



Advent Devotional Guide 2025

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FBC
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Week 1: Hope

In this holy season of Advent, we begin where God so often begins—with **hope**. Not wishful thinking, not vague optimism, but a confident expectation rooted in the character of God. Hope is the quiet assurance that the same God who promised a Savior is the God who fulfills every promise in His perfect time.

For generations, God’s people waited in the dark, clinging to the words of the prophets: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”* (Isaiah 9:2, ESV). They hoped for a Messiah they had never seen, trusting that God would one day break through the silence. And in Bethlehem, their hope was born.

Advent invites us into that same posture of anticipation. We, too, know what it is to wait. We wait for healing, for restoration, for God to move in places that feel stuck or silent. Advent reminds us that God’s delays are not God’s denials. He is working even when we cannot see Him. The manger tells us that **God always keeps His word**, often in ways far greater than we imagine.

So this Advent, may we hold fast to the hope that anchors the soul (Hebrews 6:19). May we wait with expectation, watch with confidence, and live with the assurance that the God who came to us in Bethlehem continues to come to us today.

Hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

Memory Verse for the Week:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.” – Isaiah 9:2

Sunday, Nov. 30

Read Isaiah 7:14

The Hope of Immanuel

Advent begins with a whisper of hope—an ancient promise spoken into a moment of fear, uncertainty, and political crisis. Isaiah 7:14 is not a soft, sentimental verse. It was a bold declaration given to a king who was terrified that his nation would be wiped off the map. Into that fear, God spoke the promise of Immanuel: “God with us.”

What strikes us during Advent is that God did not offer Ahaz a military strategy, a political alliance, or a quick escape. He offered His presence. A child is coming. A son will be born. God Himself will dwell with His people. That was the hope Judah needed then, and it is the hope we need now.

Hope in Scripture is not wishful thinking. It is confident expectation rooted in the unchanging character of God. Isaiah’s prophecy reminds us:

1. God keeps His promises, even when circumstances seem hopeless.

Isaiah spoke these words 700 years before Jesus was born. Generations came and went, but God did not forget. Advent reminds us that delay is not denial. God works in His time, and His timing is always perfect.

2. God’s greatest gift is Himself.

He is Immanuel: God with us. He is not far off or indifferent. In Christ, God steps into our world, our pain, our sin, and our mess. The hope we cling to is not that life will always be easy, but that we will never face life alone.

3. God’s presence brings hope for today and hope for eternity.

Because Christ came as Immanuel, we live with a hope that is steady and sure.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, You are our Immanuel. As we enter this season, fill my heart with the hope that only Your presence can bring. Remind me that You are still with me. You are still working, still guiding, still keeping Your promises. Help me wait with expectation and live with confidence, knowing that the same God who came to us in Bethlehem will come again in glory. Amen.

Monday, Dec. 1

Read Jeremiah 33:14-16

Hope in God’s Promise

Advent draws us into the deep, steady hope of God. It is a hope that is not fragile or fleeting, but anchored in His unbreakable promises. Nowhere is that hope clearer than in Jeremiah 33. These words were spoken to a people surrounded by devastation. Jerusalem was under siege. The temple was damaged. The future looked grim. And yet, God spoke into the darkness: “The days are coming...”

Not maybe. Not if things improve. Not if you are strong enough. But “I will fulfill the promise I made.”

1. Hope Begins With God's Faithfulness

Advent hope does not depend on how we feel, but on who God is. He remembers. He restores. He fulfills every word He has spoken. Even when we cannot see what God is doing, He is already at work, setting the stage for redemption.

2. Hope Comes Through a Righteous King

God promised a Branch from David's line. Just a branch – something small, seemingly weak, growing out of a stump that looked long dead. Yet this Branch would become a King who brings justice, righteousness, and salvation. This is Jesus, our long-awaited Messiah. He is the One who sets right what is wrong, heals what is broken, and brings order to what is chaos.

3. Hope Brings Security, Even When Life Feels Uncertain

Jeremiah's audience lived in fear but God promised a day when His people would dwell securely. This security is not found in our circumstances but in God's presence. In Christ, we are safe. In Christ, we have peace. In Christ, we are made righteous, not because of our works, but because "the LORD is our righteousness."

That is the heart of Advent hope: Not that we are enough, but that He is.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord God, You are faithful. You keep Your promises, even when I cannot see the way forward. Thank You for sending Jesus, our righteous King, the Branch who brings life to dead places. Fill my heart with hope as I wait for You to come again. Help me trust Your timing, rest in Your righteousness, and live with confidence in Your unfailing love. Amen.

Tuesday, Dec. 2

Read Romans 15:12-13

Abounding in Hope

Advent is the season when hope steps into the center of the story. It is the time when God boldly reminds us that hope is not something we manufacture. It is something He gives. Paul writes that God is "the God of hope." Hope is not merely an attribute of God; it is part of His very nature. If you want hope, you must come to Him, because He is its source and its giver.

1. Hope Is Rooted in the Promise of Jesus

Paul quotes Isaiah to remind us of the Root of Jesse, a prophecy pointing to Jesus. Out of the royal line of David, God brought a Savior who would be the hope not only of Israel but of all nations. In a world fractured by division, fear, and uncertainty, God sent One who would rule with righteousness, mercy, and truth. The hope of Advent is not abstract—it has a name, a face, a story. Jesus is hope made visible.

2. Hope Is Something God Gives Us

Paul's prayer is not that we would find hope, but that God would fill us with it. How does He do that? He fills us with joy, a deep gladness not tied to circumstances. He fills us with peace, a calm anchored in His presence, not our control. And He pours these into us as we believe, trusting the One who came and will come again. Advent calls us to open the empty places of our hearts to let Him fill them.

