

THE
HUMBLE
KING



ST. PAUL'S UMC

2019 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Introduction

The season of Advent is a season of preparation—we prepare for Good News! We all know that Christmas is coming—a time of family, gifts, carol sings, candle lighting, Hallmark movies. . . and long lines at the shopping malls! There are turkeys to baste, cookies to bake, cards to write and mail, and stockings to fill. But ultimately, Christmas is about something bigger—something better—something life-changing.

The Good News is about the arrival of a Humble King— a baby born in a manger who would grow up to be a man who would die for the sins of the world.

Christmas is His story. Jesus. And it's your story—in how Jesus changed your life.

This Advent devotional is written by members of St. Paul's Church who are sharing how His story intersected with their stories. Through each entry, we invite you to seek—and meet—our Humble King.

Have a blessed Advent adventure!

peace and love,

pastor david

Day 1

Isaiah 40:9-11

*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!"
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.
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.*

At the beginning of the Christmas season do you feel the excitement that Baby Jesus is coming? Or do you suddenly feel anxiety in trying to get the house decorated, buy the perfect gifts and plan the family gatherings? Do you take the time to enjoy the surprises of the season? Do you take the time to spread the good news of Christ's birth with others?

One of my favorite Christmas songs is *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by Aaron Joseph Neville & John W. Work. I can feel the excitement when singing the song. To go out and share the good news - to go over the hills and everywhere – to share with everyone that Jesus Christ is born!

Just as Isaiah was excited to proclaim the good news, to shout it from the mountain tops, I strive to share that joy of the Lord with others each day, especially during the Christmas holidays.

We should all take the time during this joyous, and hectic season, to shout it from the mountain that Jesus was born, that he will take care of us and hold us close to his heart.

*Heavenly Father, in the hustle and bustle of the season,
guide us to slow down and enjoy the excitement of Christ's birth.
Help us find opportunities "over the hills and everywhere"
to share the Christmas message of Jesus. Amen.*

Day 2

Isaiah 52:7-9

Peace, worship, salvation.

How beautiful is this picture of peace, and safety. God is overjoyed when we lift our voices in praise to him. These three themes (peace worship salvation) are identical to the birth of Christ. When Jesus came to earth as a baby he brought peace. The complete essence of Jesus's existence is peace. Everything that we teach on Christmas is revolved around peace. However, we live in an imperfect world full of conflict, greed, and rare instances of tranquility. Whereas when Jesus came, he came to unite us as one.

Worship is a way for us to lift our voices and boldly proclaim the name of Christ. This is where we see unity in abundance in worship. At the birth of Christ, we see two types of worship. We see the night sky filled with angels in abundant worship overjoyed at the sight of Christ. We also see the shepherds grveling at the feet of the baby boy. They come to worship Him in their own way. Worship is a beautiful experience publicly and privately.

Finally salvation. The free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Just like in John 3:16 starts out. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only son" Christmas was the beginning for Jesus. The long journey to the cross started with salvation. Then at the scene of the cross the veil was torn, and we were able to openly come to God. You cannot have true peace and worship without salvation. Just as the Christmas story warms our hearts, and the hot chocolate warms our bellies. This year I want to fill my life with more peace, worship, and of course salvation through Jesus son of God.

Day 3

Psalm 89:1-4

The Steadfast Love of the Lord (Psalm 89:1-4)

"Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Despite the limited number of certainties Franklin possessed, we ought to strive for more confidence. If we take our cues from Scripture, we find that we can be confident in who God is and what He says.

That is how the Psalms work their way into our hearts. First, we must understand the content. Then we can relate to the emotional state reflected by the content.

Psalm 89 expresses a sincere tension between the promises of God and the experiences of the original audience which seem to contradict those promises. Our tendency is in doubt the things we cannot see and base all our security on our present circumstances. This psalm is another call to trust God despite our circumstances. It teaches us to hope for success when everything seems to be pointing toward certain failure.

1-2 Two *forever* activities:

1. Sing of God's steadfast love.
2. Declare his faithfulness.

God's love and faithfulness belong together. They "go before" Him. These are the characteristics of a covenant-making, a covenant-keeping God. Because God is *always* loving and faithful, we will sing and declare His praise *forever*. Confidence in God's character carries us through trial and despair. Reflecting upon the attributes of God inevitably impacts our emotions. Instead of "Name it and claim it theology" it's more like "Know Him and become like Him theology."

3-4 Two *forever* promises:

1. Offspring established.
2. A Throne.

These promises received initial and partial fulfillment under the reign of David. But their fullness was established in David's greater Son, King Jesus. More than two centuries after David's reign, Isaiah prophesied that another King, sitting on David's throne, would bear the weight of the government upon his shoulders and reign forevermore (Isaiah 9:6-7). That is the very promise the Angel Gabriel gave to Mary (Luke 1:31-33).

