



TRUE *and*
BETTER



**SERMON NOTEBOOK &
DAILY ADVENT GUIDE**

THIS NOTEBOOK BELONGS TO

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An Introduction to Advent

The English word *advent* comes from a Latin word meaning “to come.” It is still sometimes used in this general sense, but the Church also uses the word Advent in a specific way to refer to the time leading up to Christmas each year when we anticipate celebrating the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah and King. Traditionally, the four Sundays preceding Christmas mark the four weeks of Advent. It is a special time of anticipation. Though Advent is a man-made tradition, observing Advent helps us remember all the years of waiting and anticipation God’s people experienced as they longed for the Messiah to come and save them. We who have the privilege of living after Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, and ascension often take the Incarnation for granted and can easily forget how world-changing it really was. Taking this time each year to remember the anticipation and longing helps us not forget how significant Jesus’ first coming really was, and how joyous it is that we can say, “Christ has come!” We’re also reminded that we, too, live in a time of longing for the coming of Christ—his second coming, when he will come to rule the world with justice and peace. Advent reminds us that we also live in anticipation for the glorious return of Christ when trumpets will sound and angels will again herald his arrival.

At the beginning of each week we’ve included the text of an Advent hymn. On each of the four Sundays of Advent (along with Christmas Eve) the Scripture text for the sermon is printed, along with space for your own sermon notes, and reflection questions for further thought and discussion. For each weekday during Advent, there is a Scripture reading and reflection questions for your own personal time of devotion. You could use these questions on your own or with others.

May we see Christ more clearly and celebrate his greatness more deeply. My prayer is that this devotional will help us look to Christ this Christmas season, celebrating his first coming and anticipating his return. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

OF THE FATHER'S LOVE BEGOTTEN



Of the Father's love begotten,
ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the Source, the Ending He,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see
evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed,
when a virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Savior of our race;
and the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed His sacred face,
evermore and evermore!

This is He whom heav'n-taught singers
sang of old with one accord,
whom the Scriptures of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
now He shines, the long-expected;
let creation praise its Lord,
evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heav'n, adore Him;
angel hosts, His praises sing:
pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice in concert ring,
evermore and evermore!

Christ, to Thee with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to Thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be,
honor, glory, and dominion,
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore!

DECEMBER 1 • FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JESUS, THE TRUE & BETTER ADAM

MATTHEW 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” **4** But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” **5** Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6** and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” **7** Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” **8** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” **10** Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” **11** Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Where Adam sinned in the garden, Jesus obeyed in the wilderness. What are some of the similarities and differences between Adam’s temptation and Jesus’?

In what specific ways does Jesus’ response to Satan differ from Adam’s?

What does it mean for us today that Jesus, the Second Adam, has come? Why is that worth celebrating this Advent and Christmas?

What are some specific ways you can celebrate Jesus as the better Adam in your Christmas traditions this year?

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

ROMANS 5:12-17

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — **13** for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. **14** Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. **15** But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. **16** And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. **17** For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

How did Adam's sin affect humanity, and what does this reveal about the nature of sin and its consequences (Romans 5:12-14)? How does this contrast with the impact of Jesus' obedience?

Compare the effects of Adam's trespass with the free gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:15-17). How does this contrast encourage you in your faith?

What does it mean that both Adam and Jesus are representative figures for humanity, and how does this shape our understanding of sin and salvation?

As we celebrate Advent, how does the biblical concept of Jesus as the better Adam change the way you think about Jesus' birth and Christmas?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

ROMANS 5:18-21

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. **20** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, **21** so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

How does Adam's one trespass lead to condemnation for all men, and how does Jesus' one act of righteousness lead to justification and life for all who believe (Romans 5:18)? What is the significance of this contrast?

Paul contrasts condemnation and justification. What is the relationship between these two?

The law increased the trespass but grace abounded even more (Romans 5:20). What does this say about God and his plan for salvation?

Why is "eternal life through Jesus Christ" an important part of Christ's work as the better Adam? How does eternal life relate to what the first Adam did (see Genesis 3:1-4, 3:17-19, & 3:24)?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

MALACHI 3:1-4

1 “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. **2** But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. **3** He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. **4** Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Why does the Lord send a messenger before his coming? How was this fulfilled in Christ’s first coming?

How will it be fulfilled in his second coming? What part do we play in that?

What is the connection between the Lord’s coming and refining? How might the Lord be working to refine you this season?

As we celebrate Christ’s first coming, how should we be preparing for his second coming?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

LUKE 1:68-79

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people **69** and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, **70** as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, **71** that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; **72** to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, **73** the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us **74** that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, **75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. **76** And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, **77** to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, **78** because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high **79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

The horn of an animal was referred to as a symbol of its strength. In what ways was Jesus the strength of salvation for God's people (see also 2 Samuel 22:2-6)?

From what enemies has Jesus saved us?