3. Hope Overflows by the Power of the Holy Spirit

The word Paul use, “abound,” means to overflow, to spill out, to run past the edges. It is a picture of hope that is not rationed, but abundant. And it’s not something we drum up within ourselves. It is the Holy Spirit who causes hope to well up, overflow, and change the way we see everything. Advent hope is supernatural hope.

Prayer Prompt:

God of hope, fill me as only You can. Let joy and peace rise within me as I trust in Your promises. Help me see Jesus, the Root of Jesse, my Redeemer, my Lord, as the true source of confidence. And by the power of Your Holy Spirit, let me abound in hope. Fill me and overflow through me. Amen.

Wednesday, Dec. 3

Read Isaiah 40:1-5

Hope in the God Who Comes Near

Advent begins with a word many hearts desperately need, “Comfort.” Not the shallow comfort of distraction or avoidance, but the deep, soul-healing comfort that can only come from God. In Isaiah 40 God’s people were experiencing fear, sin, exile, and exhaustion until He broke in to through that darkness with a message of hope, “God is coming, and He is coming for you!”

1. Hope Begins With God’s Tender Voice

“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem...” Isaiah reveals a God who does not scold from a distance but speaks gently, personally. The hope of Advent is that God draws near not with condemnation, but with compassion. He knows your fears. He understands your exhaustion. He meets you in the wilderness and whispers, “Comfort, comfort...” Hope begins when we remember that God sees us and speaks to us with mercy.

2. Hope Rests on God’s Promise of Forgiveness

Before Advent brings the manger, it brings a message, “Your warfare is ended; your iniquity is pardoned.” This is not wishful thinking. It is the foundation of hope. God Himself has taken the initiative to deal with our greatest need. In Christ, forgiveness is not a possibility; it is a reality. Advent reminds us that Jesus came to end the war between us and God, to bring peace to our hearts.

3. Hope Prepares the Way for the Lord

“A voice cries... prepare the way of the LORD.” John the Baptist would echo these words centuries later as he called people to make room for the Messiah. In Advent, we prepare for his coming by allowing Him to level the rough and uneven places of our hearts. Hope is active. It looks forward. It leans in. It prepares the way for God to move.

4. Hope Looks Toward the Revealed Glory of God

“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed...” This is the promise that steadies us. God is not silent. He is not absent. He is not finished. He came in Bethlehem, He comes to us now by His Spirit, and He will come again in glory. Advent hope stretches from manger to cross to crown.

Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank You for the comfort You speak into my life. Thank You for forgiveness, for mercy, and for Your nearness. Prepare my heart this Advent season. Lift my valleys, lower my mountains, and straighten the rough places in me. Reveal Your glory again— in my homes, in my church, and in my life. Fill me with holy hope as I wait for Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, Dec. 4

Read Luke 1:26-33

Hope Arrives in the Most Ordinary Places

Advent begins with a God who steps into an unnoticed village and speaks hope to a young girl who never expected her life to be part of a world-changing story. Nazareth was small, obscure, and ordinary, yet God chose it as the setting for His greatest announcement, “The Savior is coming!”

1. Hope Meets Us Where We Are

Gabriel did not appear in Jerusalem’s temple courts or in the halls of political power. He appeared in a humble home in a humble town to a humble young woman. This is Advent hope. God comes to ordinary people in ordinary places with extraordinary grace. It means none of us is overlooked. None of us is disqualified. None of us is too small for God’s purposes.

2. Hope Begins With the Assurance of God’s Presence

Before Gabriel announces anything miraculous, he says, “The Lord is with you.” That is the heart of hope. God’s presence precedes God’s promise. We do not face God’s calling alone. Before Mary carried Christ in her womb, she carried the promise of God’s nearness in her heart.

3. Hope Speaks Into Our Fears

Scripture says Mary was “greatly troubled.” Gabriel responds with the classic angelic statement, “Do not be afraid.” God does not dismiss our fears, He speaks into them. Hope is the presence of God who says, “I am with you. I have chosen you. I am working in ways you cannot yet see.”

4. Hope Rests on the Greatness of Jesus

Gabriel’s words lift Mary’s eyes past her circumstances to the majesty of the One who is coming. His name will be Jesus, the Savior. He will be great, greater than kings and kingdoms. He will be called the Son of the Most High, God in flesh. He will reign forever. His kingdom will never be shaken, never overthrown, never ending. Hope is not fragile because it is anchored in a King whose reign cannot fail.

5. Hope Looks Forward With Confidence

Gabriel’s announcement ties past promises to future glory. The throne of David, long empty, will be filled again. God is restoring what was broken and fulfilling what was promised. Advent reminds us that God’s plan spans generations, and we can trust His timing, His wisdom, and His faithfulness.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, thank You for the hope You brought to Mary and for the hope You bring to me. Help me believe that You meet me in ordinary places and speak purpose into my life. Calm my fears with Your presence, lift my eyes to Jesus, and fill me with confidence in His unending kingdom. Amen.

Friday, Dec. 5

Read Luke 1:34-38

Hope that Says “Let it be.”

Advent invites us into the mystery of God’s hope. That is a hope that does not depend on what we can understand or accomplish, but on the power and promise of God Himself. Nowhere is this clearer than in Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel.