*I would be silent now Lord, and expectant that I may receive the gift I need
so I may become the gift that others need. Amen.*

Day 4

Isaiah 11:1-10 (The Message / abridged)

The Spirit gives direction, builds strength, instills knowledge and the Fear-of-God. He won't judge by appearances, won't decide on the basis of hearsay. He'll judge the needy by what is right, render decisions on earth's poor with justice. His words will bring everyone to awed attention. A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked. Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots, and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

The wolf will romp with the lamb. Calf and lion will eat from the same trough. Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on my holy mountain. The whole earth will be brimming with a living knowledge of God. On that day the nations will all come to him.

Have you heard the term “God’s Economy”? It’s the idea that God’s value system, plans and motives are uniquely His own and often quite different from the way the world tends to operate.

The world often promotes values such as: “every man for himself” ... “look out for number 1” ... “let the best man win” ... “only the strong survive”.

Is there any wonder why there’s increasing epidemics of bullying and human trafficking?

Meanwhile the Bible tells us that God values things like sacrifice, forgiveness, peacemaking, generosity and loving our enemies. Do you ever consider if your goals, priorities, social ethics and politics are in alignment with the kind of values that God wants us to have?

LORD, help me to get onboard with your plans for my life and this world. Open my eyes, shed my misperceptions and help me to truly understand, embrace and live out what you value. Amen.

Day 5

Micah 5:2-3

Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:37)

This is a great Christmas text even though it comes from the very end of Jesus’s life on earth, not the beginning. Notice: Jesus says not only that he was born, but that he “came into the world.” The uniqueness of his birth is that he did not originate at his birth. He existed before he was born in a manger. The personhood, the character, the personality of Jesus of Nazareth existed before the name Jesus of Nazareth was born.

The theological word to describe this mystery is not *creation*, but *incarnation*. The person, not the body, but the essential personhood of Jesus existed before he was born as man. His birth was not a coming into being a new person, but a coming into the world of an infinitely old person.

Micah 5:2 puts it like this, 700 years before Jesus was born.

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 the old, from ancient days.

His birth was purposeful. Together with his Father there was a plan. And part of that great plan he spoke in the last hours of his life on earth.

Lord let us remember our time of longing for you so we can truly celebrate the joy we have in your gifts of joy and mercy and grace through your son Jesus. Amen.

Day 6

Zechariah 6:9-14

The word of the Lord came to me: “Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jozadak. Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord.’” – Zechariah 6:9-12

I often wonder why my parents chose to give me the name “David.” Was it because they had in mind the biblical story of David and Goliath—knowing somehow that my stature would pit me against forces bigger than me? Or was it because they knew the Hebrew meaning of the name, “beloved.” Did they have some “prophetic” reason? Or was David a name that had family history?

There’s a lot that goes with a name.

God speaks through the prophet, Zechariah, in the midst of a season of exile for the people of Israel. He gives Zechariah very clear instructions regarding the creation of a crown and then He tells him to go place it on the head of the high priest—a man named Joshua. And then God asks Zechariah to tell the high priest, “Here is the man *whose name is the Branch...*”

Prophesies in the Old Testament were not always just words; sometimes they were symbolic, metaphors about larger truths. This is one of those metaphors. God is using the High Priest, a man named Joshua, to embody a prophetic promise about *another man* named Joshua who will have a Messianic role. In Hebrew, Joshua is “Yeshua.” In Greek, Joshua is “Jesus.”

Did Jozadak know when his son was born that “Joshua” one day would be the bearer of a prophetic word from God about the arrival of another Son named Joshua several hundred years in the future?

Joshua, in Hebrew, means “The Lord saves.”

No matter what you’re facing today, God’s got you. Your name is written in the palm of His hand (cf. Isaiah 49:16). He made a promise a long time ago—and kept His word by sending His Son, Jesus—that His plan for your life is bigger than your day.

*Father, thank You for my name. It means a lot. It means even more knowing that it’s written on Your hand and in Your heart. Help me to live into Your promise today.
In Jesus’s name. Amen.*

Day 7

Malachi 3:1-6

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me..."

Malachi 3:1

"Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States. . ." The State of the Union address each year is introduced with protocol. Before the entrance of the President into the House of Representatives chamber of the U.S. Capitol, the House Sergeant at Arms loudly announces the entrance as members of the Senate and House of Representatives, along with their guests, applaud and cheer. The decorum and protocol are held with great respect, while anticipation becomes palpable for the President's arrival. Even when members of Congress disagree with the President, there is an historic quality to the emotions of the moment. People realize that they are a making history.

Before the birth of Jesus, two messengers were sent ahead to let people know that He was on His way. The first messenger came in the form of a prophet named Malachi four hundred years before the events of what we know as the Christmas story. The second messenger was John the Baptist, who would inaugurate not Jesus's birth, but His ministry as an adult—a ministry that would catalyze a spiritual movement that would forever change history. Both messengers were, in effect, the Sergeant at Arms announcing the arrival of a King.

Other messengers came too, by the way. Angels—to Mary, to Joseph, to Shepherds abiding with their sheep. God wanted to mark the special arrival of His Son in a rather unique way. God does that, at times, when He's trying to get our attention.

In what ways has God been announcing His Presence in your life recently?

