

## **Advent 2023 Devotionals - Gnome for the Holy-days**

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone. Isaiah 9:2*

### **A Great Light - Isaiah 9:2 (December 3)**

As we start the season of Advent, I wanted to revisit some of the Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled with the advent of Jesus' birth. One of my favorites is from Isaiah 9:2 -

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone. Isaiah 9:2*

### **Darkness Everywhere**

There is so much darkness in the world. This was even more the case before Jesus came because He had not brought the light and hope of salvation yet. Now, we have the Light of the World as the very center of our lives.

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

### **The Light of Life**

Jesus has given us the light of life. Eternal life! We have every reason in the world to arise and shine. God sent His glory in the form of His Son to be with us.

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. Isaiah 60:2*

### **Action Step:**

Today, as you go about your day, keep in mind that you are not walking in darkness because the Light of the World has invaded your life. Our action step is to get up and interact with others with that "Arise, Shine" attitude. Share a smile or moment of light and joy with someone else today.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Help us to step into Your Light today. Remind us throughout the day that we are not in darkness. Enable us to share Your light with those around us. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3*

### **Blessed - Genesis 12:1-3 (December 4)**

I am very blessed. I know the story of how God brought my grandparents together at a tent revival meeting. My grandfather and grandmother were married for over sixty years. They served the Lord faithfully and raised children who grew up to serve the Lord and raise their children to follow God.

I have a heritage of faith that is inspiring to say the least. I have that in common with Jesus. He had a heritage of faith that went back all the way to Genesis 12.

### **From the Beginning**

Right from the beginning, God has had a plan that did not just include His chosen people. In Genesis 12, God tells Abram (Abraham) that through His family all the families in the entire world will be blessed. Jesus fulfills this prophecy through his death on the cross and resurrection.

Through the family that Abraham never thought he would have, God pours out blessing on the entire world.

*You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness." Acts 3:25-26*

The birth of Jesus was still just the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham. The sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross made reconciliation with God possible for the Israelites and all of us who were not born into the nation God called His own.

### **Action Step:**

Reflect on the idea that we are blessed. Blessed by the sacrifice of Jesus. Even if life is tough right now, we are still blessed beyond measure. We are blessed so that we will be a blessing to those around us. What way can you bless someone today?

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Thank you for the blessing of your Son that You ordained far in advance to rescue us. Reveal to us how to be a blessing today and everyday as we approach the celebration of Your Son's birth. We want to share Your blessing with others. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
until tribute comes to him;  
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Genesis 49:10*

### **And He Shall Reign - Genesis 49:10 (December 5)**

When Jacob (also called Israel) was about to die, his sons gathered around and Jacob went one by one, prophesying over them and blessing them. As he came to Judah, the prophecy included news about Jesus (Genesis 49:10).

### **Royal Bloodline**

From the family line of Judah will come a ruler whose scepter will not depart from Him. This is one of the reasons that Luke lists the genealogy of Jesus, showing that He is descended from Judah. The Jewish people would recognize the fulfillment of the promised Messiah and His royal bloodline.

*23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ... 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ...38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. Luke 3:23-37*

### **An Eternal Throne**

*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.  
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;  
you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.  
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; Psalm 45:6-7*

Jesus may have been born in a manger, but He will reign forever. King of kings and Lord of lords!

### **Action Step:**

The Bible says that we are heirs with Christ. We are royalty because of His gift for us. We are the children of the Most High God, heirs in this royal bloodline, yet some of us go through our days with a poverty-stricken, lowest class mentality. Let's go through today thankful to God for His gift of family and inheritance. Look for someone to help today and invite them to the family!

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, what an amazing gift! You adopted us into Your family and love us when we are undeserving. Open our eyes to the opportunities to represent the family name well today. Help us to realize whose kids we are when the world tries to pull us down. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days. Micah 5:2*

### **O Bethlehem - Micah 5:2 (December 6)**

It is interesting to me that when the wisemen followed the star to find the Christ Child and met with King Herod they told him what the ancient writings said about where the Messiah would be born.

