



# Advent

READING PLAN  
2020



## WAITING IS HARD

It seems like we've done a lot of waiting this past year. We've waited for COVID to go away. We've waited for vaccines, test results, quarantines to end, and schools, restaurants, and entertainment to open again. We've waited for election results and legal processes to finish. We've all been waiting for 2021!... hopefully it will be better than 2020. We are not strangers to waiting, but it is still so difficult. Ever wonder why?

For some, it is because what we are waiting for isn't worth waiting for. We anticipated that 2020 was going to be a great year and it has turned out to be a difficult year. Some anticipated election results and were disappointed in the outcome. We all anticipate things we believe will fulfill us and make us happy, but most of these things don't bring fulfillment, and certainly do not bring happiness that lasts.

For some, waiting is difficult because we don't wait in the right ways. We fill our waiting with distractions or diversions that leave us unfit for or unsatisfied with what we were waiting for. It's like eating a bag of chips or junk food throughout the day, and then not enjoying the nice dinner prepared for us. Waiting improperly only robs us of the enjoyment of the thing waited for.

But waiting with hope, love, joy and peace for what God has ordained as good sweetens the waiting— especially during Advent.

## ADVENT MEANS “ARRIVAL,”

and it marks the weeks prior to Christmas for the Christian Church throughout the world and throughout history.

Advent is a season of waiting and focusing on the first coming of Jesus our Savior. It is a reminder that we're still now waiting for His second arrival. During Advent, the church lights a unique candle each weekend to celebrate a different part of Jesus' story and a different virtue to practice in our waiting: hope, love, joy, and peace. On Christmas Eve, as the Church around the world gathers, the Christ Candle is lit, reminding us that in Jesus, the Light of the world, we have abundant and eternal life.

This Advent, we invite you to join with the rest of The Compass Church in waiting with hope, love, joy and peace as we remember the first coming of Jesus our Savior and look forward with great anticipation to His glorious return. It is our hope that Jesus will meet you as you read and reflect on your own or with family or friends. We hope that this reading plan sparks great conversation, draws us together in unity, inspires greater faithfulness, creates sustaining contentment, and refocuses us on what is truly worth waiting for.

Prayerfully,  
Naperville Campus and  
Compass Online

## HOW TO READ THE BIBLE...

If reading the Bible is difficult for you, you are not alone. Most people feel intimidated by the Bible and struggle to read it because the Bible is no ordinary book. We cannot read it and interpret it the way we do ordinary books. This is because the Bible is filled with the very words of God and it is God's instrument through which He speaks to you and me. Reading and understanding the Bible requires spiritual lenses or ears that are tuned to the Holy Spirit. When we have the right lenses and we are tuned to the Holy Spirit, we will not only better understand what the Bible is saying, we will also hear from God. This Bible P.R.O.M.P.T. is a tool that will help you develop the right lenses and tune in to the Holy Spirit.

### The Bible P.R.O.M.P.T.

#### **PRAY**

Begin each Bible time with prayer asking God to open your eyes, ears, mind and heart to His Word. The Holy Spirit of God speaks to us through the Bible when we open ourselves up by reading and prayer.

#### **READ**

Follow along each day with the assigned reading in this Advent reading plan. Sometimes it is helpful to read a passage more than once, especially as you begin the observation step.

#### **OBSERVE**

As you read each day, look for S.T.A.R.S. You'll want to use a journal for this step and write down your S.T.A.R.S. If you do a great job at this, it should take about 5-10 minutes.

## **S.T.A.R.S.**

**SOMETHING FAMILIAR** - a name, location, object or quote...

**THEMES** - big Bible themes like love, faith, redemption...

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD** - like love, power, grace, justice, truth...

**REPETITION** – words or phrases that are repeated

**SOMETHING SURPRISING** - things that stand out

## **MEDITATE ON THE MESSAGE**

The Bible is a “living” book. That means, when we read it, God speaks fresh in the moment! God’s message for you can often be found as you think about your observations. As you reflect on your S.T.A.R.S., what stands out? What is God showing you? Capture the meaning in a single sentence or two. The meaning can take 2-3 minutes and be many things:

A truth about God (Jesus and the Holy Spirit too)

A truth about you (both good things and hard things)

A truth about others (the lost, broken, poor, church...)

A command to follow (love your enemies...)

A promise to claim (God will never leave you...)