*Lord, as I move towards Christmas, open my eyes to see the
"announcements" of what You're trying to birth in me. In Jesus's Name.
Amen.*

Day 8

Psalm 77:6 (NRSV)

I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit:

Being alone with your thoughts... That statement can be scary, especially at Christmas time. We tend to focus in on the negative aspects of what we've gone through, running it over and over again in our heads, thinking that it would have been perfect if things went differently. Well there is no restart button, so there is no going back. That's why this simple statement holds so much power over us.

But does it have to? Many people pray before going to bed and that tendency to focus on the negative spills into that prayer. So often, the only prayer is for an ultimate resolution: heal me, fix this relationship, get me the "thing" I so desperately need... Well, maybe you will never be healed, maybe a long-time relationship has ended forever, and maybe that "thing" will always be just out of your reach. None of that should stop us from answering God's call! Meditate and search your spirit for direction instead of resolution.

We have no choice, but to move forward. Instead of allowing ourselves to be stuck in a rut that feels like we can never get out of, let's change the rhetoric! You never know what your story can do to help someone else. God can and will use you to do great things, but you need to seek that direction instead of always looking for the quick fix.

*The next time you are alone with your thoughts,
what are you going to say to God?*

Day 9

Jeremiah 33:14-16

*“‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘
when I will fulfill the good promise I made...’ – Jeremiah 33:14*

In English, the future tense is used in verbs to indicate an action that will be occurring at some point in the future. The future is any moment in time ahead of right now.

One of the hallmarks of integrity is that a person is true to their word. In other words, their behavior is consistent with their words. If we say we will do it, we do it. Promises are kept.

In today's passage, I really appreciate God's confident integrity. While He doesn't tell Jeremiah when His promise will be fulfilled, He does confidently assure him that He will, indeed, be good to His word. God's character can be trusted. God's faithfulness has been proved. God never reneges on His promises.

“The days are coming.” Think about this for a moment: When Jeremiah uttered these prophetic words, it would take over five hundred years for “those days” to arrive. Five hundred years!! We get upset when promises are not kept after five hundred minutes!

But God had something in mind. He wanted to prepare His people for a totally new day. They had to be ready. This promise would impact not only Israel and Judah, but the entire world. It would be big. Huge. Life-altering. The timing was already orchestrated. The people of Jeremiah's time, like the people of Abraham's time, would be invited into trusting God for something that they would, themselves, never see first-hand.

Can you imagine that? How would that make you feel?

Yet, in Jesus Christ, that Day had arrived. Today, you and I are living in the fulfillment of what Jeremiah only dreamed about. God is always true to His word.

Is there a promise that you're waiting for God to fulfill in your life?

*Lord, thank You for being faithful to Your word. Whether I see your promises fulfilled in my lifetime or not, I'm choosing to trust You and the plan that you're working out.
I love You, Lord. Amen.*

Day 10

Mark 1:1-3

¹ *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,*
² *as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*
"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way"—
³ *a voice of one calling in the wilderness,*
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

Near the beginning of the timeless Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* the miserly and cold-hearted Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by his joyful and loving nephew Fred. The sharp-witted exchange between the two men is used by Dickens to show the extent of not only Scrooge's disdain for the Christmas season but also his calloused view of those in need of charity and goodwill. Though Fred knows his uncle won't receive the good wishes he brings, and he knows Scrooge won't accept an invitation to celebrate Christmas with Fred's family, Fred persists in bringing a message of good cheer and love. In corners of our culture today, I believe we need more people like Fred to reach out to those who, for a variety of reasons, feel like Ebenezer Scrooge.

John the Baptist played a very important role in preparing the way for Jesus of Nazareth. In the beginning of Mark's Gospel, we see a reference to the prophet Isaiah who told the Israelites that John the Baptist would be "a voice of one calling in the wilderness..." During this Advent season, I believe we are all called to be a Fred and to be a John the Baptist. We are called to go to the wilderness to those who are isolated, to be a helping hand, and to be a listening ear. Our love and support will be the very message of Christ to those who may be grieving or abandoned. In this way we are preparing a way for Christ in the hearts of others.

*Lord, as I prepare for the day ahead, show me how I can be a light
to those who need you most. Put those in my path who need to see the love
and compassion that comes with the freedom from the wages of sin.
Give me the courage to be your ambassador.*

Day 11

Luke 1:5-13

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John."

Zechariah's first prayer on that day was for a son and not for the throngs of people waiting outside. An angel appears to say that Elizabeth will bear a son. And so, the story of the one who became known as John the Baptist gives signs of the greatness to come. His preaching prepares us for the coming of Jesus. How marvelous is our God.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

John gave people the feeling of hope of something greater to come.
Just as the coming of Jesus fills us with an everlasting hope of the endless love of our Father.

We live in a troubled world. There have been and always will be the tough and difficult times, but we rejoice in the profoundly simple gift of love that sees us through: Family, friends..... the promise of a baby—a generous gift of the heavenly Father to His earthly children.

The receiving and sharing of God's most generous gift - His Son.

We are all held in the hollow of His hand, in the silence of His eternity interpreted by love.