1. Hope Often Begins With Honest Questions

Mary’s first response is so human, so relatable, “How will this be...?” She is not doubting God, she is grappling with the impossibility of what she has heard. Advent hope is not blind optimism. It is faith that brings its questions to God. God is not threatened by our honest confusion. He meets us in it. He responds with truth, reassurance, and presence.

2. Hope Is Grounded in the Power of God

Gabriel’s answer centers not on Mary’s ability, but on God’s, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you...” “The power of the Most High will overshadow you...” “Nothing will be impossible with God.” Advent hope acknowledges that salvation is accomplished by God, not by us. What God begins, He brings to completion. What He promises, He performs.

3. Hope Trusts Even When We Don’t See the Whole Picture

Mary had no detailed plan, no timeline, no explanation of how all this would unfold. She simply had the word of God, and that was enough. Her response shines as one of the most beautiful expressions of faith in Scripture, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” This is Advent hope – surrendering to God’s plan, even when it stretches us. Hope is believing God can work through us, even when we feel small. Hope is trusting the God who does the impossible.

4. Hope Opens the Door for God to Work in Us and Through Us

Mary’s “yes” changed the world. Our “yes” to God may not be written in Scripture, but it still matters deeply. Every time we trust Him, obey Him, or surrender to His will, we make space for Christ to work in us. Advent hope is not passive, it is participatory. It welcomes God’s work in our lives with open hands and willing hearts.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, give me faith like Mary’s. Help me to ask honest questions, to trust in Your power, and to surrender to Your will. Fill me with the hope that comes from Your presence and Your promises. Help me say, “Let it be to me according to Your word.” Amen.

Saturday, Dec. 6

Read Zephaniah 3:17 and Revelation 21:1-8

Hope in the God Who Makes All Things New

Advent is a season that teaches us how to live between two promises: the promise of God with us now, and the promise we will be with God when He makes all things new. Few Scriptures capture that holy tension more beautifully than the two passages you just read.

1. Hope Begins With a God Who Is Near (Zephaniah 3:17)

Zephaniah speaks to a people who have experienced judgment, fear, and loss. And into that heaviness, God announces something unbelievable, “The LORD your God is in your midst.” He is not watching from a distance. He is not waiting for us to fix ourselves. He enters the mess. He steps into the middle of our fears. He becomes Immanuel—God with us. Advent hope begins here. God is with us, and He delights in His people.

2. Hope Looks Forward to a World He Will Restore (Revelation 21:1–8)

Advent is not only about looking back to Bethlehem, it is about looking forward to the New Jerusalem. John’s vision lifts our eyes to the finish line. We will see a new heaven, a new earth, and a new city where God dwells with His people. It will be a world without tears, pain, death, brokenness, sin, fear, or suffering. The One who once lay in a manger now sits on a throne and declares, “Behold, I am making all things new.” This is not wishful thinking. It’s a certain, unshakeable promise from the mouth of the risen Christ.

3. Hope Lives in the Tension of “Already” and “Not Yet”

Between these two Scriptures is where we live. God is already in our midst (Zeph. 3). God will one day make all things new (Rev. 21). Advent teaches us to hold both truths at once. Christ has come, and Christ will come again. God is near, and God is finishing His work. We are loved now, and we are destined for glory then. In a world full of noise, fear, and uncertainty, Hope whispers, “The God who sings over you now is the same God who will wipe every tear from your eyes.”

4. Hope Gives Us Strength for Today

Because God is in our midst, we can live with courage. Because God will make all things new, we can persevere with endurance. Because Jesus is both Savior and King, we can walk this season with hearts anchored in hope.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, thank You that You are with me even now. You rejoice over me, quiet me with Your love, and surround me with Your presence. And thank You for the promise that one day You will make all things new. During this Advent season, help me live in the hope of both truths: the God who is with us, and the God who is coming again. Strengthen my faith, steady my heart, and fill me with the hope that only You can give. Amen.



Week 2: Peace

Peace is one of the most treasured words of Advent. In a world filled with noise, division, and constant pressures, peace can feel like a distant dream. Yet Advent reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the presence of Christ.

When the angels appeared to the shepherds on that first Christmas night, their song offered more than a seasonal greeting. It was a divine declaration: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace* among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14). The peace they proclaimed was not political peace, not temporary peace, and not wishful thinking. It was the deep, soul-settling peace that only Jesus—the Prince of Peace—can bring. Christ brings peace with God, reconciling us through His sacrifice. He brings peace within, calming troubled hearts with His presence. And He brings peace among us, teaching His followers to live with grace, forgiveness, and love.

In this second week of Advent, may we welcome Christ’s peace into our homes, our relationships, and our hearts. And may His calming presence prepare us for the joy of His coming.

Peace has a name. His name is Jesus.

Memory Verse for the Week:

*“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”
– Isaiah 26:3*

Sunday, Dec. 7

Read Isaiah 11:1-10

The Promise of Peace

Advent peace is not the thin, fragile peace the world often offers. Worldly peace depends on circumstances, personalities, or perfectly orchestrated moments. Advent peace is rooted in a Person. Isaiah tells us that from “the stump of Jesse” a new shoot would spring forth. He would be a King filled with the Spirit of the Lord, full of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of God. This King, unlike every ruler before Him, would judge with perfect righteousness and equity. And His reign would bring a peace the world has never known.

Isaiah paints a breathtaking picture: wolves lying down with lambs, predators transformed into protectors, children playing where danger once lived. In other words, the coming Messiah would bring *shalom* – the Hebrew word for peace, meaning wholeness, restoration, harmony, and the setting right of all things. Sin fractures, but Christ heals. Sin separates, but Christ reconciles. Sin destroys, but Christ rebuilds.

