



PROPHECIES TO PROMISES

The First Advent of Messiah Jesus



Advent 2022

Jesus in a manger. Mary's Magnificat ("My soul magnifies the Lord"). Joseph's mercy and obedience. Shepherds encountering angels. The glory of the angelic chorus. Peace on earth! The gold, frankincense and myrrh of the Magi. Barren Elizabeth giving birth to John (the Baptist). Zechariah's prophecy.

The birth of Christ in the gospels is a mix between the sublime and the supernatural. Glory and humility kiss one another so beautifully, so perfectly, and so surprisingly in all the events surrounding Jesus being born in Bethlehem.

Yet, of all the unique characters, angelic visitors, and songs of praise that surround the birth of Christ, one verse has always stood out to me:

"But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart"
(Luke 2:19).

That's my prayer for you this Christmas.

Ponder & Treasure. Wouldn't that be magical? Finding time to quietly worship God this Advent season? Pondering requires you to slow down, breathe deeply, and give thanks. Treasuring requires you to keep "the main thing the main thing", not to be sidetracked by busyness, preparations, decorations, and non-essentials.

Have you ever considered that a Roman census had ruined all of Mary's best-laid plans for December? Mary was pondering and treasuring after a spectacularly chaotic and exceptionally stressful birth! I'm sure she never envisioned stinky shepherds showing up unannounced moments after giving birth. Somehow, Mary's response was not: "God, a little privacy here, please?!"

Instead, Mary treasured and pondered all the events surrounding the birth and gift of Jesus.

The chaos will come. Stress might rear its ugly head (you're human after all). Yet Mary shows you exactly how to celebrate this season of Advent. Ponder. Treasure. Jesus is worth it.

I hope this Advent devotional of Prophecies and Promises, written by the staff and folks at Trinity, helps you treasure and ponder Jesus anew this Christmas season.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr. Jason Carter

Messiah will be the seed of a woman

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

*“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because **what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.**’”* Matthew 1:20

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman...” Galatians 4:4

Surely you remember one of your first-ever science projects from kindergarten: a seed, nestled in a damp paper towel, taped in a plastic baggie onto a sunny window.

Do you remember seeing the tiny sprout burst through a crack in the seed?

Before your very eyes, it grew. Then, you planted it in your small cup of dark dirt and watched it thrive. What awe you felt! The seed your teacher promised would grow did exactly that! You learned a truth similar to scriptural prophecies: seeds yield good things; and though things break in the process, the goodness remains.

Jesus came as a “seed” from God’s heart to all of mankind. His life, foretold in Genesis 3:15, played itself out on the world’s stage. At the perfect time, Jesus arrived, conceived by the Holy Spirit, as a Gift for you and me. As we begin our celebration of advent this year, let us tend to this Seed, this Gift, as we did our tiny seedlings: let us prepare a place for Him. Remember this Seed, foretold long ago, holding the promise of everlasting LIFE for YOU!

-Jen Elling

Those in Christ are new creations

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

What a powerful Bible verse! As a child, we are born into an earthly family. We live each day responding and reacting to everyone and everything around us. Our actions reflect a desire to be accepted by our classmates, colleagues, friends, and family. Once we become a Christian, we are spiritually reborn to be sons and daughters of God, led by the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us, and wanting to follow and imitate Jesus. We are a new creation!

Does that mean we will no longer sin? No, because we are not perfect. As Christians, our goal should be to resist sin and temptation. Jesus’ life serves as our example and as a means of perfecting our faith in this life. We read, study, and pray the word of God, listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and share fellowship with other believers. We will desire to love others, despise sin, and walk in holiness. Instead of living to please ourselves we now live to please Christ. This is sanctification. We live to produce the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The old has passed away and the new has come. God’s promises are true and unchanging! In this season of Advent, my prayer for us is that we would experience the joy of being a new creation with Christ as our Lord and Savior.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Galatians 2:20. AMEN.

-Sheila Bludworth

Messiah would be the Son of God

I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father." Psalm 2:7

The Jewish expectation for a Messiah (anointed one, Psalm 2:2) intermingled desperate hope for a righteous ruler who would represent God fully, and utter despair at the kings of Judah that had failed so spectacularly with their idolatries. The rulers of God's people were given a high calling but invariably fell short. And these failures could be seen even in the glory days of Solomon, who was called a "son" by the LORD (2 Samuel 7:14) but who also introduced all kinds of idolatry into the land (1 Kings 11:4-6).