Heavenly Father, you sent John the Baptist into the world to proclaim the coming of your Son. As once again we await the celebration of this blessed birth, filled with anticipation, may we celebrate and remember the greatest gift. The gift of your unending Love for each one of us. Amen.

Day 12

Luke 1:14-17

BEARING GOOD NEWS

Zechariah and Elizabeth were filled with joy after an angel of the Lord appeared to a fearful Zechariah bearing the good news that Elizabeth would bear a son. That son, John the Baptist, born about six months before Jesus, brought to the people of Israel, the joy of knowing they would be led back to the Lord their God. He would be changing hearts and minds to align them as righteous and loving people for the benefit of their children. And he would remind the people of Israel of the joyous news that a Savior was coming, turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. He would prepare the way for Jesus. As told in later Scripture; John the Baptist did just that, baptizing Jesus in the River Jordan.

Bearing the good news in this most joyful of seasons; the scripture, the sermons and the songs we hear and sing, realign our hearts and minds to the heart of God, our Lord and Savior, reminding us, as John, the Baptist did, that there is much to look forward to, that joy is ours when our hearts are attuned to our children and our minds are aligned with the wisdom of the righteous; it is then we are prepared for the Lord.

Thought for the Day:

Receive the good news with joy and share it with those who are seeking,
but not finding, without fear. Tell all we meet,
we are thankful for God's daily presence in our lives.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the ways you love us and make us your own; we praise your goodness to all ages. We pray for your guidance and wisdom in discerning your will for our lives; prepare us anew, that our hearts and minds are attuned to your son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in His name we pray. Amen.

Day 13

Luke 1:18-25

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news. And now, since you didn't believe what I said, you won't be able to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly come true at the proper time."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures that he must have seen a vision in the Temple sanctuary.

He stayed at the Temple until his term of service was over, and then he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. "How kind the Lord is," she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

When the angel, Gabriel, told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would have a child, Zechariah didn't believe it. The consequence of Zechariah's unbelief was that he was unable to speak until the baby was born.

Oh my! What if our unbelief prompted God to take our voice. My guess is that it would be a very quiet world!

As we approach the time when the best gift ever was delivered, let's commit to praying with expectation and **faith** that God will speak. It may not be in the timing that we prefer, but He will fulfill His promises despite what we may be seeing and feeling.

And then.....let's listen.

Day 14

Luke 1:39-45 (NIV)

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

In this story, we have two cousins meeting. One, Elizabeth, is six months pregnant with John who would become a great prophet. Mary has just learned of her very special pregnancy. Elizabeth was an older married woman who until recently been barren. In her society, a woman who could not bear children was looked down upon and ostracized. And, in Mary's case, being an unmarried pregnant woman faced an even worse judgement of society.

In our society fifty years ago, unmarried women who became pregnant faced the same shame and judgement. These girls hid their pregnancy for as long as they could and then were often sent away to a home for unwed mothers until the baby was born. Sometimes the baby was put up for adoption. Sometimes the baby was brought home and some story was made up about whose baby it was. Often times the grandparents raised the child as a sibling of the mother and not the child. Many times the father did the honorable thing and married the mother of his child. The couple did the best they could to make it work. But it often ended in failure.

What turned Elizabeth and Mary, women who would have been shamed and held in judgement by society, into women who were accepted and even honored? It was the Holy Spirit who had a special job for them in mind. Perhaps the same Holy Spirit is working in the lives of our single moms today as they are loved and honored by friends and family.

*Heavenly Father, help us to see the good in people around us.
There are humble people just like Elizabeth and Mary who have
important roles to play in our lives. Help us to not overlook them.*

Day 15

Luke 1:46-56

When we go through hard and stressful times we often don't take time to reflect. As a young girl Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a complex situation. She was shunned by friends and family who did not believe she had obtained from sexual relations with Joseph outside of marriage. Just like any of us we would have been hurt by this. Having your family turn your back on you is one of the most painful experiences any of us could go through.

Elizabeth, who was Mary's cousin, confided in Mary's time of hardship. She opened her home and spent time with her. Mary was able to stay with her for three months. From verse 46-55 Mary is openly praising God for the situation at hand. She could have easily spent these three months sulking, and using Elizabeth for a shoulder to cry on. Instead they both opened their mouths and worshiped God in the situation. WOW, I wish I could truly say during the hard times I openly worship God. I usually feel like God takes a back seat, and I try to fix everything myself. God does not deserve the back seat nor the front, to be honest. He deserves to be in the driver's seat with both hands on the wheel. How prepared are you to let go and let God take control of these situations? This Christmas season we'll face tests just as every human does in these situations. Are we going to go into it with the mind set of love, or are we going to use this time to sulk? Let's drench this Christmas season in love just like Elizabeth and Mary did in their own situations.

Day 16

Luke 1:57-66

When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!" "What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

Elizabeth's family, friends, and neighbors gathered at John's birth. They supported her while she was barren and celebrated her miraculous childbirth. The visitation with Elizabeth provided them an opportunity to bear witness to God's powerful hand throughout her trials.