During Advent, we remember that Jesus has already begun this work. By His cross, He reconciled us to God. By His Spirit, He is transforming us into people who carry His peace into our homes, our churches, and our communities. But Isaiah’s vision also reminds us that the fullness of this peace is still ahead. One day the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth “as the waters cover the sea,” and every fracture will finally be mended.

So this Advent, we wait with hope, and we live with purpose. The Prince of Peace has come, and He is coming again. Until that day, we seek to be peacemakers, faithfully reflecting His character in a world that desperately needs His healing touch.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank You for coming into our broken world to restore what sin has shattered. Bring Your peace into my heart today. Make me an instrument of Your peace in my home, my church, and my community. And as I wait for Your return, help me live with a quiet confidence that You are making all things new. Amen.

Monday, Dec. 8

Read Psalm 23

Rest for a Weary Soul

Advent arrives in a world that feels anything but peaceful. Our schedules overflow, our minds race, and our spirits carry more than we were meant to bear. Yet amid all this, the Shepherd speaks a word of deep and calming peace. Psalm 23 is not merely a poem of comfort for the valley; it is a proclamation of the Shepherd’s presence in every season. David says, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Peace begins right there: not with the removal of problems but with the assurance of God’s presence. The Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures because He knows we often won’t rest unless He leads us to it. He guides us beside still waters, those quiet places where His voice can finally be heard.

above the noise of the world. He restores our souls with the deep inner renewal that only comes from His hand.

Advent invites us to slow down long enough to notice the Shepherd who has been beside us all along. While the world hurries, He calls us to walk at His pace. While circumstances swirl, He prepares a table of fellowship. While fears loom, His rod and staff comfort us. And as we await the coming of Christ, both in the manger and in glory, we can rest in this truth: Peace is not a place, it's a Person.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. He is the One who leads us through darkness into light, through anxiety into calm, and through sorrow into joy. In following Him, we discover the kind of peace Advent promises, peace that does not depend on what is happening around us, but on Who is holding us.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, my Good Shepherd, thank You for leading me beside still waters and restoring my soul. In this Advent season, quiet my heart and steady my steps. Help me find my peace not in perfect circumstances but in Your faithful presence. Lead me, guide me, and fill me with the calm that only You can give. Amen.

Tuesday, Dec. 9

Read Isaiah 26:3-4

Peace that Holds us Steady

Advent invites us into a season of waiting, watching, and hoping, but it is also a season that exposes how restless our hearts can be. Our minds often race with responsibilities, worries, and burdens that refuse to stay quiet. Isaiah shows us a peace that is not tied to what is happening around us but to the One who stands above it all.

Notice where this peace comes from, "Whose mind is stayed on You." Peace isn't found by trying harder to calm ourselves, nor by rearranging every stressful part of life. Peace comes as we anchor our minds to the Lord. Peace is based on His character, His promises, His faithfulness. The more we look to Him, the more we learn to trust Him. The more we trust Him, the more His peace steadies us.

Isaiah then tells us why we can trust Him, "For the Lord God is an everlasting rock." Like the old hymn says, "All other ground is sinking sand." Seasons change, emotions fluctuate, circumstances rise and fall, but the Lord never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). During Advent, as we remember Christ's first coming and anticipate His return, we rest our whole weight upon the Rock who cannot be moved.

If your mind has felt scattered this season, take heart. The God who keeps us in perfect peace is also the God who holds us when our grip slips. Turn your thoughts toward Him today. Let His presence quiet your spirit and His promises settle your heart. The Prince of Peace has come and He is with you.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, my Everlasting Rock, steady my heart today. When worries rise, turn my thoughts back to You. When distractions pull me away, draw me close again. Keep me in

Your perfect peace and help me live as a person marked by Your presence. As I wait for Your coming, fill me with a peace that the world cannot give and cannot take away. Amen.

Wednesday, Dec. 10

Read Luke 2:8-14

Glory to God, Peace to People

On an ordinary night in an ordinary field, heaven broke open above a group of weary shepherds. These guys were not used to hanging out with angels. They were working the night shift, tired, forgotten, unnoticed. Yet God chose them to hear the first announcement of the birth of His Son. And what a message it was! “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”

The peace the angels proclaimed was not sentimental calm or the absence of conflict. It was the arrival of God’s long-promised salvation, peace in the form of a Person. Jesus Christ came to bring peace with God by reconciling sinners to Him (Romans 5:1). And He also brings the peace of God, a steady, sustaining calm that settles our hearts even when the world feels unstable (Philippians 4:7).

Notice where this peace begins: “Glory to God in the highest...” When God is glorified, peace follows. When Christ is exalted, hearts find rest. When we bow to the Prince of Peace, we discover what no circumstance can give and no suffering can steal. The shepherds received this peace in the simplest way—they listened, they believed, and they went to see Jesus for themselves. Advent invites us to do the same. Step away from the noise, the hurry, the pressure, and listen again to the angels’ song. Let your heart make room for the Savior who still calms fears and still speaks peace over anxious souls.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank You for entering our world with glory from heaven and peace for earth. Quiet my anxious heart and help me to receive Your peace in fresh ways this Advent. Let Your presence calm my fears, steady my thoughts, and guide my steps. Help me to share Your peace with those around me today. Amen.

