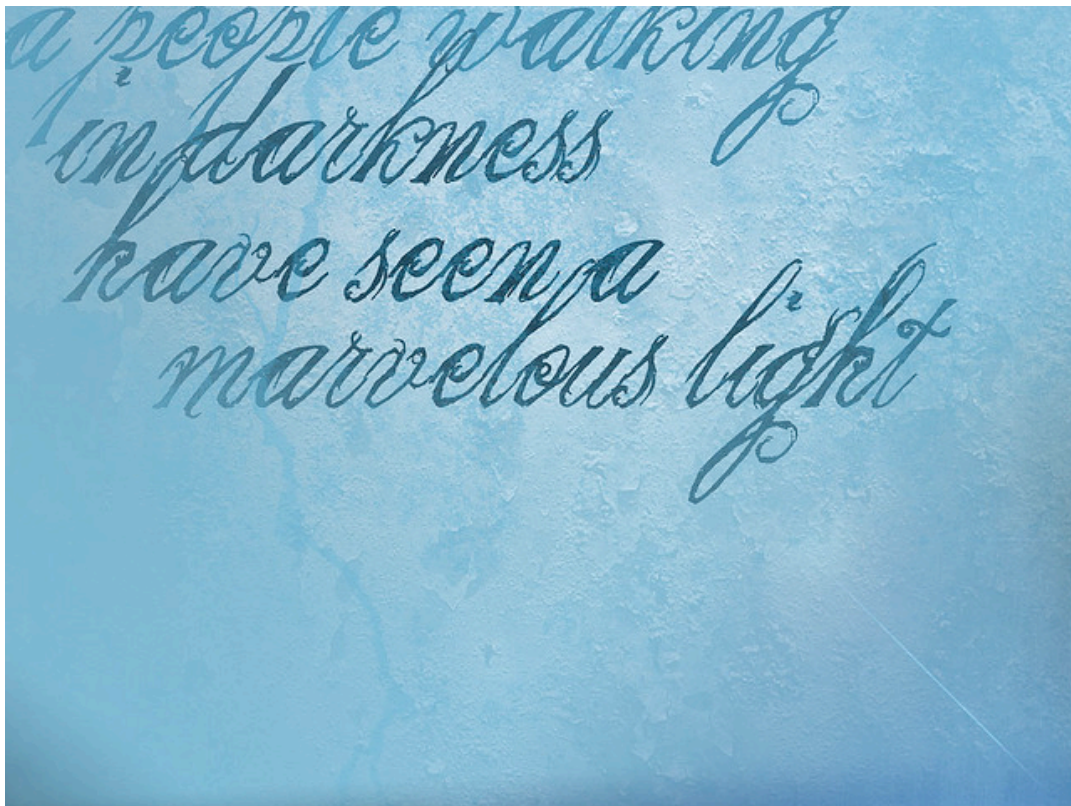


# Advent 2011



## Welcome-

I have a thing about Advent. I start looking forward to it around the time that the leaves change and life starts to cool down. Advent starts the year for Christians, it begins the pattern of the life of Christ that we celebrate in Christian worship.

Advent is a season that resets us. It is a season of expectation. For those of us that design worship, Advent provides a veritable playground of biblical memory, narrative worship and theological projection. To worship in Advent means to pull ourselves away from the idea that Christ isn't with us. Advent provides a constant recitation of Christian hope!

As we lead people in worship this December I pray that we tell a different story. We tell the story of a people who waited, and while we remember that we also are waiting. Advent forces the Christian to acknowledge the expectation of the 2nd coming. Instead of stories of fire, destruction and terror-Advent makes us think about fulfillment, promise and a God who is coming. So here are a few helps, so you can save some time and reflect deeply this season.

Chad

## Notes on Substance and Form-

This Advent is odd. Instead of the normal Christmas stories and feel good narratives, we get prophecy (OT) and heavy theologizing (NT). Yes-parts of what we expect are in the readings, but for folks jumping into these texts looking for help in leading worship this month it would be easy to scratch your head and give up.

So I offer this suggestion. Read these scriptures prayerfully. Think about how they inform the greater substance of worship during this season. How do they give us a picture of the necessity of Jesus coming? How do they answer the questions and needs both of the Jews, but also of Christians waiting for Christ again?

For Christians, Advent helps us understand the plight of the Jewish people in the 1st century. But for our own integration, Advent is an eschatological season. Advent is a season in which we celebrate the 2nd coming of Christ. This doesn't mean we show the Left Behind books, but we lead people in expectation. We think of the words of Isaiah and consider ourselves to be "a people walking in darkness, who have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9).

Let these texts, even if we don't read them every week, inform the spirit of our worship. Let them give us the attitude and posture of our worship.