In the ancient Jewish culture, it was customary for a male child to be named at birth and to acquire the same name as either the father or grandfather. A name captured a person's identity. For Elizabeth to reject the cultural norms of the time and name her son John was significant. It showed Elizabeth's recognition and acceptance of God's plan for her child. Am I interfering with God's plans for a child due to cultural norms?

When Gabriel revealed God's plan, Zechariah doubted the angel's message and was struck mute. He regained his voice only after publicly accepting God's plan by naming his son, John. Zechariah's actions made his faith complete. I wonder which sense(s) I would have lost if I was in Zechariah's shoes. I surely would have doubted Gabriel, and then questioned every detail of God's plan. Am I resisting God's plan for my life?

Heavenly Father, thank you for being the master of the impossible. Anything is possible if we keep our faith and trust in you and only you. By accepting your plan for our lives, we can be a vessel that takes the message of the Gospel to our community.

Day 17

Luke 1:67-80

*“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.” – Luke 1:76-79*

Talk about pressure! My friend, Henry, told me that when he was a boy, his dad told him that he was going to grow up and become a fine doctor, just like he was, just like his grandfather was, and just like his great-grandfather was. “That’s what we do, Henry,” said his dad; “this is a doctor family.” It didn’t matter to his father what Henry thought about what he wanted for his own life. Henry’s life was predestined.

Now Henry is, indeed, a fine doctor; but there was, for him, no option.

As a proud father, Zechariah’s first words after regaining his voice were a prophetic statement that, in reality, put a lot of pressure of a newborn infant. “You will be a prophet of the Most High... you will prepare the way for the Lord... you will give people knowledge of salvation and preach forgiveness... in order to guide people to a place of peace with God.”

This was John the Baptist. We know him from the Gospel accounts as the weird guy in the wilderness who dresses in loin cloths, eats locusts and preaches about repentance. I wonder... what kind of childhood did he have? Did Zechariah tell him he couldn’t get up from the table until he finished his locusts and wild honey? Did his mother, Elizabeth, constantly tell him to pull up his pants and comb his hair? There were expectations that were upon him, expectations that he was called to fulfill because he was to be part of something much bigger than he ever imagined, something that was not only for the people of Israel, but also for the people of the world.

I wonder... did Zechariah in that moment of prophesying know that his son would die as a prophet of the Messiah?

We never know in advance how God will use us in the future. We only know that we can trust Him to use us when needed. God, indeed, has a plan for each of us—a plan that will involve sharing the love of Jesus with a world that lives in darkness.

How do you like your locusts cooked—regular or al dente?

*Father, thank You that Your plan is good—even, and especially, when I don’t understand it.
I may never truly see the big picture of what you’re doing with my life, but I trust You.
Use me to prepare the way for the Lord. In Jesus’s Name. Amen.*

Day 18

Isaiah 9:2-7

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.*

³*You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.*

⁴*For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

⁵*For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.*

⁶*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷*His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.*

*He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.*

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

We watched the movie credits to the very end because the music was so great. However, as soon as the credits concluded the theatre went pitch black. Except for the two small red signs that were lit above the exit doors, we were submerged into darkness. But, as we opened the exit door, we were greeted with blinding sunlight. Having been in the darkness of the theatre for a few hours, we had forgotten how sunny it was outside.

This is the stark contrast that the prophet paints when he describes our experience. Before the dawning of Christ's coming, we were all in the dark. Our understanding of the world we lived in was at best shadowy, at worst, downright mistaken. Our circumstances brought varying degrees of frustration, pain, hopelessness, oppression and despair. To some extent we were without God and therefore without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12).

However, the arrival of a leader, God's leader, changed all that. To our darkened understanding, new light dawned. To our chains, freedom was granted. To our pain, healing and relief was brought. To our endless wandering astray, purpose was supplied. Hope replaced despair, our aloneness was replaced by Love. I capitalize 'love' because truth, healing, and freedom were personified; "Love" was most clearly displayed in the person of Jesus, who fulfilled this prophecy of the promised leader who would be known as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

"Father, enlighten the eyes of my heart by your Spirit that I may know you better (Ephesians 1:17,18). Prompt me to look to Jesus, Who is wonderful in His wisdom in helping me understand myself and my place in the world; Who is mighty to save me from sin and myself; Who accepts me and clings to me in a family embrace (Romans 8:1,39); and Who alone can soothe my restless heart and bring me peace with God (Romans 5:1), and peace with others (Romans 12:18; Galatians 5:22).

Day 19

Matthew 1:18-25

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

– Matthew 1:22-23

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet..." When you read Scripture with an understanding of the "mosaic" of history, you begin to realize that God had been taking humanity on a journey to the Cross. Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, God was telling people what was coming. And as "proof" of it being God's work, the promise didn't make logical sense: A "virgin" will have a baby?? Only God could make the impossible, possible.

Underneath each of the prophecies about a coming Messiah was a greater mosaic borne from the heart of a relational God. The baby would be called "Immanuel"—which is translated from Hebrew as "God with us." God wants to be with us. God wants us to be with Him. Repeatedly in the Old Testament, we hear God say things like, "And I will be their God and they will be my people" (cf. Jeremiah 31:33-34; 32:38; Genesis 17:7; Exodus 6:7; Ezekiel 36:28).