*When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel." Matthew 2:3-6*

### **Right Place, Right Time**

Jesus was not born in Bethlehem because his parents already lived. God already knew the amazing series of events that would bring Joseph and Mary to this little town to be counted for the census right at the moment when it was time for Jesus to be delivered. They were in the right place at the right time.

I'm sure Mary was not excited about traveling when she was so pregnant. Joseph was probably stressed out at the thought of his wife having to make that journey in her condition. However, sometimes what seems like so much trouble and so inconvenient is actually God directing our steps and getting us to the right place at the right time.

### **Action Step:**

Pray and ask God to direct your steps. Let's ask Him to show us when we are viewing God's orchestrations as inconveniences and problems. Take a few moments to think about how you are thinking about the struggles in your life. Ask for God to give you His perspective on your stresses and troubles. Look for what God may be doing in the middle of inconvenience!

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, We can't see the big picture like You can. Help us to have your perspective as we experience trouble, inconvenience, and stress and cooperate with You in the moment. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken. Ezekiel 34:23-24*

### **The Good Shepherd - Ezekiel 34:23-24 (December 7)**

In Ezekiel, God speaks to His people and lets them know that He will bring them a Shepherd from the line of King David that will be their Prince and Shepherd forever. Jesus came along and announces that He is that Shepherd.

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. John 10:11-16*

### **An Ignored Role**

*What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. Matthew 18:12-13*

This is a role that I don't think of very often in relation to Jesus. When I do think of Jesus as a shepherd, I often recall the passage about leaving the 99 and going after the one found in Matthew 18. However, I think that the Good Shepherd means so much more than that.

### **Jesus as MY Good Shepherd**

Jesus is not just a rescuer with no sheep left behind. He guards and protects us. He watches our health and well-being - looking out for their best interests. He knows each and every one of us by name and is aware of every hair on our heads. He laid down His life in exchange for ours. He speaks to His sheep and they know His voice.

### **Action Step:**

Reach out to Jesus as the Good Shepherd, listening for His voice, and trusting in His exceptional care for you.

### **Prayer:**

Dear God, Reveal to me the richness and depth of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Help me to hear and know His voice. I trust in Him to care for me everyday. In Jesus' name, amen.

*"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;  
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,  
to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness." Isaiah 42:6-7*

### **Out of Darkness - Isaiah 42:6-7 (December 8)**

I love this whole chapter of Isaiah 42! It is packed with goodies! If you have time today, start at the beginning and read through verse 16. God's promises to His people never fail to amaze me. In two places in this chapter, the Lord talks about bringing people out of darkness (Is. 42:7,16)

*And I will lead the blind  
in a way that they do not know,  
in paths that they have not known  
I will guide them.  
I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I do,  
and I do not forsake them. Isaiah 42:16*

### **Light of the World**

This year, as I read these prophecies, I am noticing over and over again how obviously Jesus announces that He is the Messiah by referring to the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament scriptures. In John 8, He talks about bringing people out of darkness.

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

### **Shine a light**

Blinded eyes are opened and darkness is flooded with light. I especially like how Isaiah 42:16 says *"I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground."* We stumble around in the darkness on unlevel, obstacle-strewn ground, trying to get to our destinations. Jesus shows up and gives us direction by shining a light on the level path.

### **Action Step:**

Ask God to shine a light on the specific path that you are to walk today. Maybe He will lead you to do your errands in a certain order to orchestrate a meeting with someone who needs Him. Or, maybe His light on your path will just make your day more efficient and enjoyable!

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Shine Jesus, the Light of the World, on our paths today. Give us direction, light, and level ground as we go about our daily lives. Help us to see those who need us to shine Your light in their direction too! In Jesus' name, amen.*

*And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time. Luke 1:20*

### **Unable to Speak - Luke 1:5-23 (December 9)**

Today, we are going to move from Old Testament prophecies for a moment and visit a part of the Christmas story. Zechariah and Elizabeth were living lives that were pleasing to the Lord, but they had an unfulfilled hope.