A verse to memorize (“A person will prosper.”)

## **PRAY**

Take about a minute or two to thank God for what He has shared with you, and ask Him to help you remember it and how to apply it to your life. After you ask, you might also take a minute to just listen for the answer. God most often speaks when we are quiet and still.

## **TAKE-AWAY**

Now that you’ve heard from God, what will you do with what you’ve heard? To walk away from time with God in His Word and not make an adjustment to your life is like looking in the mirror and walking away without wiping the food off your face! God’s Word is meant to change us. In fact, God wants to use His Word to transform us into the likeness of Jesus. When you reflect, consider what you can remember, do or say to look more like Jesus.

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 – HOPE

Isaiah 9:6-7 & Psalm 42

**Ryan Worsley, Campus Pastor**

Merry Christmas! I absolutely love this magical season – lights, trees, carols, the wonder in our kids' eyes as the day draws closer. But, if we aren't careful, we can get caught up in the busyness of the season and miss the true meaning of Christmas. In much the same way, the people in Jesus' day were so busy preparing and looking for an earthly king that they missed the Messiah Who was present and living among them. This Christmas season, let's slow down to enjoy the presence of the reason we celebrate – Jesus, the Hope of the world!

This Christmas, we invite you to commit to reading this Advent reading plan every day and spending time in quiet reflection on the hope we have in Christ.

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30 – HOPE

### Isaiah 11

**Jake McNamara, Online Campus Pastor**

Let's take a moment to just say it like it is: 2020 has been tough. People have been forced to stay home, jobs have been lost, and the constant threat of illness has been at the forefront nearly from Day One. It's easy to look back and realize things have looked bleak. And a lot of times when that happens, it's easy for us to assume looking forward will be the same way.

When COVID-19 first spiked here, I remember thinking it would take at least a month for things to get back to normal (I know, I know – foolish). But as the months keep moving on, more and more I wonder if things will ever get back to normal. The length of time this has taken is making hope seem lost.

But our passage today reminds us hope isn't lost. Even though it took generations, hope came in human form, full of the Spirit of wisdom, knowledge, righteousness and faithfulness. Hope is found in Jesus. Even today, I pray that you would be filled with a renewed sense of hope, knowing Jesus is continuing to work in your life.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1**

**Genesis 12:1-9**

**George Knebel, Pastor of High School Ministries**

Waiting isn't always easy, but to wait with hope is even more difficult at times. Abraham was called by God to leave his home, and journey to a foreign land God had prepared for him and God's people. Upon arriving there, we see in verse 8 that Abraham built an altar to the Lord and worshipped Him there. When waiting is difficult, when hope is hard to find, those are the moments when we need to force ourselves into God's presence, to worship Him no matter what we are feeling.

God promised to bless Abraham and all of his offspring, but this blessing was not fully seen until Jesus came, a descendant of Abraham. In the midst of waiting, we must continue to worship in obedience to God, forcing ourselves into His presence no matter what we are feeling. In doing so, that is when God restores our hope, provides us strength to continue on, refreshes our soul with His presence, and reminds us of the blessing that is to come.

Lord, let us find hope in You as we wait and worship. Let us come to Your presence, sometimes forcing ourselves to do so, to find the strength to wait for the blessing that is to come, and the hope to continue on in obedience and worship to You, Lord. Amen.



## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 – HOPE

### 2 Samuel 7

**Paul Giersz, Pastor of Guest Services & Support Groups**

In 2 Samuel 7:12 -14, God speaks to His prophet Nathan. He then instructs Nathan to pass these words along to King David. Nathan tells David about one of his descendants that God will make his kingdom and family sure, that He will be the one to build his temple that honors His name, that He will establish His leadership forever, and that God himself will be his Father. These verses speak about none other than Jesus.

As Christ followers we are the beneficiaries of this prophecy.

In Christ...

Our kingdom family is sure,  
Our temple (body) is being built into His image  
Our leader is forever established

Heavenly Father, You are the True God and Your words are always true, and You have made these promises to me, Your servant. In Jesus' Name, Amen

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 – HOPE

Jeremiah 33:14-16

**Kim Huffman, Director of Community Impact**

During the Babylonian siege on Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah reminds God's people of the promises He has repeatedly made in the past, that the days are coming when God's promises will be fulfilled, and justice and righteousness will be restored. Jeremiah is saying it may look like our days as a people and nation are over, but there is hope! God made a gracious promise, not based on our faithfulness, but rather His faithfulness. Expect Him to fulfill that promise. Better yet, expect Him.