Verses 68-75 are referring to Jesus (from the house of David). The “child” in verse 76 is John the Baptist who would prepare the people. What is significant about the messenger—the prophet of the Most High—preparing the way?

How has God been faithful to his promises through the coming of Christ?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **4** always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. **9** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **10** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

When you think about the long-awaited coming of Jesus, how does that change your understanding of your own participation in the proclamation of the good news?

How does the coming of the Messiah allow us to have the kind of affection for one another, as fellow believers, that Paul displays here? How is this affection in Christ different than generic “good wishes” during the holiday season?

Paul is praying for his brothers and sisters in Christ. Who in our church can you be praying for this Christmas season that our “love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment”?

What “fruit of righteousness” would you like to see in your own life this coming year?

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

LUKE 3:1-6

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **5** Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, **6** and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

How is this passage the fulfillment of the passage from December 5th (Luke 1:68-79)?

Why would Luke be sure to include all the rulers and leaders of the time in this passage? How does that relate to the announcement of the arrival of Christ? What would Christ's coming mean to those people?

What does it mean that “all flesh shall see the salvation of God”?

As we celebrate Advent, what does the coming of Christ mean to you? What bearing does it have on the challenges of today's world?

LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING



Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As men of old have sung.
It came, a flower bright,
Amid the cold of winter
When half-gone was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
She bore to men a Savior
When half-gone was the night.

This Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us
And lightens every load

Translated by Theodore Baker

DECEMBER 8 • SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JESUS, THE TRUE & BETTER ISRAEL

MATTHEW 2:13-15

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” **14** And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt **15** and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

HOSEA 11:1

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What does it mean that Jesus is the better Israel? Why does Matthew’s gospel point this out specifically?

In the Old Testament Israel is first the name of one man (Jacob) which then becomes the name of the people (because his twelve sons were the twelve tribes). What is the significance of Israel being both a person and a nation? What bearing does this have on the fact that Jesus is the better Israel?

When God’s people (Israel) were called out of Egypt what was their purpose? What were they supposed to do?

As we are in Christ, what is our relationship to the true and better Israel?

NOTES



MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

ROMANS 11:17-20

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, **18** do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What does it mean to be grafted into Christ? What is significant about this specific language?

What is the “root,” and what does it mean that “it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you”?

What is it that determines either being “broken off” or “standing fast”?

How can your Christmas celebrations this year nurture fear of the Lord rather than pride?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

PSALM 125

A SONG OF ASCENTS. **1** Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. **2** As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. **3** For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong. **4** Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts! **5** But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers! Peace be upon Israel!

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What does it mean that those who trust in the Lord cannot be moved and abide forever? What power accomplishes this?

What does it mean that the Lord will lead away those who turn to crooked ways? How does the justice of God allow us to have peace and rest in him even in the midst of a world full of evil?

Given that Jesus is the better Israel, how does this New Testament understanding amplify our understanding of the phrase "Peace be upon Israel"?

In what area of your life do you need to be reminded that the Lord surrounds his people this Christmas season? How can you help remind someone else of this truth during Advent?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20

14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! **15** The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. **16** On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. **17** The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. **18** I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. **19** Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. **20** At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the Lord.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Why does Zion have reason to sing and rejoice and celebrate? Why do we?

During Advent we celebrate the "already" and await the "not yet." In what ways do God's people already enjoy God "gathering [us] together"? In what ways do we still await about being gathered together?

In your own life, how has God changed your shame into praise? Who is someone you could share that story with this Christmas?

What are some of the ways your Christmas celebrations might be like the celebrations we will have when Christ comes again and all the people of God will join together in feasting and rejoicing?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

ISAIAH 12:2-6

2 “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” **3** With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. **4** And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. **5** “Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. **6** Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What is something that tempts you to fear this season? How can you call upon the Lord to help you?

What is your favorite Christian Christmas song? What is one line or lyrics that encourages you in your walk with God?

What can you give thanks to the Lord for today? What is one thing he has specifically done in your life this year that you are thankful for?

Who could you tell about it this season, and how?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What is something you are anxious about right now? How does prayer help overcome anxiety?

How does thanksgiving help us avoid being anxious? How does rejoicing help?

What are three specific things that you can rejoice in the Lord for that are specifically related to Jesus' arrival on the first Christmas?

Who can you pray for that God's peace would guard their heart and mind this season?

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

LUKE 3:7-18

7 He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. **9** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” **10** And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” **11** And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” **12** Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” **13** And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” **14** Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.” **15** As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, **16** John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” **18** So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What does repentance mean? Why is it important to bear fruits in keeping with repentance?

How does the idea that “God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” relate to Abraham’s own life and faith (see also Hebrews 11:17-19)?

Why is it “good news” that John is not the Christ? And why is it “good news” that the coming one will gather the wheat and burn the chaff?

How does your celebration of Christmas proclaim the good news?