*In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Luke 1:5-7*

Desiring a child and yet unable to conceive, they kept doing what they knew was right in the midst of the heartache.

*8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." Luke 1:8-17*

### **Crazy Experience**

Can you imagine? You are going about your job, and then an angel appears right in front of you, telling you that the impossible is about to happen and how to raise that impossibility when he arrives. Zechariah was justifiably skeptical.

*18 And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." 19 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." 21 And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. 23 And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. Luke 1:18-23*

### **To Believe or Not to Believe**

Gabriel has come from the presence of God to bring good news for Zechariah and Elizabeth, and then Zechariah does not believe the word of the Lord. When we believe God's words to us, it is credited to us as righteousness. When we don't believe, there are consequences.

Zechariah was silenced. This seems to me like both a consequence of his unbelief and a protection for him. He was protected from speaking and spreading his unbelief to others. He is unable to speak until his baby is born and he shows his belief in the message Gabriel brought. Then, he is miraculously given back his speech.

**Action Step:**

Is there anything God is trying to tell you in your life right now that you are tempted to not believe? What way can you step out in faith to demonstrate your belief in the words of God? If you can't think of something personal, what does the Bible say that you can step out in today? Don't be silenced by unbelief this season - share the God's good news with others!

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, Reveal to us the ways that we are being silenced in unbelief. Help us to hear Your words, believe them, and take action in our belief. Don't let us miss You doing the impossible in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*A voice cries:*

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Isaiah 40:3-5*

### **Prepare the Way - Isaiah 40:3-5 (December 10)**

Now we are going to mix the Old Testament prophecies with the New Testament Christmas story! Zechariah and Elizabeth would give birth to the messenger that would prepare the way before the coming Messiah.

*Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." 61 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. Luke 1:57-80*

This is the John that would become known as John the Baptist. He baptized Jesus. He lived out in the desert, dressed in animal skin, and ate locusts and wild honey.

### **A voice crying in the wilderness...**

*"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:1*

Several prophets spoke about a messenger who would prepare the way right before the Messiah. The hand of the Lord was with John the Baptist from before he was even born. He would whet the spiritual appetites of many people. They flocked to the desert to hear from the crazy man who was basically running a revival and baptizing people in a river.

**Action Step:**

This Advent Season, are we following John the Baptist's example and preparing the way for Christ in the hearts of those around us. Plowing up the ground of hardened hearts. Planting seeds of the gospel. Watering and tending the growing spiritual hunger and then providing the answer - JESUS!

What can you do today to prepare the way for Jesus with those around you today?

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, show us how to prepare the way with the people in our lives for the gospel, whether it is our family members, friends, colleagues, or even strangers we meet along the way. Give us direction today in how we are to relate to others to be a voice crying in a wilderness of sin. Work through us to bring Your Son to those around us. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14*

### **Emmanuel - Isaiah 7:14 (December 11)**

If someone says that two friends are getting together to chat, I almost always picture them holding a mug of something warm to drink. I think it goes back to my childhood. My mother and father are the most hospitable people I have ever met in life. They literally leave their front door open most days for anyone who drops by to "Come on in!"

There is always a pot of coffee brewing and my mother can whip something up in under 10 minutes to feed someone if necessary. I have countless memories of mom sitting across from one person or another with a cup of coffee in each of their hands talking and laughing, and occasionally crying.

### **Up Close and Personal**

When I read the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 this year, it made me picture settling in across from God with a cup of coffee to talk and laugh and sometimes cry. He came as a man to be God WITH us - able to relate to us, experience what we experience, and spend time with us. Too often we picture Him as far away, but Jesus came to be up close and personal with us.

### **Old Testament to New Testament**

In Matthew's record of the Christmas story, he draws the connection between the prophecy in Isaiah and Jesus:

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

*(which means, God with us). Matthew 1:22-23*

### **Action Step:**

Our door should always be open to Him. Our hearts ready to sit down and have a chat with our Messiah. Are you sitting down to talk with the Savior each day? Are you following His example and going to be with others to share Him with them? How can you do that today?