Thursday, Dec. 11

Read Philippians 4:4-7

Peace that Guards Your Heart

During Advent we talk a lot about peace, but peace can sometimes be hard to find. Life pulls at us from every direction. Responsibilities multiply. Worries rise. Even this season, which should quiet our hearts, can quickly become filled with noise, pressure, and expectations. Paul knew this tension well, and into it he spoke one of the most hope-filled promises in Scripture. “Rejoice in the Lord always... The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything...” (Phil. 4:4–6). At first glance, these words can feel unrealistic. Don’t be anxious? Rejoice always? But Paul’s invitation to peace is anchored in a Person, the Lord who is near.

Paul gives us a pattern for Advent peace: rejoice, remember, and release.

Rejoice

We do not rejoice because everything is easy, but because the Lord is faithful. Advent reminds us that joy is not rooted in circumstances but in the God who keeps His promises.

Remember

“The Lord is at hand.” The God who stepped into Bethlehem is the same God who stands with you today. His presence is the antidote to fear.

Release

“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Peace comes when we open our clenched hands and give God the very things weighing us down.

And then comes the promise—one of the most precious in all of Scripture, “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of Christ. A peace so deep it doesn’t make sense. A peace that stands guard over your heart like a divine sentinel. A peace strong enough to steady you in any storm because it flows directly from the Prince of Peace Himself.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank You for drawing near to us, then in Bethlehem and now in our everyday lives. Teach me to rejoice in You, to remember Your presence, and to release my worries into Your hands. Let Your peace guard my heart and mind today. Calm my anxious thoughts, steady my spirit, and fill me with confidence in Your love. Amen.

Friday, Dec. 12

Read Colossians 3:15

Letting Peace Rule

During Advent we prepare room in our hearts, not just for the celebration of Christ’s birth, but for the reign of Christ’s peace. Paul tells the church in Colossae to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts. The word he uses carries the idea of an umpire, an authority that decides what is allowed to stay and what must be dismissed.

That means Christ’s peace is not passive; it is active. It isn’t merely a feeling, it is a governing presence. As believers, we are called to surrender the “rulership” of our inner life to the peace that flows from Christ Himself. Worry doesn’t get the final say. Fear doesn’t call the shots. Anger doesn’t get to dictate our response. Peace does.

This peace is not separate from who Jesus is. Peace is found in His nearness, His lordship, His steady hand directing our lives. When we allow His peace to rule, we begin to experience what Advent is all about – God entering our world to bring order to our chaos, rest to our exhaustion, clarity to our confusion, and unity to His people.

And Paul gently reminds us that we were “called in one body.” Peace isn’t just personal, it’s also communal. Christ desires His church to be marked by a deep, abiding

peace that bears witness to His presence among us. A peaceful church becomes a powerful testimony.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, I surrender the throne of my heart to You. Let Your peace rule in me—guiding my thoughts, calming my spirit, and shaping my responses. Make me an instrument of Your peace in Your church and in the world. And teach me to live with gratitude for the healing You bring. Amen.

Saturday, Dec. 13

Read Psalm 62

Rest for the Soul

Advent invites us to slow down—but many of us struggle to do so. December can feel loud, hurried, and crowded. Our schedules fill up, our responsibilities intensify, and even our spiritual preparations can become rushed. And yet David, in Psalm 62, describes a peace that is not fragile or seasonal. It is deep, steady, and rooted in God Himself.

David begins with a clear confession: “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation.” David’s peace does not come from problem-free days, predictable circumstances, or the approval of people. His peace comes from the Lord, his rock, his salvation, his fortress. When the world shakes, God does not. When people fail, God remains faithful. When life feels uncertain, God is still in control.

David knew what it meant to be under pressure, misunderstood, surrounded, and weary. Yet it is in that very place that he says, “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence.” Peace is born in the same place, quiet trust in the God who never changes. Our souls find rest when we stop trying to hold everything together and instead lean fully on the One who already does.

In Psalm 62, David invites us to “pour out your heart before Him.” Peace grows when we bring our fears, frustrations, and burdens honestly to the Lord and rest in His strength. He is a refuge for us, a safe place, a shelter that can weather any storm.

Prayer Prompt:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, still my restless heart today. Teach me to wait in silence, to trust in Your strength, and to rest in Your unchanging love. Help me pour out my heart before You and find refuge in Your presence. Let Your peace fill me. Amen.



Week 3: Joy

Joy is more than a feeling, more than a moment of excitement, and far more than holiday cheer that fades when the decorations come down. Advent joy is a deep, steady gladness that is rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ.

The angel's words to the shepherds echo across the centuries: "I bring you good news of great *joy* that will be for all the people." (Luke 2:10, ESV). This joy is not reserved for the fortunate or the strong. It is not limited to those whose circumstances are smooth. It is a joy for "all the people"—for the weary, the worried, the broken, and the hopeful.

Real joy doesn't depend on how we feel; it depends on who God is. It grows out of the truth that God has come near to us in Christ. It reminds us that the Savior has entered our world, bringing light into our darkness. Even when life feels heavy, His presence brings a joy that quietly strengthens the heart.

This joy is also expectant. Just as Israel longed for the coming of the Messiah, we now look forward with joy to His promised return. Advent teaches us to live in that tension—celebrating what Christ has done and anticipating what He will do.

Joy has a name. His name is Jesus.

Memory Verse for the Week:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." – Philippians 4:4

Sunday, Dec. 14

Read Isaiah 11-12

Joy Through Struggles

When we think of joy in the Bible we typically think of books like Philippians where joy in Christ and in one another is a common theme. Isaiah, however, is a book largely about judgement and warning and probably would not be advised by very many to turn to when we're lacking joy or when we want to embrace our joy. The first 39 chapters are warning of judgment against both Israel and their enemies. However, chapters 11-12 give readers a reprieve from this and tells Israel of a time of joy when "a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse" (11:1). Israel had been through a run of wicked kings and had strayed away from serving God as King David had done. While he had many faults, David never turned to other gods. So, a king returning to this lineage and ideology would be good news for the Israelites.