The Old Testament verses written in poetic form have been presented as such. The texts written in narrative form have had the chapter/verse markers removed. Both are given in the New Living Translation. In a few places, multiple readings are given. They are marked in parenthesis.

Thanks for reading and leading others in worship.

## Additional Resources:

[Revised Common Lectionary](#): Tons of art/poetry to use in worship as well as readings from other years if needed.

[Advent Slide Backgrounds](#): Here are a few slide backgrounds I have made over the years. Most follow the traditional color for Advent (blue) and are available for free download.

[Various reflections/resources](#): These are all curated at my website [outsideisbetter.net](http://outsideisbetter.net). There are other resources, bibliographies, thoughts from others and other helpful items for Advent.

# Sunday, November 27th

## Isaiah 64:1-9

- Is. 64:1 Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down!  
How the mountains would quake in your presence!
- Is. 64:2 As fire causes wood to burn  
and water to boil,  
your coming would make the nations tremble.  
Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame!
- Is. 64:3 When you came down long ago,  
you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations.  
And oh, how the mountains quaked!
- Is. 64:4 For since the world began,  
no ear has heard  
and no eye has seen a God like you,  
who works for those who wait for him!
- Is. 64:5 You welcome those who gladly do good,  
who follow godly ways.  
But you have been very angry with us,  
for we are not godly.  
We are constant sinners;  
how can people like us be saved?
- Is. 64:6 We are all infected and impure with sin.  
When we display our righteous deeds,  
they are nothing but filthy rags.  
Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall,  
and our sins sweep us away like the wind.
- Is. 64:7 Yet no one calls on your name  
or pleads with you for mercy.  
Therefore, you have turned away from us  
and turned us over to our sins.
- Is. 64:8 And yet, O LORD, you are our Father.  
We are the clay, and you are the potter.  
We all are formed by your hand.
- Is. 64:9 Don't be so angry with us, LORD.  
Please don't remember our sins forever.  
Look at us, we pray,  
and see that we are all your people.

## **Psalm 80:1-7,17-19**

- Psa. 80:1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.  
O God, enthroned above the cherubim,  
display your radiant glory
- Psa. 80:2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.  
Show us your mighty power.  
Come to rescue us!
- Psa. 80:3 Turn us again to yourself, O God.  
Make your face shine down upon us.  
Only then will we be saved.
- Psa. 80:4 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies,  
how long will you be angry with our prayers?
- Psa. 80:5 You have fed us with sorrow  
and made us drink tears by the bucketful.
- Psa. 80:6 You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations.  
Our enemies treat us as a joke.
- Psa. 80:7 Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies.  
Make your face shine down upon us.  
Only then will we be saved.
- Psa. 80:17 Strengthen the man you love,  
the son of your choice.
- Psa. 80:18 Then we will never abandon you again.  
Revive us so we can call on your name once more.
- Psa. 80:19 Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies.  
Make your face shine down upon us.  
Only then will we be saved.

## **1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. Through him, God has enriched your church in every way —with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Mark 13:24-37**

“At that time, after the anguish of those days,  
the sun will be darkened,  
the moon will give no light,  
the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send out his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place. Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!

“The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. You, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!”

# Sunday, December 4th

## Isaiah 40:1-11

- Is. 40:1 "Comfort, comfort my people,"  
says your God.
- Is. 40:2 "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.  
Tell her that her sad days are gone  
and her sins are pardoned.  
Yes, the LORD has punished her twice over  
for all her sins."
- Is. 40:3 Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting,  
"Clear the way through the wilderness  
for the LORD!  
Make a straight highway through the wasteland  
for our God!
- Is. 40:4 Fill in the valleys,  
and level the mountains and hills.  
Straighten the curves,  
and smooth out the rough places.
- Is. 40:5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
The LORD has spoken!"
- Is. 40:6 A voice said, "Shout!"  
I asked, "What should I shout?"  
"Shout that people are like the grass.  
Their beauty fades as quickly  
as the flowers in a field.
- Is. 40:7 The grass withers and the flowers fade  
beneath the breath of the LORD.  
And so it is with people.
- Is. 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fade,  
but the word of our God stands forever."
- Is. 40:9 O Zion, messenger of good news,  
shout from the mountaintops!  
Shout it louder, O Jerusalem.  
Shout, and do not be afraid.  
Tell the towns of Judah,  
"Your God is coming!"
- Is. 40:10 Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power.  
He will rule with a powerful arm.  
See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.
- Is. 40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

He will carry the lambs in his arms,  
holding them close to his heart.  
He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

### **Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

Psa. 85:1 LORD, you poured out blessings on your land!  
You restored the fortunes of Israel.