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Help us to recognize You as the up close and personal God With Us! Remind us to take time each day to sit and chat with you. Help us to be hospitable to others and share Your love with them this season. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15*

### **Gift of God - 2 Corinthians 9:15 (December 12)**

Today is my daughter's birthday. She turns sixteen today and it has me thinking about when she was born. We decided to name her Jasmine Diane because of its meaning. Jasmine can mean either "Gift of God" or "a sweet fragrance". Diane means "Of the Divine". A sweet fragrance of the Divine. A gift from God Himself. And she is!

Kind, generous, beautiful, graceful, and talented - Jazzy is a gift to our family. However, she is not the first gift God ever gave us. He has given countless gifts - the greatest of which is the Gift of Jesus! Through His sacrifice on the cross, we are restored to right relationship with our Creator.

### **Relationship broken by sin**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*

We are all sinners who need a Savior to enter the presence of the Holy God.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God Romans 3:23*

### **But God...**

But God loves us so much that He sent us the best Gift of all! He sent us Jesus to save us. We can accept His Gift joyfully and share it with others this season.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17*

### **Candy Canes**

Candy canes are Christmas candy because of this meaning! We are dirty with sin. Jesus shed his red blood to pay for our sin. When we accept His gift, our spirits are cleaned and made as white as snow. Red and white intertwined in the shape of a shepherd staff for the "Good Shepherd."

### **Action Step:**

Every time you see a candy cane, thank God for His indescribable gift! Maybe get a few candy canes and give them out while sharing the best Gift of all with others.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Thank You for Your indescribable Gift of Jesus! Help me to keep it in mind everyday this season and share it with those around me. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."  
Matthew 19:26*

### **Nothing is Impossible - Matthew 19:26 (December 13)**

When the angel appears to Mary to tell her what will happen to her, he also informs Mary that her cousin Elizabeth who was old and barren is pregnant. The angel uses this as proof that God can do the impossible to help Mary believe the incredible news that she who has never been intimate with a man will have a son.

*And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:35-38*

### **Impossible is transformed into possible**

I chose a gnome all tangled up in Christmas lights for this devotional, because it is a symbol of one of the most impossible tasks associated with Christmas at our house. When we are putting up decorations, there is invariably a strand or two of lights that have issues. They won't light because one light is out within the strand. It is so hard to find the one light to replace so the strand will light up.

This year, when we put up our Christmas tree, we tested a strand and it worked. Then, we put it on the tree and half of it went out. My husband reached out and touched one light and all of them came back on. On the first try, he found the one light that needed to be replaced. Impossible - but possible!

### **Lights to remind us**

This Christmas, when we gaze at the Christmas lights on trees and houses, in garland and wreaths, let's remember that God can do the impossible in our lives. Jesus said so...

*But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."  
Matthew 19:26*

### **Action Step:**

Do you have a need in your life that seems impossible? Talk to God, the One who can do the impossible, and ask for His help. Write down your prayer with the date and tuck it near a Christmas light in your Christmas tree to remind you that God can accomplish what is impossible for us. When he answers, write the answer on the paper - it could even be a new tradition to tuck prayers and answered prayers into our Christmas trees each year!

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, expand our vision to see where You are doing the impossible in our lives. Help us to believe not in the magic of Santa, but in the ability of our Creator God to do what we cannot. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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

### **Bells of Peace - John 16:33 (December 14)**

I am a singer and worship leader. I have always loved Christmas carols, and one of my favorites is "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." Throughout the song, a quote from the angels who announced the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds in the Christmas story is repeated again and again.