LET ALL MORTAL FLESH KEEP SILENCE



Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded,
for, with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
in the body and the blood.
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heav'nly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the pow'rs of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At His feet the six-winged seraph,
cherubim with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the Presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, Lord Most High!"

Gerard Moultrie





MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19

15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— **16** just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ **17** And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. **18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. **19** And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.’

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What are some of the main things Moses was known for? How was Jesus “a prophet like” Moses? In addition to the Sermon on the Mount, what are some other specific accounts in the gospels where Jesus is like Moses?

When this prophet like Moses came, the people were to listen to him (verse 18:15)? What does it mean to listen to Jesus (see Matthew 7:24-27)?

The people wanted Moses to draw near to God in their place because they were afraid lest they die (see also Exodus 20:18-21). How is Jesus a mediator like that for us?

What part of the law and authority of Jesus causes you to rejoice this season?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

MICAH 5:2-5A

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. **3** Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. **4** And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Why is the clan/tribe of Judah significant? What does it have to do with the rulers of Israel? What promises are related to them?

Why is the “coming forth” of this ruler “from of old”?

What other shepherd-king is from Bethlehem? How does Jesus “shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord”?

How is our salvation a part of Jesus being “great to the ends of the earth”? How does this reality add joy and celebration to your Christmas?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18

PSALM 80:1-7

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. **2** Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and come to save us! **3** Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved! **4** O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? **5** You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. **6** You make us an object of contention for our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves. **7** Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

How was Jesus' first coming an answer to the cry for God to come and save? In what ways are we still waiting for God to come and save us?

How does the arrival of Jesus shine the face of God upon us (see Colossians 1:15a)?

How is Jesus our Shepherd today? What is one specific need you have from him today?

What is your heart's cry to God for him to restore? How do mourning and tears fit in with the anticipation of Advent?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

HEBREWS 10:5-10

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; **6** in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. **7** Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’ ” **8** When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), **9** then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. **10** And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

How does the incarnation of Jesus relate to the sacrifices and offerings? Why is it so significant that Jesus came in the flesh?

Why does Jesus insist that he comes to do the will of the Father? What can this teach us?

What comes to mind when you realize or consider that the body of the infant in the manger was the same body that later hung on the cross?

How does Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice make Christmas all the more important and joyous?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20

LUKE 1:39-45

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

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Why would Luke include the detail that Mary traveled to a town of Judah? How does this connect with Israel's history?

Why would it be significant that Elizabeth called Mary's baby her Lord?

In what way was Mary blessed? How has Jesus blessed us?

What blessings of your salvation are you most thankful to the Lord for? How can you express that thankfulness to him as you celebrate Christmas?

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

LUKE 1:46-55

46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; **49** for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. **50** And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. **51** He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; **52** he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; **53** he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. **54** He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, **55** as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Who does Mary point to and magnify? Why does Mary rejoice in God?

What great things has “he who is mighty” done?

Read Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. What similarities do you notice between these two mothers’ songs?

If you were to compose a song of praise to the Lord this Christmas, what would it say?

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL



O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode.

O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light.

O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

December 22 • Fourth Sunday of Advent

Jesus, The True & Better David

MATTHEW 1:1

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

MATTHEW 1:17-2:6

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. **18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. **2:1** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” **3** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; **4** and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: **6** “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”



MONDAY, DECEMBER 23

MATTHEW 2:7-12

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” **9** After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. **12** And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What is odd about the fact the Jewish king of Judea (Herod) is asking Gentile wise men about this child?

Why would Matthew record the specific gifts that were brought? What is significant about each of them?

Read 1 Kings 10:1-10. Who is Solomon? What is his relationship to David? How is the queen of Sheba similar to the wise men?

What about the Kingship of Jesus makes you “rejoice exceedingly with great joy”?

DECEMBER 24 • CHRISTMAS EVE

JESUS, THE TRUE & BETTER LAMB

JOHN 1:29-30

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’

HEBREWS 10:11-18

11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. **15** And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, **16** “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” **17** then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” **18** Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Why is it fitting at Christmas to remember Jesus is the Lamb of God?

In what ways is Jesus the better Lamb? Why and how is his sacrifice different?

Why is it significant that Jesus is both the priest and the sacrifice?

How is Jesus, the Lamb of God, the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament? Why is he our only hope this Christmas?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25

CHRISTMAS DAY

LUKE 2:1-20

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, **5** to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **6** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. **8** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. **10** And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” **15** When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

What is something you treasure about the account of Jesus' birth?

Why do we have reason to be joyful this Christmas, even if we face difficult times or hard circumstances?

How has this Advent sermon series or devotional changed the way you have approached Christmas this year? How has your understanding of Christ grown?

What can you do to continue celebrating the arrival of Jesus beyond the Christmas season?



INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

Infant holy, infant lowly,
for His bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all!
Christ the babe is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of the gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you;
Christ the babe was born for you.

Piotrowi Skardze















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