Israel's history raises the pressing question: could a righteous ruler, a true Son of God, arise? The writer of Hebrews gives us the answer:

"... in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things ... The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Hebrews 1:2-5

So he became ... superior to the angels ... For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father?'" Hebrews 1:2-5

Let us worship Jesus, the true Son of God! He is the righteous, godly ruler we all need - heir of all things, the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his word!!

-Mike Elmer

God will give spiritual blessings in Christ

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

There’s a story of an elderly Los Angeles couple who died of malnutrition in their apartment. Investigators found \$40,000 stored in a closet. They died despite having plenty of resources for life. How many Christians live unaware of (or underutilizing) the resources we have been given by our Heavenly Father?

We have a treasure trove of blessings from our Heavenly Father because of union with His Son. All the love the Father pours out on His Beloved is poured out on us. Jesus’ incarnation, death, and resurrection secured for all his heirs every conceivable spiritual blessing.

These blessings are not earthly or natural but spiritual and supernatural. They include the forgiveness of sins, redemption, acceptance, adoption as children, and more.

The greatest blessing is our vital union with Jesus that brings us into relationship with God. His presence is our greatest gift.

This is why, even from a prison cell, the apostle Paul was able to gush forth praise to our Heavenly Father for all the blessings he had received through his Lord Jesus Christ.

If we would only view ourselves in the heavenly places, understanding the manifold spiritual blessings we have been given, we would live differently. We would not get so bogged down with the things of this world but flourish in the blessings given to us by our God. We would join the apostle Paul in singing His praises all the days of our lives.

-Lisa Carter

Messiah would be the seed of Abraham

“The LORD had said to Abram... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:1-3

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham...” Matthew 1:1

“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” Galatians 3:16

God made a promise to Abraham two thousand years before Jesus was born that set the stage for the birth of Jesus.

Abraham was about 75 years old and without child when God said, “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” The prospect of Abraham’s descendants blessing all mankind was extremely unlikely. Even so, Abraham chose to believe God’s promises, no matter how unlikely.

But Abraham’s descendants endured centuries of oppression at the hands of foreign nations: first in the land of Canaan, then in Egypt where the people became numerous, and again in Canaan in the shadow of ascendant empires, until they would eventually be subjected to the Roman Empire.

For so many years, God’s promises to Abraham seemed to be null and void.

Then God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

It turns out the Jewish people would be a blessing to the people of earth. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham with the birth of Jesus. God was working behind the scenes, setting the stage. The Christmas story began 2,000 years before the first Christmas, and it continues to unfold 2,000 years later.

-Hanna Smith

God will supply all our needs

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matthew 6:33

In our culture, the Christmas season brings additional stress to our time, our pocketbooks, and our emotions. What will we eat, drink, wear, give, or receive this month? It is easy to fill in the blank: “How will I accomplish ____?!” Worry seems so normal.

In Matthew 6, Jesus gives us ways to calm our anxiety:

1. God is our Great Provider; He both feeds common birds and “clothes” wildflowers--even though neither are made in his image or called his children.
2. We are valued by God; He knows our needs.
3. Worry doesn't help.

However, rather than allowing culture to define our values, we should first seek the Kingdom of God, and pursue His righteousness. As children of the King, our lives are about more than satisfying our body's needs. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus says, “Blessed are the those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Satisfied! God will add all these things to you!

Prayer: My dear Father in Heaven, thank you for making me your child and calling me to kingdom living. Forgive me for the times I worry about my needs rather than trusting in you as my wise and generous provider. Align my heart and life to your eternal values. Thank you for defining my needs as what will truly satisfy me. This season, open my eyes to see those around me who are filled with worry. Help me to point them to you, my Prince of Peace!

-Sandy Bantz

Wednesday, December 7

PROPHECY

Messiah would come from the line of Judah

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah... Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah...” Matthew 1:1-3

God is eternal but we are shaped by our mortality. Throughout the Bible, God demonstrates how our expectations don't match His eternal plan. God uses people we don't expect. In the Old Testament no one is the center of the story for very long. Each new generation in turn takes up the faith and God subverts their expectations.