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14 (KJV)*

### **Prince of Peace**

Peace on earth, goodwill toward men. The ancient prophets also spoke of One who would bring peace. In fact, He would be the Prince of Peace.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*

### **Singing in the midst of tragedy**

The lyrics of "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" were written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow during a time of great loss, fear, and chaos in his life. His country, engaged in Civil War, was in turmoil with rampant hate and division. His beloved wife had died in a fire. His oldest son had just been severely wounded in battle and was on the edge of life and death. He heard the bells ringing and penned the beautiful words that remind us that peace cannot be found in the things of this world. It can only be found in our God that is not sleeping. Only in our Savior who has conquered death.

### **I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day**

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
and wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”

### **Jesus offers peace**

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

Jesus Himself said that we cannot find peace in the world, but only in Him.

### **Action Step:**

Take a look at your life today and see where you have been trying to find peace. Does the idea of a full bank account feel like it would bring peace? Are you placing the burden of providing your peace on your spouse, family member, or a friend? Is the job you have or want to have where you are seeking peace? Let's take a moment to put our hope in the only One who can bring us the peace we crave. While the world around us is in turmoil, we can live in His peace. When our circumstances are a constant struggle, we can rest in His peace.

In Philippians 4, Paul writes that the peace of God transcends our understanding. Others may not understand the peace we have in the midst of loss and trial, but it is ours through Jesus. Let's tap into that peace today.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Open our spiritual eyes to see where we have misplaced our trust and hope for peace. Help us to seek peace in You. Let the bells we see in decorations and hear during this season remind us that Jesus is our Prince of Peace in a chaotic world. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace 1 Peter 4:10*

### **Given a Gift - 1 Peter 4:10 (December 15)**

What gift would you most like to have for Christmas? Did something pop into your head that you put on your Christmas list for a family member? Are you writing a letter to send to the North Pole? We have the best Gift-Giver imaginable, but many of us devote little thought to the gifts God entrusts to us.

We have already had a devotional about God's amazing Gift of His Son, but God has given us other gifts too. Many of the gifts He gives us are given to us for us to use to bless others. We are merely stewards of them. How well are you stewarding your gifts?

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace 1 Peter 4:10*

### **Never disqualified**

Some of us are not good stewards of God's gift to us because we think we have disqualified ourselves. We think we are too old or too fragile or too damaged by circumstances to be of any use anymore. Some of us think we are too young. However, God says that we are never too young, too old, or too broken - never disqualified.

*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29*

### **A gift to open**

This season, we are all children of the Most High King sitting by the Christmas tree of life with a gift to open and use.

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 1 Corinthians 12:4-5*

God has given each of us different gifts. Gifts like teaching, hospitality, service, singing, healing, discernment, wisdom, writing, and more. We have hands that can clean, bandage, cook, create. We have mouths that can speak words of encouragement and hope. We have ears that can listen empathetically. We have arms to hold children and hug those who are hurting...and so many, many more gifts.

### **Action Step:**

How have you been hoarding your gift instead of using it for God's glory and the benefit of others? Have you disqualified yourself when God has not? How can you step out in your gift (even in a small way) today? Go step into the gift of God.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Reveal to us the gifts that You have given us to use for You. Show us how we can step into those gifts today and squander them no longer. Empower us to bless others and glorify You. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:1-4*

### **Everlasting Life - 1 John 1:1-4 (December 16)**

Eternal life was made manifest to us in the person of Jesus. Manifest means easily observable using the senses - obvious. God sent His Son to us as a living breathing manifestation of eternal life and God's incalculable love.

One of the reminders we have during December of this gift of everlasting life is the Christmas tree. Christmas trees are evergreen plants. They stay lovely and green, alive and fragrant throughout the cold winter. They are a sign and symbol to us of the evergreen love of God and the eternal life we have through Jesus.

### **Trees have had meaning from the very beginning of time.**

*And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9*

Our Christmas trees also remind us that because of Adam and Eve's disobedience regarding a tree we are separated from God's presence. Through the sacrifice of Jesus being nailed to a different tree, we are restored to right relationship with our Creator.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

### **A job to do**

We have a job to do. We are to keep ourselves in the love of God. We are to build ourselves up in faith, encouraging our spirits in the Lord, praying in the Holy Spirit. It is the mercy of Jesus that leads to eternal life. When we have found it, we are to share it with others, rescuing them back to the Father.