As we are besieged with hardship, loss, fears, and dashed expectations in this season, take hope in knowing the promise of justice and righteousness was fulfilled through our Savior, Jesus Christ. We celebrate this fulfilled promise made repeatedly long ago at Christmas and recognize Him as King. God is faithful.

Expect Him.

Take a moment to tell God where you need Him to show up in your life today, and then expect Him.

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 – HOPE

### Isaiah 61

#### **Gerald Aloran, Pastor of Adult Ministry**

At the time of the writing of the book of Isaiah, Israel was taken and destroyed by Assyria. Babylon destroyed and exiled Judah. You could imagine God's people asking how is Yahweh the sole creator when His very people are being forced to worship another god? Has our God been defeated, and we are left to rot as captives? Many of you are looking at 2020 asking where is God amid people dying because of COVID-19? Where is God during our nation's unrest and polarized division? Isaiah 61 reminds our God has not forgotten us and He is not defeated. God has made promises and has kept them by sending Jesus for the sake of our salvation.

Father, in a world where all hope in politics and people is unstable, teach me to show in words and deeds the hope that can only be found in Your promises!  
Amen

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 – HOPE

Luke 4:14-21

**Rick Allen, Pastor of Congregational Care**

Our world is full of people in 2020 who have lost, or are losing hope in many ways. No graduation ceremonies, postponed weddings, loss of friends and family members to COVID-19, loss of employment, and many other failed hopes. It is extremely difficult to maintain hope in something or in someone if you continue to see those hopes unmet or dashed. The Bible is full of pictures of people hoping for something. In the Old Testament a common hope among the Jewish community was the coming of the Messiah. But how many generations came and went without seeing the fulfillment of that hope? But, when Jesus came to planet earth, He claimed to be the fulfillment of this hope. In our passage for today, Jesus is seen standing in the synagogue, reading a promise from Isaiah that refers to the Messiah, and then sitting down, simply saying, "I am the one Isaiah was writing about!" Hope fulfilled, yet many didn't believe it. Today we are waiting for the 2nd Coming of Jesus. Are you giving up hope? Don't.

Father, thank You for Your trustworthiness. When You say something is going to happen, it does. We can believe that the Jesus of Christmas is returning someday as King. Today please renew that hope in my heart and mind so it will affect my daily living. Amen.

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 – LOVE

### Jeremiah 31:1-14

**Pete Sutton, Pastor of Student Ministries**

Love is a strange word. It is used to describe our feelings toward everything from Christmas cookies and hot chocolate, to sports teams and America. Often, the thing that is loved is loved for the way it makes one feel. But love as the Bible defines it is not about feelings at all. Rather, love is a sacrificial posture toward the thing or one that is loved. In fact, where there is not sacrifice, there is no love. When God declares His “everlasting love” for Israel (v. 3), He follows it up with irrevocable promises and tangible kindnesses that will never fade or diminish. According to Jeremiah 31, through these declarations, Israel is transformed. The passage moves from surviving in the wilderness (v. 2) toward thriving on “the heights of Zion,” (v. 12). The people are changed from weeping (v. 9) to worshipping, (v. 13). These transformations come through a recognition of and an encounter with the everlasting love and kindness of God.

Reread today’s passage and count how many times God’s declaration of love is followed up with a promise beginning with the words, “I will.” Then take time to reflect on these promises which flow from God’s everlasting love for us.

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 7 – LOVE

### 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Ryan Worsley, Campus Pastor

Outside of Jesus, King David may be the most well-known character in all of the Bible. Though certainly imperfect, Scripture refers to him as “a man after God’s own heart.” Yet, as a young boy, David was an afterthought. His own father never even considered him as a possible heir to the throne and instead saw David as just a shepherd. Thankfully, God knew the potential inside of David and chose him to lead Israel and become a hero of the faith. This is great news for us today! No matter what others may think of us, God loves us and sees the true potential inside of us! May we live in that truth daily!

Think of someone you love and believe in dearly. Now, tell that person how much he or she means to you and why.

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8 – LOVE

### Micah 5:1-9

**Dan Huffman, Pastor of CompassKids**

I'm dating myself, but one of my favorite song as a young man was "The Power of Love: by Huey Lewis and the News. Yes, this was focused on romantic love, but the truth is there is nothing greater than love (1 Corinthians 13:13). As we focus on love this week in our Advent journey, it is important to recognize the unique power of love.