At the end of Genesis, Jacob lay on his deathbed. He gathered his sons to prophesy over them. Joseph, the hero who endured hardship and saved his family from starvation, received an effusive blessing where he was elevated to “prince among his brothers” (Genesis 49:26).

Joseph was close to Jacob's heart, but the Lord subverted Jacob's expectations and led him to give the greatest prophecy to Judah: “The scepter will not depart from Judah... until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.” (Genesis 49:10)

This prophecy is shown to be fulfilled in Jesus in Matthew's genealogy (Matthew 1:3).

Joseph founded two of the tribes of Israel, but it was Judah whose legacy would live on. Joseph's descendants fell away from God and their tribes were lost centuries ago. Through Judah, the Jewish people get their name and through Judah God brought His Son into the world.

Sadly, history repeated. It was the most pious who resisted Christ. They expected Messiah to free them from Rome and they missed God's eternal plan to free them from sin and bring them into eternal life with Him.

-Adam Harder

Thursday, December 8

PROMISE

Jesus has overcome the world for us

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

We all want peace, but the world shifts our focus away from Christ to our tribulations.

Jesus experienced the tribulation of this world: darkness, despair, death, disease, disappointment, pain, and hate. He warns us that in the world we will experience these things too. But Jesus tells us to take heart, to take courage; not in ourselves, but in Him, the conqueror, who has overcome darkness, death and the devil. He has overcome the world! Not only did he overcome the world, He abided in His Father, doing His Father's will and therefore had peace - the same peace He wants each of us to have.

We can have peace, even in tribulation, when we are in Christ, knowing that he has achieved victory over the world. We cannot overcome the world, but we don't have to. We are invited to confidently rest in Christ's peace.

For several months leading up to my transition out of the military I struggled with my identity. To me, everything depended on my titles, my performance, and my achievements. My identity was an idol and the thought of losing it stole my joy and kept me from resting in Christ. When at last I laid down my worldly identity and embraced my identity as a child of God, I found peace in Christ. Even so, I still have to humbly surrender and rest in him daily.

I encourage you to take heart and search out what idols you may have to lay down so you can know the joy of resting in Christ's peace.

May the peace of Christ fill your heart and your home this Advent and all your days.

-Bear Conniff

**Messiah would be from the line of David
and will inherit his throne**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore...”

Isaiah 9:6-7

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David...”

Matthew 1:1

The chances of flipping a coin and getting heads is 50%. That’s a pretty good chance. How about heads 10 times in a row? It’s 0.0009765%. I’m no statistician, but that’s not a very good chance of success. How about getting heads 100 times in a row? Absolutely no chance right? Not exactly. The chances of getting heads 100 times in a row is 1,000 times more likely than buying the only winning lottery ticket if all the people that ever lived on earth bought one.

Okay, now how about this: what are the chances that of the roughly 100 prophecies about the Messiah made hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, they would all be fulfilled in one man? These are prophecies that include: where he would be born, the nature of His birth, where He would live, the suffering He would endure for us AND, yes, that He would be descended from the great King David. What are the chances they would all be true of one person? Essentially ZERO. Yet, they are all true in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, we call Him Lord. We call Him Messiah because they are ALL true—about Him. That Messiah, the only one, inherits the throne.

-Pastor Drew Elling

Those in Christ Jesus will have eternal life in him

“Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” John 4:13-14

One of the greatest promises is that of eternal life that Jesus gives us as a redeemed people. Eternal fellowship and life with the triune God is an indescribable gift from the Father to us.

There are four elements in this promise that are important to us. First, the word ‘whoever’ means the promise is available to every person. This is made clear by the fact that Christ is speaking this promise to an adulterous Samaritan woman who is shunned by her own community. She is a sinner like the rest of us.

Second, it is Jesus who is the giver of this wonderful promise. He uses the phrase ‘I will give’ twice in the same sentence. He alone is the source of the living water we so need and desire.

Third, the living water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38, 39). Those who thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. (Matt. 5:6).

Fourth, the Holy Spirit will well up inside us and become a spring that flows to others as we share our hope and this promise of eternal life. Wells in ancient Israel were life-giving places that were shared because of the scarcity of water.

This advent season let us meditate on the great gift of eternal life. Let us rejoice in the promise of never being thirsty again, and may our joy in the Spirit motivate us to share with others our great hope.

-Mike Elmer Sr.