*But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Jude 1:20-23*

### **Action Step:**

Choose a scripture to use to encourage yourself when you are down and share it in the comments on Facebook or YouTube. Whenever you see a Christmas tree, say your Bible verse to yourself.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, lead us to the perfect scripture to build up our faith and encourage our spirits. Use the Christmas trees all around us to remind us to use Your Word in this way. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high Hebrews 1:3*

### **The Beauty of Jesus - Hebrews 1:3 (December 17)**

We fill our homes with beautiful decorations and ornaments that are delicate and stunning. The beauty all around us during the Christmas season can even be a little overwhelming. However, all that beauty cannot even compare to the beauty of Jesus.

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high Hebrews 1:3*

### **Radiant Imprint**

Jesus is holding the universe up with His Words. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus is radiant. He is the image and embodiment of the Creator God. The nature of the all-powerful, all-knowing, infinitely loving, and forgiving, is imprinted on Jesus. All the glory and beauty of God is given an image in the person of Jesus.

### **Emmanuel**

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. Revelation 21:3*

God dwelling with us - Emmanuel - in the person of Jesus. What a beautiful truth! What a beautiful Savior and King!

### **Behold Him**

*Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty;  
they will see a land that stretches afar. Isaiah 33:17*

This advent season, let's be sure to behold His beauty rather than just the beautiful decorations and ornaments in our homes and communities.

### **Action Step:**

As we see decorations, lights, and lovely ornaments, let them trigger a reminder to contemplate the beauty of Jesus, the very radiance and glory of God, coming to dwell with us and be among us. What are some aspects of the beauty of Jesus that you want to remember this season?

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Your Son is so beautiful and yet He came to dwell in our mess. Thank you for the beauty of Jesus this season. Help us not to focus on only the beautiful ornaments around us, but to focus on Jesus' beauty. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Samuel 7:12-13*

### **King of Kings - 2 Samuel 7:12-13 (December 18)**

In 2 Samuel 7, King David is given a prophecy about his son Solomon and the long future.

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Samuel 7:12-13*

### **Genealogy**

In the first chapter of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus proves he is a descendant of David and Solomon. His throne is established forever.

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham...and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. Matthew 1:1, 6-7, 16*

### **King of Kings**

Even in the end, the last book of the Bible which is filled with prophecies of the far-reaching future, Jesus is confirmed as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our King Jesus is mighty and all-powerful. He holds the future in His hands. He is enthroned over all.

*He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 19:13-16*

### **Action Step:**

It is our job to submit to His Kingship over us. However, I try to keep control over areas of my life. What areas do we need to surrender to Him? Let's take a moment today to bow the knees of our hearts to our King of kings.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, We acknowledge that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Help us to submit to that kingship in every area of our lives. Show us what we are keeping back from the authority of Jesus. Help us to surrender. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*They feast on the abundance of your house,  
and you give them drink from the river of your delights. Psalm 36:8*

### **Taste and See - Psalm 36:8 (December 19)**

Do you have traditional special goodies that you make during the holidays each year? Some of our family traditions include peanut butter crunchies, homemade fudge, and toffee candy. When we start baking those treats, it really feels like Christmas.

### **Feast on the good things of God**

We taste and see that it is Christmas time. The Bible tells us that God has delights for us to feast on. We are to taste and see His goodness, delighting ourselves in Him!

*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!  
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Psalm 34:8*

### **The sweet Word of God**

Did you know that the word “meditate” actually indicates an action like a cow chewing its cud. Tasting, chewing on, and coming back over and over again to an idea or thought. We are to meditate on the Word of God - it is so sweet!

*How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:103*

### **Feed ourselves on God’s goodness**

This season, let’s not only feed on the sweet treats of the holidays, but also feast on the abundance from the house of God, feed ourselves with the Word of God, and taste the Lord’s goodness in our lives.

