First United Methodist Church

West Point, Georgia



ADVENT DEVOTIONS 2026

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday, November 30, 2026

Isaiah 64:8-9 NIV

8 Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9 Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

"You are our Father!" God, as a caring and loving parent, has held back judgment and not allowed our sins to overtake us, remaining faithful to and for those who will wait for God. So we can know that God would not respond to the people's plea with a CONSUMING presence that leaves us to our own devices but would send a LOVING presence to be our Emmanuel, God with us. When we least expect it, Jesus shows up and changes everything, including us. It happened on the day of his birth and we should expect the miraculous to happen in this season of Advent. Don't we long for God to work a miracle in our lives, whether we feel far away or separated from God, anxious and rundown about current events, or just caught up in the ordinary and routine tasks of life? We need to know that Jesus and his birth is good news for poor shepherds and angels, a young mother and some wise men, even us today. Jesus is good news to anyone who seeks to live life differently through a transformation of the heart. May we know this good news for ourselves this Advent season!

Tuesday, December 1, 2026

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 NLT

1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock. O God, enthroned above the cherubim, display your radiant glory 2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Show us your mighty power. Come to rescue us! 3 Turn us again to yourself, O God. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved. 4 O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, how long will you be angry with our prayers? 5 You have fed us with sorrow and made us drink tears by the bucketful. 6 You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations. Our enemies treat us as a joke. 7 Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

17 Strengthen the man you love, the son of your choice. 18 Then we will never abandon you again. Revive us so we can call on your name once more. 19 Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

Here we find reassuring words from the psalmist about God's salvation for us, restoring us to who we were meant to be as God's people. Even in troubled times, the psalmist asks God to hold back wrath and instead send saving grace. Have you ever prayed these words (or similar ones) during a tough time in your life? What did you discover about God?

Wednesday, December 2, 2026

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 NLT

3 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 4 I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. 5 Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. 6 This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. 7 Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. 9 God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul writes to the church at Corinth and gives thanks for the gifts given them by God so that they might work and serve in the Kingdom as they wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all of this, Christ is the one who will strengthen us until the end because God is faithful to the end. As comforting as these words were for the Corinthian church, they should be comforting to us as well. This is something we simply do for a day or during a season. This is to become a lifestyle of gratitude toward God and service for God in fellowship with Christ. How are you using the gifts given you by God to build up the Church and serve the Kingdom?

Thursday, December 3, 2026

Romans 13:11-14 NLT

11 This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. 13 Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Paul tells us to realize that time is running out and to wake up. Jesus Christ will return and our salvation will be fully realized for our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. As we prepare for Christmas during this Advent season, Paul calls us to set aside the dark parts of our lives and put on the light of Christ in their place. While it has been said that we see the sins of others easier than our own, we'll be held accountable, too. Reflect on your own life experiences and ask for God's continued guidance in the future.

Friday, December 4, 2026

Mark 13:24-37 NLT

24 “At that time, after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no
light, 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then
everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he
will send out his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest
ends of the earth and heaven. 28 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud
and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you
see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door. 30
I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take
place. 31 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. 32 “However, no
one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or
the Son himself. Only the Father knows. 33 And since you don’t know when that time will come,
be on guard! Stay alert! 34 “The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a
man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the
work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. 35 You, too, must keep
watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at
midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. 36 Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives
without warning. 37 I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!”

As our Advent wreath reading stated this past Sunday, “We wait as people surprised again and again by God who shakes us out of our complacency and wakes us up to the work of the kingdom all around us…May we stay awake to God’s activity in the world as we wait in expectation that even now God is with us, working to restore us to the fullness of life with God and one another.” Advent is a great time to consider how fruitful we are with the gifts we’ve been given. Are we being fruitful, serving in the Kingdom of God? We all have gifts or talents that we are to use in building up the body of Christ and our world. If you’re not using those gifts, ask God for help and guidance on what you should be doing.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday, December 7, 2026

Psalm 85:1-13 NLT

1 LORD, you poured out blessings on your land! You restored the fortunes of Israel. 2 You forgave the guilt of your people— yes, you covered all their sins. 3 You held back your fury. You kept back your blazing anger. 4 Now restore us again, O God of our salvation. Put aside your anger against us once more. 5 Will you be angry with us always? Will you prolong your wrath to all generations? 6 Won't you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you? 7 Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. 8 I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying, for he speaks peace to his faithful people. But let them not return to their foolish ways. 9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, so our land will be filled with his glory. 10 Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed! 11 Truth springs up from the earth, and righteousness smiles down from heaven. 12 Yes, the LORD pours down his blessings. Our land will yield its bountiful harvest. 13 Righteousness goes as a herald before him, preparing the way for his steps.