Messiah would be born of a virgin

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

Isaiah 7:14

“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

The Lord is Great. He is the Creator. The first thing scripture shows us in Genesis is the creation of the world we see around us. And it was good. Along with that creation He uniquely designed humans to “be fruitful and multiply.” I simply love that the God of all creation, the God who designed humans to reproduce, outdoes Himself in the act of coming to Earth in the flesh.

While King Ahaz’s faith fell short in that he was too feeble to ask God for a sign, the Lord said to him, “behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.”

Wait, what? That’s not how that works, Lord Creator. We didn’t ask for this sign.

He knows. And yet He is able to spark life. He is gracious to leave His heavenly realm to tread upon this earth, to grow from a blastocyst to an infant to a grown man. The outrageous miracle that is this virgin birth and the humility that is his physical presence among us - it is enough to bring me to tears. What a profound miracle it is to know this God personally!

-Lydia Eikevik

Monday, December 12

PROMISE

Christ Jesus will give rest to those who are his

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”* Matthew 11:28

REST! Everyone wants it. How do we GET it??

If you have been on this Earth for any length of time, then you have experienced EXHAUSTION. These last few years have been BONKERS, and it doesn't seem like the craziness is slowing down. This world is full of deep soul weariness, often seen in life's complexities, emotional heartbreak, physical ailments, and the consequences of sin.

I challenge you to ask yourself, where do you GO when you need a break from the world? Where do you find REST? Do you take a nap? Schedule a massage? Turn to your spouse in hopes they whisk you off for a mental health day?

Jesus is very specific about where to go when we are burdened and need rest. He promises us that if we come to Him, then He will provide true rest for us. He promises to be gentle and humble as we bring our worldly problems to Him. He encourages us to participate in a “yoke exchange.” He offers to take our hard yoke (the burdens of this world) for his easy yoke (to believe, abide and follow in His steps).

Jesus did not intend for us to take on any yoke in isolation. I believe that He looks on with great joy when He sees His people gathering together, sharing each other's burdens, and holding each other accountable as we collectively follow Him. Sounds like our church family, right?

If you are weary this holiday season, I encourage you to RSVP “YES” to Jesus' special invitation. “Come to me,” He says. “You will find rest for your souls.”

-Heather Warrington

Messiah would be born in Bethlehem

“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.”

Micah 5:2

“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea...’” Matthew 2:3-6

The birthplace of Jesus was prophesied by Micah probably between 700 and 650 BC.

Jesus' lineage also traces back through the town of Bethlehem. This includes Boaz, the kinsman redeemer of Ruth, who is included in the genealogy of Jesus: 'Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.' (Matthew 1:5-6) We read more about Boaz in the book of Ruth: "Boaz went up to the town gate (at Bethlehem) and sat down there...then the elders and all the people at the gate said, 'We are witnesses...may you...be famous in Bethlehem.'" (Ruth 4:1-11)

Amazingly, David was anointed king in Bethlehem. "Samuel ... came to Bethlehem. And the Lord said 'Arise, anoint him (David) for this is he.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers." (1 Samuel 16:4, 12, 13)

Do these events not point toward the importance in history of such a little town? And further to the birth of our Lord and Savior, Emmanuel (God with us)?

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea during the time of King Herod. How great, how significant are you O Little Town of Bethlehem!

-Dave Wooley

Wednesday, December 14

PROMISE

Jesus will never leave those who are his

"I am with you ALWAYS - to the end of the age!" Matthew 28:20

This promise was Jesus' LAST WORDS to His disciples! He knew that he was leaving and that some were filled with doubt (v.17). What were His last words of encouragement to His closest friends? I WILL BE WITH YOU. When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, because YOU WILL, do not fear! Why? I am with you! When you face armies larger than you, do not fear! Why? I am with you!

The very same God who acted in supernatural ways on behalf of His people is with you this very day. What comfort it brings, even in an earthly sense, to know you have a friend in your corner. How much more so to know that we have Jesus, our closest friend, walking with us in our darkest of days? Even in our ugliest sins, He will not forsake His own.

Our problem is that we too quickly forget this truth! Let us today repent of forgetting of the Lord's presence - His nearness in our lives. We are not alone - ever. God longs to be near to His broken people. That is what we are celebrating this Christmas season: Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us! Let us pause this moment and pray that the Holy Spirit will give us creative ways of REMEMBERING His presence in our daily lives.