In today's passage, God's people were terrorized by the powerful nation of Assyria. They had already destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and had set their sights on the Southern Kingdom of Judah. During this time of uncertainty and fear, God uses the prophet Micah to share His ultimate plan to combat evil. Surprisingly, God's plan involves the small city of Bethlehem and the birth of a baby boy. Where is the power in that solution?

The power is in love; a supernatural love that would break the power of evil and sin once and for all. In a world of hate, God was sending love incarnate. This baby boy would go on to demonstrate the greatest expression of love by laying down His life for us.

As you reflect on these passages, replace the Assyrians with whoever or whatever is terrorizing you these days. How does the love of God help you overcome this fear? How can you show love to someone who does not deserve it this week?

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9 – LOVE

### Matthew 2:1-12

**George Knebel, Pastor of High School Ministries**

The wise men or Magi who saw the “star” of the “king of the Jews” were likely pagan astrologers, looking to the stars to find purpose and meaning. They were given a sign from God leading them to the place where Jesus was born. Most of their lives they would have been searching the stars to answer the big questions of life, to find purpose, to discover if there was a loving God, to find hope. And in this moment, the Lord leads them to the fulfillment of all of those questions, to Jesus.

Upon entering the house where Jesus was, the Magi are transformed and respond in love. They fall down and worship Jesus. Then, through seemingly impractical gifts of gold, incense and myrrh, offer their sacrifice of love. These gifts of love speak to the future of Jesus. Gold is a gift fit for a king. Incense was used in temple worship, a gift fit for the Great High Priest. The Myrrh was an oil used to prepare a body for ceremonial burial. Each gift foretelling what was to come through this child.

When we encounter the presence of Jesus, like the Magi, the loving response is sacrifice—to give our lives to Him as a gift, an offering, an act of worship. In a similar way the Magi gave sacrificial, costly gifts to Jesus. When we come into the presence of Christ, we are to sacrificially give up our lives as a loving response to what Jesus has done for us. Has your love for Christ cost you anything? How can you love Jesus sacrificially this week?



## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 – LOVE

### Lamentations 3:21-24

**Paul Giersz, Pastor of Guest Services & Support Groups**

In Lamentations 3:22-23, Jeramiah tells us of God's loyal love, inexhaustible compassion, and immeasurable faithfulness. In verse 21, Jerimiah tells us when he faces trials, tribulations and tough circumstances, he thinks back and remembers how these truths have played out many times in his life.

What a great lesson. Over my years of following Jesus, I have put together a God scrapbook. It's called a journal. In this journal I have recorded the times that God's love, compassion, and faithfulness have been obvious in my life. When I face life's trials, tribulations, and difficult circumstances, I have been able to look back in my God scrapbook and remember all the times He has come through in the past to help me have victory in the present.

Do you have a God scrapbook?

What things would you put in your God scrapbook?

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11 – LOVE

### Psalm 99:1-9

**Kim Huffman, Director of Community Impact**

This song declares God's holiness. Like Isaiah 6:3, the declaration of holiness occurs three times. In addition, verses 1-2 proclaim that God reigns, is great, and exalted over all nations; verse 4 says He is mighty and loves justice. Our God isn't just powerful, He is simultaneously powerful and righteous. His love for justice directly correlates with His holiness.

This song also tells us how to respond appropriately to our holy, justice-loving God, as it calls us to praise, exalt, follow, and worship Him. Verses 6-8 are a reminder of how personal and present God is, and how His people are to follow in His ways. God calls us to righteousness and to love justice and do what is right.

Take some time to declare out loud the holiness of God, His kingship, His righteousness, and His love for justice. Then, ask Him to show you how to be a greater lover of justice to better reflect His holiness.

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 – LOVE

### Isaiah 43:1-13

#### **Gerald Aloran, Pastor of Adult Ministry**

I never understood the nuances of love coming from a single-parent, immigrant home. For me, love was functional and reciprocal. If you loved me, you would do things for me. If I loved you, I would do things for you. My understanding of love matured after years of marriage and parenting. My love for my family was on display best in the worst of times, not the best of times. It was because I fought against my selfish ambitions and sense of justice for the sake of my family.