### **Action Step:**

Grab your Bible and your favorite Christmas sweet treat. As you savor the special holiday food, meditate on a scripture about God’s goodness. Here are a few to get you started:

*Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34*

*No one is good but One, that is, God. Mark 10:18*

*Good and upright is the Lord. Psalm 25:8*

*I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works. Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, and I will declare Your greatness. They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. Psalm 145:5-7*

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, Thank You for Your incredible goodness! Help us to savor Your Word this Christmas and feast on the abundance of Your house. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love Ephesians 3:17*

### **Making Room - Ephesians 3:17 (December 20)**

We have talked quite a bit about God coming as Emmanuel to dwell with us. However, we are to be a dwelling place for Christ. Our hearts are a home for the Savior.

### **No Vacancy?**

When Jesus was born, there was no vacancy, no room in the inn. His parents were placed in a leftover space, the place where the animals were kept. Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, was born into the mess and mayhem with no reserved space.

*And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:6-7*

### **The temple of the Holy Spirit**

In our lives today, will we make room in our hearts and lives for the Savior? The Bible even calls us the Temple of God - His Spirit dwells in us.

*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16*

### **Putting down roots**

When we grow up and get a job and buy a house, there is a phrase that is often used. People say we are “putting down roots.” When we make room in ourselves as a home for Jesus, we put down roots into the love of God. Through faith in the Savior, our hearts become a dwelling place for Jesus.

*So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love Ephesians 3:17*

### **Action Step:**

Sometimes we fill our lives up with too much to make room for our Savior. Take time today to see if others things are taking up His reserved space and create vacancy for Jesus once again.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Help us to make room for Jesus in our daily lives. Show us where we need to create some space for the Savior. Let Your Spirit take up residence in our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

### **A Threefold Cord - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (December 21)**

Yesterday was my parents' anniversary. They have been married for 60 years! Their devotion to one another and to God is an inspiration.

*And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:5-9*

### **Jesus at the center**

The foundation of my parents' marriage has always been a commitment first to God and second to each other. They keep Jesus at the center of their marriage and it has withstood trouble, tragedy, struggle, illness, and more.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24*

### **A Gift**

The stresses of the Christmas season can put a strain on a marriage. However, we can choose to look at our spouse as an amazing gift from God.

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing  
and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 19:14*

### **Action Step:**

If we are married, we need to remind ourselves that no matter the stresses that cause us to be frustrated or irritated by our spouse, they are a gift entrusted to us by God. If you are not married, God says that Jesus is the bridegroom and His church is the bride. We can see Jesus as the Gift that He is.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Help us remember that we are stronger together than apart. Help us to put Jesus at the center of our marriages. Give us Your perspective of our spouses this season. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Hebrews 13:15*

### **Worship Him - Hebrews 13:15 (December 22)**

During the Christmas story, we see the shepherds hearing the news of Jesus' birth and coming to worship Him. They kneel before the Baby Messiah and acknowledge His Name above all names. We read of the wisemen traveling from far away on the strength of ancient prophecies to worship the Newborn King.

### **Eternal worship**

In Heaven, there is a constant song of worship continuing eternally.

*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,*

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" Revelation 5:13*

### **In the beginning**

From the beginning of everything, Jesus, the Word of God, was there. He came to earth to dwell with us and save us.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

### **Like the Shepherds and Wisemen**

Like the shepherds and wisemen, we need to bow our hearts in worship before Jesus. We delight in the goodness of God's presence. We are brought near to God to worship Him alone.

*When iniquities prevail against me,  
you atone for our transgressions.*

*Blessed is the one you choose and bring near,  
to dwell in your courts!*

*We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
the holiness of your temple! Psalm 63:3-4*

### **Action Step:**

Take a few moments for worship today. Turn on some worship music and bow your heart in worship of the Lord.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, We worship You today and always. We bow before Jesus the King and exalt His Name above all others. Draw our hearts close to You this Christmas. In Jesus' name, amen.*

*Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4*

### **The Legend of the Poinsettia - Luke 21:1-4 (December 23)**

The poinsettia is associated with Christmas because of a legend that originated in Mexico. One Christmas Eve, a small, poor girl named Pepita wanted to give a gift to the Baby Jesus. Her cousin told her that "even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves Him, will make Jesus happy."