May we, along with the psalmist, take courage and proclaim today "but for me it is good to be near God!" Psalm 73:28

-Brandie Conniff

Messiah would be threatened by earthly authorities

“Thus says the Lord: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.’”

Jeremiah 31:15

“Then Herod... sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah...’” Matthew 2:16-18

To read these verses in context is terrible. But how much more for those who experienced it? The sincere heart is horrified by the actions of Herod. Can you hear the cries of the descendants of Rachel with loud lamentation?

This is a terrible prophecy to have fulfilled, but it is a clear theme in Scripture: wicked men on high thrones set in opposition to heaven. “The kings of the earth” set themselves “against the Lord and against his Anointed” (Psalm 2:2). Recall proud Pharaoh, corrupt Israelite kings, and now Herod the fool, seeking his own preservation through violence. But God knew that evil would meet the coming Kingdom, that the Advent would lead to bloodshed, ultimately that of His beloved Son.

It is good to remember where all this is going. Revelation pictures the ultimate end of the rebellion, when the kings of the earth gather against heaven and are slain by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, returning in glory (Revelation 19:11-21). But, for a time, today, the nations still rage. So we weep together in the Spirit, we raise holy hands, we repent of our own sins, whose same violence pinned our Christ to the cross. And we whisper in our hearts, “Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

-Kristian Eikevik

Christ Jesus will bring his followers peace in prayer

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

We are a culture that has all the information in the world available to read, watch, or hear every moment of every day. How can we ever relax? Isn't it our responsibility as citizens to know what is going on?

Most of this information does not lead to peacefulness; it leads to stress. And we are continually told how bad stress is for us - which makes us feel more stressed. Do you think God meant for us to live a stressed life?

There is only one way to go from stressful living to peaceful living. Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee."

So how do we do keep our mind on God? By communicating with Him. Philippians 4:6 says, "In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." This means talking to Our Lord. It can be aloud, or in our minds, or written down. (A great resource for learning how to do this is Brother Lawrence's small booklet *Practicing the Presence of God*.)

Father, I trust that you love me and can hear me. Help! I need your peace. Give me wisdom to know just what to do. Give me vision to see things as You do. I know all things work together for good for those who love you. And I know all good comes from you. Lord, I stand on Your promises. Amen.

-Nina Lee

Messiah would flee to Egypt and return

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

“And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 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.’” Matthew 2:14-15

The prophet Hosea tells us that out of Egypt God called His Son. Then, in Matthew’s gospel we find out that Jesus was in Egypt for the early days of His life before settling in Nazareth with Joseph and Mary. If this was the entirety of Hosea 11:1, it would be a fairly simple- though still incredible- prophecy describing the life of the Messiah to come. Instead, the verse starts with the phrase “When Israel was a child.” The prophet here is alluding to the journey that took the nation of Israel out of slavery, but more importantly, the prophet is telling us something remarkable about who Jesus is: Jesus is the better Israel.

In Exodus 4, the Lord affectionately refers to Israel as His firstborn son. Who else has been given that title in Scripture? In Sunday School we learned the answer is Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything God called Israel to be for the world. While Israel was woefully faithless to the commands of their God, Jesus faithfully executed every word given to Him by the Father. Where the Israel of old came out of Egypt and immediately ran from the promises of their God, Jesus came out of Egypt in order to fulfill the promises of His Father so that in Him all the peoples of the earth may be blessed.

-Luke Kadlecek

Jesus Will Return For Us

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” John 14:1-3

As the disciples sat with Jesus in the Upper Room, there was surely an ominous shadow of uncertainty hanging over them. Jesus could see deep into their troubled souls and planted a precious seed of hope in their hearts. Less than 72 hours later, events overwhelmed even the strongest among them. Jesus was arrested, beaten, mocked, tortured, crucified, and buried. The disciples’ hearts were more than troubled; they felt betrayed, abandoned, confused, and hopeless.

Like Jesus’ body, the seed of hope that was planted just hours before lies buried, lifeless, and hidden.

On that bleak Sabbath day, the promises of **a dead man** rang hollow.

But after Sunday, the promises of **a resurrected man** forever ring true!

Jesus keeps his promises – even the seemingly impossible ones... like rising from the dead!