Israel was wondering what they did wrong to deserve their nation not only being destroyed, but their people taken captive to foreign nations and foreign idols. Yahweh reminded His people that they are “precious and honored” (v.4) in God’s sight, and that one day He will release them. This isn’t because Israel did anything to deserve it but because God chose to claim Israel as His (v.1). Christians have what I like to call “Identity Amnesia.” We must remind ourselves that who we are in God’s sight because we forget often.

Spend some time today telling the person in the mirror that God loves you and you are His.

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13 – JOY

### Luke 2:1-20

#### **Rick Allen, Pastor of Congregational Care**

Do you remember the first time you heard the story of Christmas, the story of the birth of Jesus? I would guess that most of us don't remember, especially since we have heard it so many times. But the shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem when Jesus was born could, I am sure, never forget that experience for the rest of their lives. In probably what was the most fearful event ever for them, that night an angel showed up, accompanied by a bright light that scattered the darkness, with a message for these despised guardians of sheep. The message: Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, was born!

The shepherds' response: "Hey, let's get out of here and go find this baby!" And that is what they did, running as fast as they could. When they found the baby, they weren't quiet about it. They were excitedly telling everyone they saw what the angel had told them about this baby who was born in the place where animals were fed. These bystanders were "astonished" at the message these outcasts of society were telling them. And the shepherds? They returned to the fields, overwhelmed with joy and "glorifying and praising God."

Even though it probably won't be the first time we hear it, may we let the story of Jesus amaze us with joy as we contemplate it this year!

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 14 – JOY

### Psalm 21

**Pete Sutton, Pastor of Student Ministries**

Psalm 21 is a “Royal Psalm.” It declares the greatness of Israel’s king and, more-so, the greatness of God Who gives victory and blessing to the king. Additionally, it looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, King Jesus, when the King’s victories will be complete and permanent. The Psalm is split into halves. The first half (vs. 1-6) addresses God and all that He has done for the king. The second half (vs. 8-13) addresses the king and all the victories he will achieve. The whole Psalm hinges on verse 7, which celebrates the king’s trust in the unfailing love of God. It is because of the king’s trust in God’s unfailing love that he is empowered to rejoice (v. 1), sing and praise (v. 13) in the “strength” of the Lord which bookends this entire Psalm. Joy is the divine gift of God when His people turn their attention to Him and trust in His strength. Then, like the king, we will not be shaken. We will face each day, each trial, each battle, with confidence and joy to sing and praise our God regardless of our obstacles, foes or fears. Let us only rejoice in the strength of the Lord!

Today, reflect on times in your past when God sustained you with His unfailing love through a difficult trial or season of life. As you reflect on these seasons, take joy in God’s love for you.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15 – JOY**

**Joel 2:18-32**

**Ryan Worsley, Campus Pastor**

2020 has been such a tough year. Many of us have felt isolated and alone, unable to spend time with family and friends and enjoy things to which we've grown accustomed. Perhaps you feel that you have missed out this year – seeing grandkids, traveling, attending church, etc. Well, I have good news! God tell us to “be glad and rejoice” because He will restore the lost things to us. So, as you celebrate this Christmas, may you be filled with the joy of the Lord and the beauty of His promises!

Make a list of the first ten blessings that come to mind and thank God for each one.

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 – JOY**

**Psalm 97:1-12**

**Jake McNamara, Online Campus Pastor**

Marie Kondo has gained so much traction over the past few years with her ability to organize. To summarize her motto, you should discard anything that doesn't spark joy. Or to put it another way, only keep the things that bring you joy. It's easy to think that joy will come from the big presents, the extra money, the trappings of the holiday season. But the chapter we read today paints a different picture. It's that joy can be found in the simple, non-material things.

Take a look again at some of the things the Psalmist takes joy in. They are things like knowledge that the Lord is in control (v. 1), hearing of God's justice (v. 8), and having an upright heart (v. 11). As you go about your day today, be aware of what things God has given you that bring you joy. Take a few moments at the end of the day to thank God for each and every one of those gifts!

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17 – JOY

Isaiah 65:17-25

**George Knebel, Pastor of High School Ministries**

What a beautiful image of the future joy to come when God fulfills His promise of renewing creation.

God invites people to enter into His joy according to His promise of the renewal of all of creation. This comes through the redeeming work of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and return. While we wait for the fulfillment of Christ's work, we can wait with hope, with expectation, and with joy knowing that the Lord will keep His promises! One day, all that was envisioned in the passage will come to pass. What a joyous day that will be!