Psa. 85:2 You forgave the guilt of your people—  
yes, you covered all their sins.

Interlude

Psa. 85:8 I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying,  
for he speaks peace to his faithful people.  
But let them not return to their foolish ways.

Psa. 85:9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,  
so our land will be filled with his glory.

Psa. 85:10 Unfailing love and truth have met together.  
Righteousness and peace have kissed!

Psa. 85:11 Truth springs up from the earth,  
and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

Psa. 85:12 Yes, the LORD pours down his blessings.  
Our land will yield its bountiful harvest.

Psa. 85:13 Righteousness goes as a herald before him,  
preparing the way for his steps.

### **2 Peter 3:8-15a**

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.

### **Mark 1:1-18**

This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written:

“Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
and he will prepare your way.  
He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming!  
Clear the road for him!’”

This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.

Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God’s Good News. **“The time promised by God has come at last!”** he announced. **“The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”**

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, **“Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”** And they left their nets at once and followed him.

# Sunday, December 11th

## Isaiah 61:1-11

- Is. 61:1 ¶ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,  
for the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted  
and to proclaim that captives will be released  
and prisoners will be freed.
- Is. 61:2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn  
that the time of the LORD's favor has come,  
and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.
- Is. 61:3 To all who mourn in Israel,  
he will give a crown of beauty for ashes,  
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,  
festive praise instead of despair.  
In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks  
that the LORD has planted for his own glory.
- Is. 61:4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins,  
repairing cities destroyed long ago.  
They will revive them,  
though they have been deserted for many generations.
- Is. 61:8 "For I, the LORD, love justice.  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.  
I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering  
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
- Is. 61:9 Their descendants will be recognized  
and honored among the nations.  
Everyone will realize that they are a people  
the LORD has blessed."
- Is. 61:10 I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God!  
For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation  
and draped me in a robe of righteousness.  
I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit  
or a bride with her jewels.
- Is. 61:11 The Sovereign LORD will show his justice to the nations of the world.  
Everyone will praise him!  
His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring,  
with plants springing up everywhere.

## **Psalm 126 (or Luke 1:46b-55)**

Psa. 126:0 A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

Psa. 126:1 When the LORD brought back his exiles to Jerusalem,  
it was like a dream!

Psa. 126:2 We were filled with laughter,  
and we sang for joy.  
And the other nations said,  
“What amazing things the LORD has done for them.”

Psa. 126:3 Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us!  
What joy!

Psa. 126:4 Restore our fortunes, LORD,  
as streams renew the desert.

Psa. 126:5 Those who plant in tears  
will harvest with shouts of joy.

Psa. 126:6 They weep as they go to plant their seed,  
but they sing as they return with the harvest.

## **Luke 1:46b-55**

The Magnificat:

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!  
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,  
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One is holy,  
and he has done great things for me.

He shows mercy from generation to generation  
to all who fear him.

His mighty arm has done tremendous things!  
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

He has brought down princes from their thrones  
and exalted the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

He has helped his servant Israel  
and remembered to be merciful.

For he made this promise to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children forever.”

## **John 1:6-8, 19-28**

God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.

This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

"Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No," he replied. "Are you the Prophet we are expecting?" "No."

"Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness,  
'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"

Then the Pharisees who had been sent asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

## **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

# Sunday, December 18th

## 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16

When King David was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all the surrounding enemies, the king summoned Nathan the prophet. “Look,” David said,

“I am living in a beautiful cedar palace, but the Ark of God is out there in a tent!”

Nathan replied to the king, “Go ahead and do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you.”

But that same night the LORD said to Nathan,

“Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD has declared: Are you the one to build a house for me to live in? I have never lived in a house, from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until this very day. I have always moved from one place to another with a tent and a Tabernacle as my dwelling. Yet no matter where I have gone with the Israelites, I have never once complained to Israel’s tribal leaders, the shepherds of my people Israel. I have never asked them, “Why haven’t you built me a beautiful cedar house?”’”

“Now go and say to my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies has declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the leader of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before your eyes. Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed. Evil nations won’t oppress them as they’ve done in the past, starting from the time I appointed judges to rule my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

“Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.”

## **Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 (or Luke 1:46b-55)**

Psa. 89:1 I will sing of the LORD's unfailing love forever!  
Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.

Psa. 89:2 Your unfailing love will last forever.  
Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.

Psa. 89:3 The LORD said, "I have made a covenant with David, my chosen servant.  
I have sworn this oath to him:

Psa. 89:4 'I will establish your descendants as kings forever;  
they will sit on your throne from now until eternity.'"