The whole point of the "incarnation"—God sending His own Son to be born in the flesh—was for that message of "being with us" to be made very clear.

In what ways do you need God to "be with you" today?
What specifically do you need from God?

Lord, thank You for being a God who doesn't wait for us to come to You, but who takes the initiative by coming to us. Sometimes we forget that Your love pursues us. Thank You for pursuing me, for being with me. Lord, I need You today for (name your situation). In Jesus's Name. Amen.

Day 20

Luke 2:6-7

6. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7. 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.

During the years after God freed the Israelites, they would worship God thanking him for bringing them out of slavery with burnt offerings. In later years, as the Israel nation was established and the temple was built, they would sacrifice pure white lambs wrapped in white cloth as their offering to their heavenly father. When the Virgin Mary gave birth to baby Jesus, he was wrapped in white cloth. Jesus was the only person to walk on this earth who was pure and sinless. He eventually would be crucified and die on a cross as a sacrifice for our sins. His death is not the final story. Jesus rose from the dead and is living in heaven waiting on us to join him. All we need to do is to believe in him and ask for forgiveness for our sins and we can have eternal life with Jesus in heaven. Won't you during this Christmas season, think about what this little baby born in a stable did for our lives?

*Lord, thank you for giving us your son, born in a lowly stable to come from heaven and die on a cross for everyone on this earth. We Love you Lord and thank you for all the blessings you bestow on us every day and especially at this special time of Christmas.
In Jesus name, Amen.*

Day 21

Isaiah 7:10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

It has been over four years since I last spoke to my father. My father is a recovering alcoholic and struggled for years. Recently my father had a heart attack and was scheduled for open heart surgery. One night I received a phone call and on the phone was my father. He did something that I have been waiting years to hear: "I'm sorry". You don't even know how much those two words meant to me. His next words were "please forgive me". At that moment I knew God was there with us. I cried, my dad cried and I forgave him. My dad lives a few hours away and I couldn't see him before his surgery. After his surgery, he was moved to a facility in Camp Hill. I couldn't believe it. God must want me to go see him. It was a difficult visit at first, but we talked and we both now feel at peace. I am so grateful to God that he intervened. Do you have someone who you need to forgive this holiday season? Do you have someone who needs to forgive you? Reach out to them. Christmas is the time for forgiveness!

Prayer:

Father, thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to forgive our sins. Let us remember that you forgive, so bless me with the power of forgiveness. Amen.

Day 22

Luke 2:13-14

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host
praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

When I stop and think about what it must have been like to be a shepherd in the dark of night, I wonder if I have ever experienced the scene described above. I picture a barren countryside with limited trees, plenty of dirt and rocks, lit only by stars and the moon in the sky. What must it have been like to suddenly receive the presence of God in the form of an angel? It not only appeared, but the angelic pure form of God filled the entire night sky, blanketing the earth with praise to the heavens, commanding peace among men.

I work hard every day to be mindful and thankful for all God has given me. Some days, it's the simple things such as making it through a green light when I'm running behind or finding a few dollars unpredictably tucked away in my wallet. Other days provide larger outcomes or blessings, which may include completing a goal, successfully repairing something that is broken or achieving balance throughout a hectic day to finish strong. But I find myself offering God the most praise when the grace and blessings that surround me come to me most unexpectedly. Have I ever been so overawed by God's presence that I have felt His overwhelming existence just as complete as the shepherds above? Have you?

Lord, In this festive season of celebration...
Open my ears to hear Your words,
Open my eyes to Your wondrous works,
Open my heart to give Your love,
Open my mind to Your direction from above.
May I be still and quiet giving you room to appear,
May I be moved to know when You are near.
May I look for You in all that You do,
May I find You unexpectedly and rejoice in praise all season through!
Amen.

Day 23

Matthew 2:1-2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When you look into the sky on a beautiful starry night, think of the Magi and ask yourself, "Are you ready to follow the star?"

Seven years ago my daughter and her husband were told that they would not be able to have another child. God had blessed them with a beautiful healthy baby girl as a result of IVF. Doctors said the possibility of that being successful again was not likely. They were beyond distraught, but never gave up hope! What they did not know was that they were already pregnant! Nine months later they delivered a healthy baby boy! GOD'S PLAN, GOD'S TIMING, GOD'S STAR! "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) Our God is an Awesome God!

*Thank you, God, for giving us your son "Jesus".
Help each of us to STOP! LOOK! AND LISTEN!
as we follow THE STAR!*

Day 24

Luke 2:21-35

Luke 2:25: Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Anticipation. Can you feel it in the air? Tomorrow is the day! The excitement cannot be contained. Children will have trouble sleeping as the anticipation of what tomorrow will bring builds throughout the evening. However, this pales in comparison to the anticipation of Simeon.

Luke records that Simeon, a righteous man, had been promised by God that he would not die without first seeing Jesus Christ. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to be presented in the temple, they were met by Simeon, who had been led by the Holy Spirit to the temple. Simeon blesses Jesus and foretells of what Jesus will endure for the many.