Lord, as we wait for the fulfillment of ultimate joy to come, help us to find the joy of Your salvation that was given to us in Jesus here and now. Let the joy of Your salvation renew our hearts, restore our souls, and transform our lives. Amen.



**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18 – JOY**

**Psalm 47**

**Paul Giersz, Pastor of Guest Services & Support Groups**

Jesus is...The Eternal and the Most High.

Jesus is God and King of everything in the world.

Jesus has won wars, will win wars, and will suppress our enemies.

Jesus has and will make our enemies bow.

Jesus appoints and removes princes, kings, and even presidents.

And we are the ones He loves.

In this season of uncertainty, anxiety and even doubt we, as the ones He loves, have a reason to...

“Clap our hand, and raise our voices joyfully and loudly.”

- Psalm 47:1

Today as you reflect on Psalm 47 turn on some worship music and raise your voice joyfully and loudly!

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 – JOY

### Psalm 149

**Kim Huffman, Director of Community Impact**

I don't know about you, but I could certainly use a new song these days! I am weary to the bone of the song of lament that our current circumstances and news sources bring. In these verses, the psalmist is commemorating a victory over an enemy and calling God's people to rejoice in the name of their Maker and King – both when gathered with God's people and while lying alone in bed.

We, too, have an enemy – sin and death. But, God is victorious over our enemy through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That enemy has been conquered once and for all because He delights in us (v 4)!! Our new song is that of joy, which springs from the constant truth that salvation is here and available to all people. No matter our circumstances, if we have put our trust in the constant, saving power of Jesus, we are victorious, and joy is ours forever!

Ask God to remind you of a song of praise to Him, and sing it out at the top of your lungs!

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 – PEACE

### Luke 1:1-56

#### **Gerald Aloran, Pastor of Adult Ministry**

World War 2 ended when the axis powers surrendered in 1945. It was estimated that 3% of the world's population, or 85 million people had perished as a result of this six-year war. Six years might not seem like a long time, but for those living in the middle of this war, it felt it was never going to end. Can you imagine how the people reacted when they heard that the Germans had surrendered? No one saw that day coming.

God's people at the time of Luke's writing had not heard from God in 400 years. God's people were educated in the Bible (Old Testament) and believed in its promises for Israel. Imagine waiting 400 years. Maybe some did not believe the Bible anymore. Maybe some said God forgot Israel. What we do know is that in Luke 1, good news has finally arrived. The long-awaited Prince of peace (Is 9:6) is coming through a virgin named Mary.

Lord, we thank You that You have not forgotten about Your people during civil and physical unrest. We know that You are with us. Remind us today that Your peace has come and You will continue to rule and reign even if "the nations rage." Amen!

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 21 – PEACE

### Matthew 1:18-25

#### **Rick Allen, Pastor of Congregational Care**

When was the last time you had to make a decision that you felt very anxious and unsettled about? This is the situation in which Joseph found himself in today's Scripture passage. He and Mary, according to the Jewish traditions of the time, were betrothed, the period of one year before the marriage proper occurred. Even though the final stage of the marriage process had not taken place yet, the betrothal could only be broken by divorce. Joseph loved Mary and was looking forward to spending their lives together. Then came the discovery that Mary was pregnant, and Joseph knew he wasn't the father. Joseph's dilemma was, "do I make a scandal of this and publicly denounce Mary for being unfaithful, or do I officially end our relationship with a secret divorce?" Neither was a pleasant option. How did Joseph find guidance and peace in such a difficult time?

By the Word of God, which came to him via an angel.

When Joseph heard God's word, he listened, believed, and obeyed. How do we handle situations which create heavy unsettledness in us? Is God's Word what we go to? Understandably, we probably don't always receive such a specific response from God like Joseph did, but by listening to, believing, and obeying God's Word, we can find direction and peace in our lives.

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my pathway."

