32***

In this chapter of Ephesians, Paul lists some ways that Christians should act differently now that they are Christ-followers. In verse 32, Paul says that we should be kind and compassionate to one another.

In the book, *Wonder*, by R. J. Palacio, the first of Mr. Browne's precepts is this: When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind. It's not always easy to choose kindness, especially when your little brother eats the last chocolate chip cookie or when your best friend chooses not to play with you on the playground. But even when it's hard, it is one of the ways Jesus wants us to be different. How can you show kindness to someone today?

Ainsleigh Gaskins



For
unto
you is
born this
day in the
city of David
a saviour, which
is Christ the Lord

LUKE

2:11

ADVENT CALENDAR DECEMBER 2019

| DATE | TIME | ACTIVITY |
|------|------------|--|
| | | ADVENT I |
| 1 | | Week of Prayer for International Missions Begins (through December 8) |
| | | Red Sleigh Donations Deadline |
| 7 | 8:00 a.m. | Church Hill Christian Wellness Center Christmas Store at Bethlehem Baptist Church |
| | 9:00 a.m. | Parents Morning Out in the FLC Gym |
| | | ADVENT II |
| 8 | 6:00 p.m. | Middle School Christmas Party at the Luzzatto's |
| 9 | 9:00 a.m. | CLC Christmas Chapel Program in the Sanctuary |
| | 6:00 p.m. | West Virginia Missions Presents in Spence Hall |
| 10 | 12:00 p.m. | Second Cousins Annual Christmas Luncheon, FLC 103-104 |
| | 2:00 p.m. | The Jubilation Community Choir Concert in the Sanctuary |
| 12 | | Christmas Mission Trip to Caretta, West Virginia |
| | | ADVENT III |
| 15 | 11:00 a.m. | "To Look for A Star" Christmas Concert in the Sanctuary during the Worship Service |
| | 6:00 p.m. | High School Christmas Party at the Willett's |
| 16 | 6:30 p.m. | ESL International Christmas Dinner in Ed. 201 |
| 18 | 6:45 p.m. | "Away in a Manger" Children's Choir Christmas Concert in the Sanctuary |
| 21 | 9:00 a.m. | Give & Go Basketball Christmas Camp in the FLC Gym |
| | 7:00 p.m. | College Christmas Party at the Beamer's |
| | | Arabic Language Ministry Worship in Spence Hall |
| | | ADVENT IV |
| 22 | | Poinsettia Dedication Sunday |
| | 8:45 a.m. | Morning Worship in the Sanctuary |
| | 8:45 a.m. | The Well Worship in the FLC Gym |
| | 9:45 a.m. | Sunday School for All Ages |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Morning Worship in the Sanctuary |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Spanish Language Ministry Worship in the Chapel |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Portuguese Language Ministry Worship in Spence Hall |
| | 2:00 p.m. | Nepalese Language Ministry Worship in Spence Hall |
| 23 | 9:00 a.m. | Give & Go Basketball Christmas Camp in the FLC Gym |
| 24 | | Christmas Eve |
| | 4:00 p.m. | The Well Christmas Eve Worship in the FLC Gym |
| | 5:30 p.m. | Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship in the Sanctuary |
| | 11:00 p.m. | Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship in the Sanctuary |
| 25 | | Christmas Day |

Sunday, December 15 - I Peter 1:3-5

“I hope for ...” , “I hope to ...” ; “I hope that” How often do we use the term HOPE in our daily lives? It is part of our life. Hope sustains us. It is what keeps us going.

Peter addressed the early Christians, giving them hope during their difficult times. They were being persecuted and their morale was low. He let them know that Jesus Christ was providing living hope for an inheritance waiting in heaven for His followers. That it is not a temporary or fading hope. Peter stressed that salvation from Jesus is permanent.

At this time of year, we praise the birth of Jesus, who provides this inheritance in Heaven when hope becomes a reality.

Don Edwards

Monday, December 16 - John 13:34-35

Jesus commands us to love one another. By “us” He means fellow Christians. Many people are classified by their cultural differences, what they wear, or what they do. Jesus, however, tells us that we, as Christians, should be known by our brotherly and sisterly love for one another. It does not mean that we should exclude others. We are all God’s children. He also wants us to share love with others, especially those who may not know Christ that well.