This verse likely has a two-fold meaning. The first is that of Zerubabel: a figure from the genealogy of David that comes to prominence after the Israelites return from the exile and helps them get back on track (Zerubabel is prominent in the book of Ezra). This shows a temporal, earthly salvation from their struggles. The second is that of a permanent king and savior in Jesus, who is also of the line of David (Matthew 1:20). Jesus shows an eternal, heavenly salvation from all the evil and suffering that humanity has had to endure throughout the earthly life. This passage reminds us that God is in control, and we can thus find joy in him.

It is often said that you're either coming out of one of life's storms, in one, or about to go through one. So, whatever season you're in, know that God will either bring you out of it, heal you from it, or give you the strength to bear it. While suffering is promised in this life, so is God's goodness and salvation. In this time of celebrating Jesus' coming, let us find joy in the fact that because of His coming our suffering and struggles are temporary, and God will deliver us from them in this life or the next.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How does Jesus' coming give you joy even in times of struggle or suffering?

How can we use passages like this to prepare, sit through, or heal from suffering and struggle?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God's gift of salvation fills us with joy throughout the year.

Pray that the holiday reminder of Jesus' coming fills us with joy to spread to others.

Monday, Dec. 15

Read Psalm 16:11

Joy in God's Presence

This world is a crazy place. It's busy, loud, chaotic, and overall not the perfection that God intended. This makes it hard to feel or see the presence of God in everyday life. I've never heard of someone finding peace in their office, classroom, in front of the tv, or driving

down I-35. Rather people feel and see that God's presence "is abundant joy" when out in nature, enjoying the sunrise with a cup of coffee, or spending time of true fellowship with friends and family. This Christmas season find where you can see God's presence and experience this abundant joy. Maybe it's by your Christmas tree with a crackling fire, doing Advent with your family, listening to Christmas hymns while looking at Christmas lights, or enjoying a lovingly well-crafted Christmas meal with friends and family. Let us not be bogged down by the world, but live in the abundant joy of our Lord and Savior.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

Where is it that you find yourself in God's presence?

How can we prioritize and intentionally seek out God's presence and experience this abundant joy in such a busy season?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that we regularly seek to be in God's presence.

Pray that we delight in God's presence and not the world around us.

Tuesday, Dec. 16

Read Luke 1:39-45

Joy in Christ's Arrival

Every Wednesday I attend the West Middle and High School lunches to see our students and invite others to Wednesday night church. I've been doing this for several years, yet one experience still stands out to me. Shortly after walking in a student not just approached but ran up to me to inform me that they had received an award for one of their classes. Their excitement couldn't be contained as the overwhelming feeling of pride and accomplishment consumed them. They beamed and jumped up and down. It was genuinely nice to see a student who, despite their best efforts, doesn't always excel in academics be so excited to see their hard work pay off. A few minutes later I walk up to a table where another student had earned the same award. However, their reaction was much different. This person often excels and has become used to success. Thus, their reaction was one of being underwhelmed and this achievement was just one of many.

For many of us, Christmas can become just one of many Christmases and holidays. It's the same every year. We shop, decorate, go to parties, go to Christmas Eve services, then eat and open presents with friends and family. We've done it. We go through the motions because the calendar dictates we do so. We're doing all of the things, but the excitement, joy, and true celebration aren't really there. In today's passage, Elizabeth displays the joy, awe, and wonder with which we should approach Christmas. Jesus has come! That is tremendous news worth the upmost celebration and should bring us true joy. While there wasn't anything explicitly wrong with the reaction from the student used to success, let us not approach Christmas like this. Let us approach it like the student who worked and worked for their award. Let us approach it like Elizabeth who was so consumed and overwhelmed. Let us approach it with childlike wonder as children of God excited about the coming of our Lord and Savior.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

Have/do we get desensitized to Christmas and what it represents?

What can we do to have that childlike joy, awe, and wonder surrounding Christmas?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that what Christmas represents fills us with true joy that only God can provide.

Pray that we don't become desensitized to the true meaning of Christmas.

Wednesday, Dec. 17

Read Luke 1:46-55

Joy in Service to God

If one was to read today's passage separate from the rest of surrounding text they would probably think that Mary had just received a major gift or deliverance from God. Her joy overflows. She reflects on how his mercy is shown to those who fear Him. It seems like she has just won the lottery. Hit the jackpot. Gets to live in a mansion and never have to work again. But in reality, this is quite far from the truth. She rejoices and celebrates because God has chosen her to serve Him. He called her to serve Him in a hard and scary way. She was likely twelve or thirteen, and would be pregnant out of wedlock. Pregnancy alone is scary. Now, it's pregnancy without sexual relations, and on top of it without being married. In Mary's culture people who were pregnant outside of marriage were treated akin to The Scarlet Letter, if not worse. She is about to endure a lot; physically, mentally, and culturally. Yet, she rejoices.

Mary was filled with joy and let it overflow because God had called her to serve Him. God calls us to serve Him every day. It won't be by physically delivering the God Incarnate, but at our schools and workplaces. The question is, how often are we filled with joy by this call to service? Do we get up to go to school or work and praise God with a song like Mary does? Mary's calling wasn't easy, and it certainly wasn't always fun. Yet she rejoices because God called her to serve Him. Let Christmas be a reminder of who it is that we get the privilege of serving day in and day out.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How can we go about having Mary's joy for serving God?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God gives us a heart of joy for serving Him.