It is hard to fathom how Simeon must have felt that day. He lived his entire life with the promise of seeing the Messiah and God kept His promise. There was no grand celebration or elaborate party to mark the occasion. Rather, Joseph and Mary, according to Jewish custom, presented Jesus, like every other male child.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of the Christmas Season, don't forget the true reason we celebrate. Jesus Christ was born in a humble manger, so He could die for your sins and my sins, so we may enjoy everlasting life. We anxiously await his return and when it happens, it will be glorious. Be like Simeon. Be willing to be led by the Spirit. Never forget the promises made to us by God. Remain steadfast in your commitment to God.

Father, tomorrow is the day that we celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus. It is a glorious day that changed the world like no other event. Renew our spirits as we await His return and prepare our hearts to be ready for when that happens. Let us be like Simeon and never let go of your promises. In your Son's name, Amen.

Day 25

Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

**Recently, I asked some of our children in grades Preschool to 3rd grade
"What Does Christmas Mean to You?" I hope you enjoy what they have to say
and Merry Christmas from Children's Ministry!**

"What Does Christmas Mean to You?"

Wyatt	Help others by buying toys!
Annabelle	Jesus is born! Spend time with my family!
Molly	Spend time with friends and family!
Ben	Having fun with my family and friends!
Parker	Giving and getting presents!
Mabel	Hanging up ornaments with my family!
Emilie	Jesus is born!
Drew	Spending time with my family! (I hope I get a robot for Christmas!)
Emma	Being with my family!
Katie	Special time with family in Connecticut!
Nathan	Making cookies!
Reilly	Spending time with my family!
Jessie	Decorating for Christmas!
Brooklyn	SNOW!
Eden	Jesus is Born!
Keira	Wrapping presents with Daddy!
Ariana	Last year I got a doctor kit for Christmas. This year I hope I get a parachute to wear and a Bible!
Caroline	Playing in the snow! (Maybe I'll get a unicorn that talks back to me for Christmas!)
Lilly	Presents, maybe I'll get a doctor kit?
Audra	Jesus, because it's when Jesus was born.

Thought:

May the season fill you with the love of Christ and remember to share that love with others.

Prayer:

Thank you God for the gift of your Son, Jesus.

We pray that we remember throughout the year to love others as you love us. Amen.

Day 26

Romans 15:4-13

A Thrill of Hope

*“A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;
Fall on your knees . . .”*

The hope we read of is not merely a wish such as “I hope there are lots of presents under the tree.” This hope is our confident expectation that God will fulfill all of His promises.

The prophets of the Old Testament longed for a Messiah. In the beginning pages of the New Testament, God is about to fulfill his promise through an ordinary couple – Mary and Joseph.

We can imagine how Joseph wrestled with thoughts of Mary being pregnant. While in this conflicted state, he was visited by an angel in a dream who told him what he should do. Upon awakening, Joseph immediately took Mary to his home as his wife as the angel had directed him. Joseph claimed the hope for himself. Through faith, Joseph knew that he had an important role in God’s plan for the salvation of the world.

In like manner, the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her not to be afraid. Her child would be conceived by the Holy Spirit and be the Son of God. Mary responds, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Mary claimed the hope for herself as she, by faith, understood what a wonderful honor to birth the Savior of the world.

The birth of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah is a promise fulfilled. God has also promised that Jesus will come again in triumph and victory. Will we claim this hope for ourselves?

Prayer:

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 15:13

Day 27

John 3:16-17

During this time of advent, we celebrate the JOY of the birth of a new baby. Baby Jesus was sent by God to save us. This promise will give us HOPE to know if we have faith in Jesus' teachings we will find the PEACE of eternal life. This is a wonderful and pure LOVE. The Bible tells us that LOVE is the greatest of these. Which explains the verse 17 we may have not paid attention to. Jesus wasn't sent here to condemn us, but to save us.

I grew up thinking that I needed to check items off my list to earn my way to HEAVEN. While trying to earn this trip I was focused on me and my journey to heaven. I felt I needed to be perfect, which I wasn't. Since this is not the way, I was failing in my mind and felt guilty. I didn't think of the collateral damage I was leaving behind. This damage was the people I was criticizing to get the attention off of my mistakes, so I could protect my pride and reputation. This false sense of power never lasted so I found myself in a vicious circle of hurting others to protect myself. Thank goodness for positive mentors in my life and reading the Bible to refocus me on what my goal was. Jesus was sent to mentor the disciples so they could mentor others and multiply disciples for God. He never wanted us to focus on our own journey only (which was my focus when I was gossiping and pointing out other's faults).

Jesus was sent here to save us and that is what we need to learn from him. Love each other, lift each other up, guide each other, a model for each other, and praise God with each other. God sent Jesus to mentor the disciples. This led the disciples to the knowledge to mentor others and write chapters in the Bible. God created us to do the same. Pray to be guided to someone to mentor so we can contribute to the multiplication God started those 2000 plus years ago. God sent this Humble King to serve His father and save us (no checklist needed). All we need to do is love each other, lift each other up, guide each other, a model for each other, and praise God with each other.