Loving others can be difficult sometimes. There may be someone you would rather not be around. Stop and think for a moment though. What if they do not have love in their life or even know what love is? What if they do not know Jesus? We should take the time to show them the overflowing love of God. Think of what we could do if we loved each person unconditionally, just as Jesus did.

Mason Boggs

Tuesday, December 17 - John 1:9-12

At Christmas time, it's easy to fill up our lives with all sorts of things (good things even!) like gifts, decorations, parties, and eggnog... but those things aren't what Christmas is about. Christmas is about a God who loved us SO MUCH that He left His perfect home to come and live with us, in our messy lives. John calls us to recognize, [the] true light. Take a minute today and do something that helps you remember why we celebrate: listen to your favorite carol, do something kind for someone else, go look at the stars and imagine that night in the manger -- and remind yourself that Jesus is at the center of it all.

Alex Schad

Wednesday, December 18 - John 14:25-27

These were Christ's words of farewell to His disciples as they celebrated the Passover in the upper room. He knew His time was at hand. Their world was about to come apart.

He urges them to remember what He has taught and He reassures them that though He is going to the Father, God is sending the Holy Spirit who will remind them of His teaching and provide understanding.

This is Jesus' legacy and He leaves us with His peace, the peace of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Peace born of belief and trust. This is the peace that surpasses all understanding. It is not the world's peace.

Christ is telling us, "Do not be troubled, do not be afraid. I am with you. God is in charge. All is well."

Grayson Harding

Thursday, December 19 - Rom 8:38

The birth of Jesus is the demonstration of God's love in its purest form. It is so strong a gift that Paul tells us once we are a part of God's family, absolutely nothing can come between us and the gift of love that Jesus brings.

Paul emphasizes its importance in three separate ways. Neither the beginning of life nor the end of life can take us away from Him. Not our past transgressions, our life on this very day, or the future before us can drive a permanent wedge in our relationship. Life's tallest mountain and lowest valley are not roadblocks. He loves us as we are, where we are in an all-consuming, never-ending commitment.

Betsy Beamer

Friday, December 20 - Hebrews 11:1

What do we hope for? Hebrews 10:37 has already answered this question, quoting from the Old Testament: For, *'Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay.* Trusting in that promise, God's people endured four hundred years of silence while hoping for the first coming of the Messiah. Examples of this righteous expectation include Mary's praise to God, Zechariah and Elizabeth's faith, the wise men's search, and the joyful anticipation of Simeon and Anna. In the same way, Hebrews commands us to have a similar hope in the second return of the Coming One.

Sarah & Eric Burk

****Saturday, December 21 - Proverbs 17:17***

What is a friend? The dictionary tells us that a friend is someone who helps and supports you. Maybe you would add that a friend is someone you get along with, someone who likes the things you like.

Today's Bible verse adds something else. It tells us that a friend loves ALL THE TIME! A friend loves you when you are happy and when you are sad. A friend loves you when you're having fun and when you cannot get along. A friend loves you when you make good choices and when you make bad choices. The Bible says we need to be that kind of friend. Jesus is that kind of friend. Jesus loves you ALL THE TIME! How do we know? The Bible tells us so!

Emily Boddy

Sunday, December 22 - Luke 1: 57-80

In ancient times, names chosen often were indicative of one's appearance, character, or thankful responses to God's provisions. There was Esau ("red and hairy"), Jacob ("the supplanter"), and Samuel ("his name is God").

In Luke 1: 13, God's messenger picks the name of the son to be born to Elizabeth and Zechariah. When Zechariah doubts, he is made mute until the child is born. His name is John, a shortened version of *Jehohanan* ("Jehovah's gift").

In verse 67, Zechariah begins to prophesy (the Benedictus). He is thankful that God will use his son in preparing the way for the Messiah. Chapter 1 closes in anticipation of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Zechariah learned to trust that God will fulfill God's promises, and so must we.

Robert Lewis

Monday, December 23 - Matthew 1:18-23

In this passage, we have one of the great declarations of the entire Bible, and the heart of Christmas. We learn of God's perfect plan. Immanuel – God with Us! God is not watching us from a distance (as one contemporary song falsely proclaims), rather God has chosen to miraculously break into history, to be a part of the human condition. We learn of the very human people chosen to be the parents of the Christ child. Most importantly, we learn that God is doing a mighty work, seeking us out to restore relationship with Him. At Christmas, we celebrate a Creator God whose love surprises us, and surpasses all our hopes by being present with us. Praise be to God!