- Psalm 119:105

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22 – PEACE

### Luke 19:28-44

**Pete Sutton, Pastor of Student Ministries**

Luke 19 is typically something we read at Easter, but it has equally as much relevance to Christmas. This passage captures Palm Sunday and what Bible scholars call “the triumphal entry.” It is the climax of Luke’s recollection of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, and the presentation of Israel’s King. The declaration of “peace” by the crowd of disciplines in verse 38 calls to mind a similar declaration of peace made by the angels to the shepherds in Luke 2:14. The question Luke is presenting is simple, “what will you do with King Jesus and the peace He brings?” Some embrace it all, shouting joyfully and praising God, but some (the Pharisees and prominent people of the city) reject it and even call for rebuke of those who claim it. Their rejection leads Jesus to weep over the city He loves. The Messiah, Who brings peace, is distraught over the rejection of peace. The Prince of peace Israel has been waiting for has been rejected in favor of enemies that bring anything but peace. However, “Peace to those on whom His favor rests,”

As you reflect on today’s reading, ask yourself Luke’s important question. “What will you do with King Jesus and the peace He brings?”

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23 – PEACE

John 1:1-16

**Ryan Worsley, Campus Pastor**

Do you remember being scared of the dark? Two of our four kids are really afraid of the dark. Every night when the lights go off before bed, they tense up until they see the night light or closet light has been left on for them. Then, they can relax and go to sleep. Thankfully, light (even a little bit) always overcomes darkness. To be sure, this year has felt really dark at times, and we can easily get carried away with fear. But, we don't have to be afraid because we know that light always shines in the darkness! May the light of Christ shine through us this Christmas to a watching world!

As you enjoy the beauty of the lights on your Christmas tree, thank God for Jesus – the Light of the world.

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 – PEACE (CHRISTMAS EVE)

### John 3:16-21

**Dan Huffman, Pastor of CompassKids**

As a child, our Christmas tree was always decorated with multicolored lights. When I got married, my wife told me this was wrong. From that day on, we have always decorated our Christmas tree with white lights. People have many different decorating tastes, as you can quickly see driving down your street at night. There is one thing that everyone will agree upon, Christmas lights look best at night. There is something about the darkness that makes the sparkling light more beautiful...more peaceful.

Our passage today is very familiar to most people. It summarizes God's motivation for saving mankind from self-destruction. If we are honest with ourselves, we acknowledge that there is darkness in us. It may be easier to recognize this darkness in others, but it is a universal problem called sin. In the midst of this darkness God sent the Light of the World – Jesus!

The beauty and peace of Christmas come in understanding that light has overcome darkness in the world and in our own lives. When we put our trust in Jesus, the light of salvation floods into our souls and declares us righteous and holy before God. May the peace of knowing that you are forgiven make your Christmas bright and beautiful.

Heavenly Father, we celebrate You this year for sending the light of Your Son into our dark world. May the peace we experience be shared with all we encounter.

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 – CHRISTMAS DAY

Luke 2:22-40

**Pete Sutton, Pastor of Student Ministries**

Today's reading celebrates a hope fulfilled. Both Simeon and Anna waited patiently for the coming of Israel's Messiah. For decades they leaned into the hope of God's promises, the love of God's people, the joy of God's presence, and the peace of God's provision. Their faithfulness and fervor did not diminish. They did not stray far from the Temple where the Anointed One was anticipated. Day in and day out, they worshipped, fasted and prayed that Messiah would come. Simeon and Anna knew how to wait, and their faith and faithfulness sustained them. The reward they received was more than worth it. Imagine waiting over sixty years for the Messiah and then embracing Him in your arms, bundled up, as a baby. Imagine locking eyes with baby Jesus and kissing Him on the forehead. Imagine feeling His soft, warm skin and the realization that the God you've been praying to now shares your flesh. Imagine handing Him back to His mother, Mary, and the blessing her with your words as she has blessed you with the very "Word of God."

There will be a day, for all who place their hope and trust in Jesus, when hope is fulfilled. One day, those who have surrendered to King Jesus, will look Him in the eye, will feel the warmth of His touch, will be swallowed in His embrace, and will hear the Words of God – "well done, my good and faithful servant." On that day, it will all be worth the wait.



## JESUS, Thank You for Christmas.

Thank You for entering our world and filling us with Your hope, love, joy and peace. Thank You for Your precious promises that sustain us as we wait for Your glorious return. Thank You for the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of the family of God that gives us strength. Thank You for sharing with us Your good gifts that grant us all we need for life and godliness. Grant also that we may wait patiently, expectantly, and faithfully now as Simeon and Anna did then. Until that day, may Your light shine through us to a world that needs Your peace. This we pray in the worthy name of Jesus our Messiah, Savior and King,

Amen.

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