*Dear God, thank you for sending your Son to save us from our human sins.
Help the Holy Spirit to open my ears and eyes to find the path you would want
me to follow. Guide me and my choices to help others come to you.
Help my attention and focus to stay on you and the true meaning of Christmas.
Amen.*

Day 28

Hebrews 10:22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. – Hebrews 10:19-22

I had a conversation recently with a long-tenured church member friend from my hometown. We were sharing how we were missing loved ones who had passed away when I said, “Take heart, you’ll be able to see them again one day when you join them in heaven.” The man responded rather quietly, “I sure hope I’ll see them again.” When I asked what he meant by that, he shared that he tried to live a good life, but wondered if it was “good enough to get into heaven.” I asked him if he believed in Jesus and accepted what Jesus did on the Cross. My friend said, “Of course! I just don’t think I deserve heaven.”

There are way too many followers of Jesus who feel the same way. We accept what Jesus did for us in dying on the cross, but we worry that we’re just not good enough for heaven.

Our assurance of salvation in Christ should give us confidence. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tries to stress the point: “Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...” His point is that Jesus’s death and resurrection was God’s way of creating a direct line between us and God, enabling us to “draw near to God...with full assurance that faith brings.” Anything short of confidence puts the emphasis on what *we do*, rather than on what *God did*. Salvation is all about what God did, not about what we do to earn it. We can never earn it. It’s God’s gift of Himself.

The opening words of that wonderful hymn remind us: “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”

Christmas always points us towards Easter—to the cross and the empty tomb where the point of the manger meets the grace of resurrection hope.

*“Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine.
Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”*

Day 29

John 14:6

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Growing up, this is a verse in John that was said in Sunday school many times, as you may have experienced as well. Like many verses, unfortunately, it can begin to lose its meaning the more we hear it. That is, until we look at what the verse is actually saying. Take a minute, focus your mind, and think of the cross. There, Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice that saved everyone. This sacrifice is what made Him the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is not just an option to get to heaven. He is our only option to spend eternity with God. He is The Way. He is not one truth of many. He is The Only Truth. He paid for our sins with His life. He conquered death and gave us life and a promise of eternity. He is The Life. He is our way to heaven.

As you head into this New Year, I challenge you to think about this verse and its true, deep meaning. Think of how Jesus has changed your life and how Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the reason we have life and are promised eternity with God.

Dear Jesus, I know that you are the only way, the only truth, and the reason we have life. Thank you for your unconditional love that led you to making the ultimate sacrifice, so that I can spend forever with you and your Father in heaven. Amen.

Day 30

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²*The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

³*His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴*but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

⁵*Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.*

⁶*The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*

⁷*The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

⁸*The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.*

⁹*They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

¹⁰*On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

"How cute! The children are playing with the deadly snakes" (verse 8).....**What?!** I'm sorry, I hate snakes (just think of that scene in 'The Raiders of the Lost Ark' when Indiana Jones has to drop into the midst of an uncovered tomb which is overrun with snakes! Yuck!). However, when the Prince of Peace rules the planet, everything will be restored to its original, pristine serenity; the world as we know it will be rid of danger, aggression, violence, death and anything that might bring a tear to our eyes or disrupt the harmony restored to creation. Even young children will play safely among snakes!

The Perfect leader will be endowed with "*the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord*" (Isaiah 11:2,3). He will judge the secrets of men's hearts and his rule will be according to truth not appearances. He will not abuse power (as is so common among men); His servant leadership combines perfectly steadfast love and faithfulness, in His benevolent rule righteousness and peace kiss (Psalm 85:10).

The resultant harmonious earth where the knowledge of God - not only as an intellectual commodity but as an intimate, reconciled relational-knowing - will be a universal, worldwide possession. We are finally enabled to live out our glorious destiny, reconciled to God and obediently trusting him as we were designed to do, we will enjoy peace in perfect harmony (In Christ....it's the real thing) within ourselves, with one another and our environment.

"Father, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" When Jesus returns to bring his kingdom in its fullness, what a different place our world will be. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me....and make me a willing servant and instrument of your peace today and forevermore.

Our Advent Devotional Contributors

Andrew Bible

Tim Gartley

Dave Grey

Dan & Liz Helm

Suzanne Hetrick

Linda Kaylor

Judy Lesoine

Dave Longenecker

Pastor John Marcott

Mike Myers

Cyndi Page

Dianne Orwig

Karen Reale

David Rizzo

Chris Ruch

Emily Singiser

Pastor Matthew Skillen

Pete & Diane Snyder

Barb Woods

Pastor David Woolverton

Lynn Ziegler

If you look for Me at Christmas,

you won't need a special star—

I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,

I'm right there where you are.

You may not be aware of Me

amid the celebrations—

You'll have to look beyond the stores

and all the decorations.

But if you take a moment

from your list of things to do

And listen to your heart,

you'll find I'm waiting there for you.

You're the one I want to be with,

you're the reason that I came,

And you'll find Me in the stillness

as I'm whispering your name.

- Love, Jesus