Walking to the Christmas Eve services at her small church, Pepita picked some weeds by the side of the road and carried them to the nativity scene at the altar. When she placed them before the creche, the weeds were miraculously transformed into beautiful, bright red flowers. These poinsettias became known as "Flores de Noche Buena" ("Flowers of the Holy Night").

### **Gifts for Jesus**

Throughout the ages, many people have brought gifts to Jesus. The woman who found Him at Simon the leper's house and emptied her alabaster box of expensive perfume on Him.

*And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. Mark 14:3*

### **Gift-Givers**

The widow who brought two small coins, everything she had. The little drummer boy from the Christmas carol who brought his song to the Savior. The first gift-givers to Jesus of which we have record are the wisemen who followed the prophesied star to Jesus.

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

*Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child,*

*and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Matthew 2:1-12*

### **Very specific gifts**

The wisemen brought very specific gifts to the Christ Child. We have the opportunity to do the same. We all bring our hearts to Him to be His dwelling place. We can also bring the gifts He has given us back to Him and ask Him to use them for His glory. Everything we have is a gift from God. Anything we bring to Him was given to us by Him.

### **Action Step:**

What gifts do you need to dedicate to God’s use and bring back as a gift to Him today? Is there an offering you can give in faith to the work of God at Christmas time? What specific gift can you bring the Savior today? Just like young Pepita, the smallest gift can be used miraculously by God!

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, Open our eyes to see the gifts we can bring to You in faith today. Help us to let go of our grip of control over all that You have given us and give it back to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

*In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*

*He will raise a signal for the nations  
and will assemble the banished of Israel,  
and gather the dispersed of Judah  
from the four corners of the earth. Isaiah 11:10, 12*

### **Gathered in Joy - Isaiah 11:10,12 (December 24)**

Jesus is a gatherer of the dispersed. We were spread apart and separated from God in His holiness and the people who are His Church. Through His gift of salvation, Jesus gathers the dispersed together in joy.

*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:11*

### **A Cheering Section in Heaven**

In fact, we even have a joyous cheering section in heaven. The Christians who have gone before us witness our race of faith. They celebrate with the angels as even one sinner repents and is brought into the family of God.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Hebrews 12:1-3*

### **The Words of Jesus Bring Joy**

This thought alone should encourage us and help us to keep going when we feel faint-hearted or weary. However, Jesus Himself said that He came so that His joy could be fulfilled in us. We have access to the joy of Jesus in our daily, on-earth lives.

*But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. John 17:13*

### **Action Step:**

We need to tap into the joy of Jesus this Christmas. Let's decide today to choose to gather with other believers, even if it is online or on the phone. Let's decide to choose walking in the joy of Jesus today.

### **Prayer:**

Dear God, Help us to feel and see Your joy in our everyday lives. Give us the courage to keep going when we are discouraged. Gather us together in Your name and bring us joy. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Merry Christmas! - Luke 2 (December 25)**

We have a tradition in our family. On Christmas Eve, we go to candlelight service at our church (Well, we lead worship for it too!) and then come home to snack with family, bake a batch of chocolate chip cookies for "Santa and Mrs. Claus" to eat while setting out the presents, and open one gift (usually Christmas pajamas).

When we wake up on Christmas morning, we turn a yule log with music on the television and pop open a can of cinnamon rolls for the oven. We eat breakfast together. Then, before we open any gifts, we read the Christmas story from Luke 2.

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

*8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*14 "Glory to God in the highest,*

*and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

*15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2:1-20*

I pray that your family centers Christmas day around the Savior this year and that you have a very merry holy day!

*Blessings,  
Amanda*