He is, even now, preparing a place for each of his precious flock. What a glorious day it will be when all the preparations are complete and Jesus fulfills one final promise as he returns to take us home!

It’s easy to become troubled when we look at all that is happening in the world. We face trials and struggles, but those who know Jesus do not need to despair because of such challenges.

Take heart brothers and sisters! One day, Jesus will return for you and you will be with him forevermore! Maranatha!!

-Jeff Bantz

Messiah would be called a Nazarene

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” Isaiah 11:1

“And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.” Matthew 2:23

Orlando Bloom, Paris Decker, Sydney Pollack...contemporary celebrities with names associated with popular and prosperous cities. But for Jesus of Nazareth, this was not the case. One of the first disciples questioned his origin, “... Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’” (John 1:45-46)

After Jesus’ birth and the family’s flight into Egypt, Scripture reveals that they returned to Nazareth (of Hebrew origin: netser, branch or sprout). Nazareth was a back-water town along a trade route that ran from Damascus through Galilee to the Mediterranean coast. Borrowing lyrics from the 1960’s song Down in the Boondocks: “People put me down ‘Cause that’s the side of town I was born in.” Jesus’ youth would be spent in a disregarded valley that lay in a despised province of a conquered land.

In the world of “go big or go home,” the subversive theme of his life resonates from this childhood locale. His work would be of the Spirit, not by popularity. He did not seek to make himself great, but to submit his will to the Father for the glory of God.

So, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” A thousand times yes! Sight for the blind, healing for the sick, faith for the faithless, hope for the hopeless, and life for the lifeless. Let us be among those who heed Phillip’s invitation again this year. “Come and See!”

-Pastor Steve Schantz

Christ gives his followers abundant life

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

The holiday season can be so busy with errands, Christmas parties, and family gatherings. The frenetic pace leaves little time for reflection and contemplation. If we're not careful, we can altogether miss the true reason to celebrate – that Jesus Christ was born and that he came so that His people could have life to the full. That should be the fuel that lights up our Christmas celebrations and directs our affections.

So many of the TV ads we see tell us how happy and fulfilled we would be if only we had _____. The reality is nothing this world offers can truly satisfy our longing for something greater – a relationship with our Creator. Jesus gave us the greatest gift of all – Himself.

In John 10:9 Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.” You see, abundant life is not about having stuff. It's about having peace and joy. It's about having God. Living life to the full starts with knowing God and believing in Jesus Christ, the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6). Believing in Him means we are safe from the thief that comes to steal, kill and destroy us, but it also means a life where we do more than just survive, we thrive.

Jesus wants to lead us to green pastures and still waters. He is our Good Shepherd and the Giver of life. May we experience the deep soul satisfaction that only Christ can give and may we truly live life to the full!

-Jessica Dunn

Messiah would be preceded by a messenger

“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.” Malachi 3:1

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” Matthew 3:1-3

I love that God’s redemption story for us is woven throughout His Word, from Genesis through Revelation. When I was in high school, my favorite subject was English Literature. I loved to read, and I loved when authors would foreshadow or hint at events yet to come in a story.

Two Old Testament prophets, Malachi and Isaiah (40:3), both foreshadow the coming of John the Baptist before Jesus. Jesus and his distant cousin John were both conceived miraculously. John grew up in a priestly household to devout parents. He matured into the man God intended him to be and throughout his adult life drew many to repentance.

Can you imagine with me the family gatherings through the years where these two had probably played and eaten celebratory meals together? Those many years culminated with John humbly baptizing Jesus. And what a scene that followed! (read Matthew 3:13-17)

From that moment on, Jesus’ ministry unfolded up to the moment for which he was born. Praise God for continuing to weave this story of salvation from centuries ago to today so that we also can repent of our sins and be washed in his forgiveness!

-Christine Randall

God works all things for good for those he has called

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28

In my life I have often wondered when things feel downright hard, how will God use my difficult situation for His glory? What good can come from this tragedy, Lord?

I'm sure you've had moments too. Perhaps it's the loss of a loved one, a divorce in the family, a fear-inducing diagnosis, a financial setback, or maybe the loss of a job. If you're reading this Advent Devotional, I believe you're seeking the Lord. If you seek the Lord, He will meet you in your hardships. I can attest to that! He always finds a way to bring beauty from the ashes, even when we don't see it at first.