Caven Schofield

Tuesday, December 24 - Luke 1:39-50

Thousands of years ago, Mary and Joseph's roles in society were well defined. God wasn't doubted! The angels He sent to speak to them were not ignored! Mary was a willing mother, joyfully bursting into song about God's mercies, powers, and the promises she had been taught as a child.

Today, we are thousands of years away and almost completely removed from such willingness to obey God. In 2019, our "expectant mother joys" often center around baby showers, decorating the nursery, choosing names, visiting doctors, and registering for gifts. Has God slipped away from our "expected baby's" world? Does MY soul forget to praise the Lord's greatness?

Please God, come back! Bring Jesus back into our world soon, very soon!

Joanie Bache

Wednesday, December 25 - Luke 2:1-20

Nativity sets are lovely, but unfortunately, the figurines are often stationary. I think we need some with wheels, because the characters in the Christmas story were on the move.

Caesar Augustus mandated that everyone return to their own towns for a census. Can you imagine the gridlock on the ancient roads? Everybody across the entire land had to return to their ancestral home.

Joseph and Mary had to go from Nazareth, where they lived, to Bethlehem. That's a 97-mile trek. Since 20 miles was an average day's journey back then, traveling to Bethlehem would have taken about five days. Keep in mind that Mary was in her third trimester. I don't know anyone in her third trimester who wants to ride in a car for five hours, much less ride a donkey for five days. Nevertheless, she went.

The shepherds were on the move, too. They were living out in the fields, in constant motion with their sheep. When the angel announced that Christ was born in Bethlehem, the shepherds made a special trip of their own. They arrived at the manger to see the baby and told Mary and Joseph what the angels had said about Jesus. Everyone was amazed.

As important as this meeting was, I'm guessing the original manger scene only lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The shepherds saw the child, told their story, but then had to get back to work. The manger scene was a fleeting moment amid a frenzy of transition. The characters drew together briefly but meaningfully. They came close to the divine Savior, who had come to be with them in the flesh. Their time together was only a flash, but it was a flash of glory.

continued...

Many of us will travel this Christmas, or welcome guests who have traveled to see us. Many of us will rush around to decorate homes, to prepare meals, and to purchase, wrap, and deliver gifts. Christmas remains a time when people across the entire land are on the move.

I suppose it's fitting, since Christmas marks God's great move from eternity into time, from heaven down to earth. Christ came all this way to save us. While our moments together at Christmas are fleeting, the Savior is with us always. Hallelujah!

Noel Schoonmaker

FOR UNTO US A
CHILD
IS
BORN



ISAIAH 9:6

Ministering With You

Dr. Noel Schoonmaker, *Senior Pastor*
Dr. Raymond Spence, Jr., *Pastor Emeritus*
Reverend Kathi Traficanti, *Minister of Adult Education*
Reverend Katie Vance Lucas, *Minister of Children*
Reverend Ben Brown, *Minister of Students*
Reverend Nelson Taylor, *Interim Minister of Music*
Mrs. Susan Hill, *Director of Creative Learning Center*
Mrs. Ainsleigh Gaskins, *Assistant Director of Creative Learning Center*
Reverend Louis Orsatti, *Pastor, Spanish Language Ministry*
Reverend Agayby Shehata, *Pastor, Arabic Language Ministry*
Reverend André Amaral, *Pastor, Portuguese Language Ministry*
Reverend Joseph Pradhan, *Pastor, Nepalese Language Ministry*
Mrs. Hilliary Larsen, *Music Associate*
Mrs. Judy Mawyer, *Children's Choir Coordinator*
Mrs. Virginia Moore, *Director of Recreation Ministry*
Mrs. Kathy Driver, *Office Manager*
Mrs. Patty Dimowski, *Administrative Secretary*
Mrs. Griendora "G" McDowell, *Financial Administrator*
Mrs. Joanna Landrum, *Communication Administrative Assistant*
Ms. Olivia Freeman, *Communication Administrative Assistant*
Ms. Beverly Stewart, *Administrative Assistant*
Mr. Adam Schumm, *Director of Food Services*
Mr. Danny Belanger, *Facilities Manager*
Mr. Billy Petruska, *Supervisor of Events & Maintenance*



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for unbounded service

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