Interlude

Psa. 89:19 Long ago you spoke in a vision to your faithful people.  
You said, "I have raised up a warrior.  
I have selected him from the common people to be king.

Psa. 89:20 I have found my servant David.  
I have anointed him with my holy oil.

Psa. 89:21 I will steady him with my hand;  
with my powerful arm I will make him strong.

Psa. 89:22 His enemies will not defeat him,  
nor will the wicked overpower him.

Psa. 89:23 I will beat down his adversaries before him  
and destroy those who hate him.

Psa. 89:24 My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him,  
and by my authority he will grow in power.

Psa. 89:25 I will extend his rule over the sea,  
his dominion over the rivers.

Psa. 89:26 And he will call out to me, 'You are my Father,  
my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

## **Romans 16:25-27**

Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him. All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.

## **Luke 1:26-38**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

# Saturday, December 24th

## Isaiah 9:2-7

- Is. 9:2 The people who walk in darkness  
will see a great light.  
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,  
a light will shine.
- Is. 9:3 You will enlarge the nation of Israel,  
and its people will rejoice.  
They will rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest  
and like warriors dividing the plunder.
- Is. 9:4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery  
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.  
You will break the oppressor's rod,  
just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.
- Is. 9:5 The boots of the warrior  
and the uniforms bloodstained by war  
will all be burned.  
They will be fuel for the fire.
- Is. 9:6 For a child is born to us,  
a son is given to us.  
The government will rest on his shoulders.  
And he will be called:  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- Is. 9:7 His government and its peace  
will never end.  
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David  
for all eternity.  
The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies  
will make this happen!

## Psalm 96

- Psa. 96:1 Sing a new song to the LORD!  
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
- Psa. 96:2 Sing to the LORD; praise his name.  
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
- Psa. 96:3 Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.  
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.
- Psa. 96:4 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!  
He is to be feared above all gods.
- Psa. 96:5 The gods of other nations are mere idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens!
- Psa. 96:6 Honor and majesty surround him;  
strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.
- Psa. 96:7 O nations of the world, recognize the LORD;  
recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.
- Psa. 96:8 Give to the LORD the glory he deserves!  
Bring your offering and come into his courts.
- Psa. 96:9 Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.  
Let all the earth tremble before him.
- Psa. 96:10 Tell all the nations, "The LORD reigns!"  
The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.  
He will judge all peoples fairly.
- Psa. 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice!  
Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
- Psa. 96:12 Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy!  
Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise
- Psa. 96:13 before the LORD, for he is coming!  
He is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with justice,  
and the nations with his truth.

## **Titus 2:11-14**

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

## **Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)**

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, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

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 shepherds' 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.

# Sunday, December 25th

## Isaiah 52:7-10

- Is. 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who brings good news,  
the good news of peace and salvation,  
the news that the God of Israel reigns!
- Is. 52:8 The watchmen shout and sing with joy,  
for before their very eyes  
they see the LORD returning to Jerusalem.
- Is. 52:9 Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song,  
for the LORD has comforted his people.  
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
- Is. 52:10 The LORD has demonstrated his holy power  
before the eyes of all the nations.  
All the ends of the earth will see  
the victory of our God.

## Psalm 98

- Psa. 98:0 A psalm.
- Psa. 98:1 Sing a new song to the LORD,  
for he has done wonderful deeds.  
His right hand has won a mighty victory;  
his holy arm has shown his saving power!
- Psa. 98:2 The LORD has announced his victory  
and has revealed his righteousness to every nation!
- Psa. 98:3 He has remembered his promise to love and be faithful to Israel.  
The ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
- Psa. 98:4 Shout to the LORD, all the earth;  
break out in praise and sing for joy!
- Psa. 98:5 Sing your praise to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and melodious song,
- Psa. 98:6 with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn.  
Make a joyful symphony before the LORD, the King!
- Psa. 98:7 Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!  
Let the earth and all living things join in.
- Psa. 98:8 Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!  
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy  
before the LORD.
- Psa. 98:9 For the LORD is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with justice,

and the nations with fairness.

### **Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12)**

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus:

“You are my Son.

Today I have become your Father.”

God also said,

“I will be his Father,  
and he will be my Son.”

And when he brought his supreme Son into the world, God said,

“Let all of God's angels worship him.”

Regarding the angels, he says,

“He sends his angels like the winds,  
his servants like flames of fire.”

But to the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.

You rule with a scepter of justice.

You love justice and hate evil.

Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you,

pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.”

He also says to the Son,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth  
and made the heavens with your hands.

They will perish, but you remain forever.

They will wear out like old clothing.

You will fold them up like a cloak

and discard them like old clothing.

But you are always the same;

you will live forever.”

## **John 1:1-14**

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.

God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

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

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.