I remember not long ago a time when my grandmother's health took a turn for the worse. We could rest in the comfort that she belonged to the Lord, but it was hard to see her suffering. Yet what God did in that time to bring reconciliation among her children was remarkable!

The ultimate reason we have hope that God will redeem our tragedies is the reason for which Christ Jesus came to earth. The tragedy of the cross has become our salvation, and the worst thing imaginable our greatest hope!

That's why we are called to look to God in times of trial and suffering. In doing so, our Savior is glorified. The Word assures us that ALL things work together for good for those called according to his purpose. So even when you aren't sure how, you can know Who is the one who redeems and makes all things new!

-Esther Elmer

Messiah would receive the Holy Spirit

“And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah 11:2

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...”

Matthew 3:16

This might be one of the most beautiful visuals that we find in the Bible. Can you see it? Can you imagine standing there near Jesus and John on the shore of the Jordan River, seeing the glory of the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus Christ? Those who had confessed their sins and had been baptized by John only moments earlier certainly would not forget that day!

Jesus, of course, had no sins to declare and needed no forgiveness. His was not a baptism of repentance; instead, it was a fulfillment of God’s merciful plan to redeem us. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed centuries prior that the Holy Spirit would equip the Messiah for his ministry of teaching, healing, and sharing the good news. The New Testament certainly attests that the Holy Spirit did all of that through Jesus the Christ.

Jesus humbled himself throughout his life, and ultimately, in his death. He also humbled himself to be baptized as many sinners like us had done. As we anticipate this Christmas season, let’s remember our King Jesus! As the heavens were opened to him, he made a way for you and me to enjoy the same relationship with the Father. He has also sent to us the Holy Spirit and that is a wonderful and joyous gift indeed!

-Jill Means

Saturday, December 24

PROMISE

Jesus would send power from on high, the Holy Spirit

*“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait for the Promise of the Father.**” Acts 1:4*

The NIV says that the disciples had to wait for the ‘gift.’ Is there a special gift you are waiting for tomorrow? Maybe you’ve also been told that it is coming, but you can’t have it yet? It’s probably wrapped, sitting under the tree right now! But you must wait one more sleep!

Whatever gift you will receive tomorrow pales into insignificance, compared to the one that Jesus promised: the gift of power from on high!

*“But **you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

The problems we currently face in our world are rooted in selfish ambition and the desire for control and **power**. If we could only see that the power that we all really need is the power promised by Jesus. The one we receive when we allow the Holy Spirit to come upon us and take control!

Christmas is a time to remember Jesus. This year I encourage you to also remember the gift of the promised Holy Spirit. He is a comforter, the source of wisdom, revelation, and power. He helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us. He wants to lead us, guide us, speak to us. He’s even the guarantee that Jesus will come again.

In the busyness of this Christmas Eve, ask the Holy Spirit to come upon you today.

-Simon Dunn

Sunday, December 25

For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory. 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NLT)

All the prophecies. All the promises. All is fulfilled in Jesus.

A great attribute of God that comes to mind when I think of God sovereignly and graciously guiding history through all the peaks and valleys of the Old Testament prophecies to finally come to rest on the person of Jesus: faithfulness.

God never forgot. God never abandoned. God always promised to write a better story for the people of God. So Jesus was born in Bethlehem! Nearly every chapter in the Bible is brimming with the faithfulness of God.

The same is true of the story that God is writing with your life. You may have regrets, disappointments, and heartbreaks in your life. You may have past traumas and broken relationships. You may have cried inconsolable tears and hollered at heaven.

God never forgot you.

God never overlooked you.

God never neglected you.

God still turns laments into love songs. God still turns tears into laughter.

God still turns a two-left feet stumbler into a ballroom dancer.

God is still in the business of writing a better story for your life *through Christ*. It's not the story you would have written. You wouldn't have chosen all the chapters. You wish you could tear out some of the pages. Yet, the faithfulness of God is woven throughout your life because Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Jesus is the absolute greatest expression of the faithfulness of God. Your story includes Jesus. That's the faithfulness of God to you.

On this Christmas day, whisper a thankful "Yes" and "Amen" for Jesus.

-Pastor Jason Carter



TRINITY
WELLSPRINGS
CHURCH

COMMUNITY OVERFLOWING

TrinityWellsprings.com