Thursday, Dec. 18

Read Philippians 4:4-9

Choosing Joy

Joy is a choice. It isn't something that automatically happens, but is typically something that we have to be intentional about. The good news is that God tells us through the Apostle Paul how we can have joy and as a result, rejoice. A few years ago at camp there was a game setup where people would kick a Velcro soccer ball at a big, dart board

style target. Every time one of our students missed I would give the very helpful advice of “Hey, do better” or “have you thought about not being bad at this?” Our students, understanding the jest, typically gave me an equally snide comment back. Clearly, this “advice” did nothing to direct them on how to hit the target. Had that been my goal I could have advised them on with which part of their shoe to kick, where to aim, or how hard to kick.

In Philippians 4 Paul gives us the latter type of advice. Rather than simply saying “Rejoice” or “Have Joy,” he tells us how to go about having joy that overflows into rejoicing. He instructs us to be gracious and to let it be known to all. If we’re full of grace, this is going to come with a joyful attitude. He tells us not to worry, but to thankfully turn to God and thus be filled with peace. I have never met a truly thankful person that is at peace but isn’t joyful. We can all think of the people who do and don’t embody this. Subsequently, we know which person we want to be like. So, let us choose joy by focusing on God, rejoicing, being thankful, and as a result be filled by His peace.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How can we choose joy?

Is joy typically an easy or difficult choice for you?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God fills us with joy and gives us a heart to choose it.

Friday, Dec. 19

Read Titus 3:9

Joy Over Division

One likely doesn’t read Titus 3:9 and immediately think of joy. That’s because we all know the person that provokes what Paul is telling us in this verse to avoid. We know the person that no matter the topic wants to debate and quarrel. Sometimes this can be in good fun to playfully debate something. And sometimes it can ruin the vibe and make everyone around miserable. One of the most heated arguments I have ever heard was on a mission trip. It wasn’t a debate that would have an outcome that could be beneficial to the trip or in any way further God’s Kingdom, but was about the better restaurant between Denny’s and IHOP. A debate that involved screaming and name calling about which chain restaurant has better frozen food that they heat up and serve. This senseless debate quickly got loud and heated, making many of us in the room a nervous wreck. It continued to cause factions and make people choose sides. It was such a trivial thing that was not only devoid of joy but put us all in moods in which going out to spread joy (y’know, kinda the point of a mission trip) was quite difficult.

So, the reason we don’t think of joy when reading this passage is because this behavior and attitude is completely devoid of it. While we don’t know exactly what debates and quarrels Paul is referring to, the principle is clear: don’t let us have a divisive heart. Our world is full of this. Everywhere we go there is division. Christmas represents the coming of

the one who would bridge divisions. In this Christmas season, let us focus on a heart of joy. Let our conversations not be divisive, but filled with and give love and joy.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Why are we often pulled towards a heart of division rather than one of joy?

How can we avoid these divisive debates and quarrels and have joy with one another?

Prayer Prompts

Pray that God will fill us with joy.

Pray that God will make us want to make his joy known rather than our thoughts or opinions that could sprout division.

Saturday, Dec. 20

Read John 15:9-11

Joy Versus Happiness

I was in sixth grade when a Sunday School teacher gave an illustration that has stuck with me ever since. In this illustration he asked whether or not we would be happy if he gave us an ice cream cone. He had us imagine our favorite ice cream on a Summer night, and to think about the sweetness of the cold ice cream and the combination of the crunch of the cone. But he abruptly cut this off by asking if we're still happy when the ice cream cone is gone. The answer: probably not. And it is with this that he helped us to understand the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is temporary and can come from a lot of things. Joy is eternal and can only come from God. God has given us Jesus, shown us His love, and given us His way to follow "so that [His] joy may be in [us] and [our] joy may be complete" (John 15:11, CSB).

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How do love and joy correlate?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that we seek joy in God and God alone.



Week 4: Love

Love is at the heart of Advent. It is the reason Christ came, the motive behind the manger, and the message that echoes through every carol, candle, and Scripture read during this holy season. Advent teaches us that God's love is not abstract. It is not distant. It is not uncertain. God's love took on flesh and lived among us.

John 3:16 declares the story simply and beautifully: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..." (ESV). Advent invites us to pause and ponder that miracle. The God who created galaxies stepped into our world as a child wrapped in swaddling clothes. He came not to condemn, but to save.

Advent love is *sacrificial*. The Father gave His Son. The Son gave Himself. Love moved heaven toward earth.

Advent love is *personal*. Christ came for the world, but He also came for you. He entered your everyday, flawed life with the offer of grace and redemption.

Advent love is *transforming*. It shapes how we see others, how we forgive, how we serve, and how we live. When God's love fills our hearts, it overflows into our homes, our church, and our community. As John later writes, "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19, ESV).

Love has a Name. His name is Jesus.

Memory Verse for the Week:

"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." – 1 John 4:9

Sunday, Dec. 21

Read 1 John 4:7-21

God is Love

When we think of the attributes of God we should think of a pyramid. At the top of this pyramid are holiness and love. Every other attribute of God then goes down the pyramid because every attribute of God stems from His love and His holiness. God is holy and God is love. Thus, it is impossible for God to be anything or do anything that is not holy or loving. Because God is perfect, his love is perfect.

Today's passage is dense and layered. There is a lot to think about, absorb, and put to practice when we're discussing the idea of love. As it comes from God and is holy, there is a very high standard of love for us to try and meet. But as is made known from this passage, we can only truly love if God is in us. Thus, we should rely on Him to grow in and try and perfect this love.

It is because of this love that Jesus came to us. It is because of this love that we celebrate Christmas. Yet, Christmas can often be an unloving time. Verse 21 clearly states "And we have this command from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister" (CSB). Let us remember this when a package is running late and we're waiting to talk to a representative. Let us remember this when traffic is wild and someone cuts us off (or maybe don't be the person who cuts someone off when traffic is wild). Let us remember this when we're trying to cook a Christmas dinner or make plans with family. There are many things that can get in the way of us loving. And compared to God's love and his command to do as such, those things are quite small.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How does the idea that God is love make you think of Him?

Do you find this passage encouraging, convicting, hopeful, or all three?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that we see God's love and show it to all.

Monday, Dec. 22

Read Philemon 4-5 and John 13:35

Making Love Known

No matter who you are, where you're from, or whether or not you are a basketball fan, you have definitely heard of Michael Jordan. Whether or not you've seen, love it, or hate it, you have heard of the movie Titanic. It doesn't matter if you eat there or not, you've heard of McDonald's. There are things in this world that are big enough that, for better or for worse, they make it to just about everyone. The list could go on. But as Christians we should long for someone or something to be known by nearly everyone not because of their athletic abilities, tragedy, or cheap and convenient food. Paul tells Philemon in the book of the same name that he has heard of his love. What a testament. What an impact that would be if someone could say that they have heard of us because of our love. They don't know us because of our profession, team affiliations, collections, where we're from, political

leanings, what car we drive, or our social media profiles. But, they know us because of our love.

This plays into Jesus' statement in John 13:35 that "everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (CSB). We should strive to show love, and thus people will know that we are followers of God. Imagine a world where Christians are known by people before they are even met because people have heard about how they love. Imagine a world where it doesn't have to be asked or told whether or not someone follows God, because they simply love everyone they encounter. This Christmas season, let our goal be for God's love to be heard about and seen through us by all.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

Do you think that people know that you are a Christian without you telling them because of your love?

How can we help our brothers and sisters in Christ love well?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God is seen in and through you by your love.

Tuesday, Dec. 23

Read John 3:16

Long before shepherds heard angels sing, long before a star lit the sky, long before Mary laid the infant Jesus in a manger, there was love. God's love is eternal, initiating, and immeasurable.

John 3:16 is not a Christmas verse on its surface, yet it holds the very essence of Christmas in its core. "God so loved the world..." That little word "so" carries the weight of heaven. It is not love measured in inches or miles, but in sacrifice and surrender. God loved us to the extent that He gave – gave what was most precious, most beloved, most costly, His only Son.

Advent reminds us that the story of Christmas does not begin at Bethlehem. It begins in the very heart of God, who looked upon the world and saw it as it was: broken, wandering, rebellious, shadowed by sin. Yet His response was not condemnation, but compassion.

Jesus was given so that you may live. He came down so that you could be lifted up. He entered our darkness so you could walk in His eternal light. This gift is not wrapped in qualification but in invitation: "whoever believes." Young or old, broken or whole, Advent reminds us that the gift is for you. Salvation is not earned; it is received. Eternal life is not achieved; it is given.

You are loved: deeply, purposefully, and eternally.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

How can this truth ("Love came down for you") change the way you engage with family, church, or community this Christmas?

What are some practical ways you can "give" love to others in the same spirit that God gave His Son?

Prayer Prompt:

Thank God for His love. Prayer that He will help you slow down long enough to remember the wonder of His love. Ask him to help you receive his gift of love and share it with others.

Wednesday, Dec. 24

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Love as Fruit of Knowing God

Galatians 5:22-23, “The Fruit of the Spirit,” is one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture. There are entire Bible studies over it, VBS is often based on it, and many of us grew up singing in a deep voice “The Fruit of the Spirit’s not a watermelon!” As common as it’s taught and preached, there are several mistakes that we tend to make when talking about the Fruit of the Spirit. Most of these mistakes revolve around the first listed: love. For one, the passage is the “fruit” (singular) not “fruits” (Plural). This is because all nine that are that are listed are a form of love. A common interpretation is that the Fruit of the Spirit working in us is love, and that the other listings are the forms or attributes of love. It is unlikely that any of us have met a joyful or patient person that wasn’t loving. The second mistake plays into this as we often try and think about what fruit we need to work on the most. This is fine, but given the previous explanation, it doesn’t make sense to try and work on kindness without also, or first, working on love. When we seek to love, the other listings will come naturally.

Many of us traditionally read the Christmas story tonight on Christmas Eve out of the book of Luke. As you do so, try and look through the story at how God’s love manifests into these attributes.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

How can you improve on love?

How can we be intentional on loving others so that others can see it as a result of the Holy Spirit working in a through us?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that we, especially in this Christmas season, are showing love to all that we encounter, and that everything we do comes from love.

Day 25- Culminating Love

Luke 2:1-20

We made it! Christmas day is here. As with the Christmas season as a whole, it is easy for Christmas day to be filled with celebration yet be absent of the one we’re celebrating. Be intentional today to think about the Christmas story. And as we’re doing so, think about how it’s the culmination of the hope, peace, joy, and love that we’ve been studying over the last four weeks.

Advent 2025
FBC West

As we venture into a new year, take the Christmas season to regularly think of the hope, peace, joy, and love that we are gifted through Christ. Use these to be thankful, today and every other. Use these to share with others who God is. Use these to think about God's nature. Use these to think about the God that we serve.

Our Lord has come!

Merry Christmas!