We receive God's loving forgiveness and restoration as deeply committed Jesus followers. "Surely his salvation is near" (v 9) and that salvation can be known by others when the peace of God and characteristics of Jesus are seen amongst God's people. How is God making these things known through you?

Tuesday, December 8, 2026

Isaiah 40:1-11 NLT

1 "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. 2 "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the LORD has punished her twice over for all her sins." 3 Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! 4 Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places. 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!" 6 A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field. 7 The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the LORD. And so it is with people. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever." 9 O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountaintops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!" 10 Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

These words of Isaiah were written in a time when many of the people of Judah had been taken as captives into exile in Babylon, feeling crushed and without hope. There are many moments in our lives when we need comfort and yearn for help to come. In Isaiah's words, the suffering people who looked for the long-awaited Messiah were given a hope-filled image of God. It expresses the belief that no matter what happens to us, God will be there to comfort and support us. Christmas can be a pivotal time for many when we are in need of that same reassurance and comfort in our lives. Perhaps we are grieving the loss of a loved one, struggling with a diagnosis or illness, dealing with broken relationships, or the experience of job loss, wondering how we will make it through. How does the miracle of Christmas in Jesus as our Messiah bring new hope to you?

Wednesday, December 9, 2026

Zechariah 9:9–12 NLT

9 Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt. 10 I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. 11 Because of the covenant I made with you, sealed with blood, I will free your prisoners from death in a waterless dungeon. 12 Come back to the place of safety, all you prisoners who still have hope! I promise this very day that I will repay two blessings for each of your troubles.

The gospels tell us how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in his triumphal entry but they also spoke to the prophet's own times as they waited for this great king from God to come to them as well. The humble peacefulness of Jesus, God's promised Messiah, was demonstrated to the world as he came to fulfill his mission and become the king who would reign over all the world. How is your life an example of this type of peaceful humility toward others?

Thursday, December 10, 2026

2 Peter 3:8-15a NLT

8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. 11 Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, 12 looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he

will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. [13] *But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.* [14] *And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.* [15] *And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.*

It seems that we always want to use a timeline or calendar of our choosing to determine if people or things are early or late. Peter does a good job of saying what a waste of time that is when it comes to God! It's not about God being early or late according to our standards but about God's compassion and mercy showing through all things in God's good timing. We're all about instant access online or grabbing food in a drive-thru because it's more convenient for us. What might happen during this Advent season if we took a moment to slow down and enjoy God's works in and around our lives? The earthly things we grow so fond of will pass away at some point so we take an opportunity to focus on those things that will matter for eternity. Where has your focus been lately?

Friday, December 11, 2026

Mark 1:1-8 NLT

[1] *This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began* [2] *just as the prophet Isaiah had written: "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way.* [3] *He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!' "* [4] *This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.* [5] *All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.* [6] *His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.* [7] *John announced: "Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals.* [8] *I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"*

Throughout human history we can see evidence of messengers being sent out before a king's arrival to make the appropriate preparations. John the Baptizer was such a messenger, bringing a message of preparing for the coming king from God, the promised Messiah. He preached a message of waiting for Jesus but to also act now by repenting or turning back to God. He also brought baptism as a sign and means of this life change which could lead to a person being forgiven their sins by God. This was disturbing to some because this act of baptism would be for Jews and Gentiles alike who were preparing for the one greater than John to come. John faithfully prepared the way for Jesus and his ministry, the one who would change everything with the love of God. How are you waiting and preparing for the Messiah's arrival this year?

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday, December 14, 2026

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 NLT

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good
news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives
will be released and prisoners will be freed. 2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the
time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. 3
To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead
of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great
oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory. 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins,
repairing cities destroyed long ago. They will revive them, though they have been deserted for
many generations.

8 "For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my
people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 Their descendants
will be recognized and honored among the nations. Everyone will realize that they are a people
the LORD has blessed." 10 I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed
me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a
bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels. 11 The Sovereign LORD will
show his justice to the nations of the world. Everyone will praise him! His righteousness will be
like a garden in early spring, with plants springing up everywhere.

Spiritually speaking, Isaiah speaks of God decorating the lives of his people much like we hang decorations in our homes, reminders of God's hope and a light from Heaven shining into the darkness of the world. The beauty of a garland in place of ashes and sadness; oil and blessing in place of mourning; a mantle of praise placed on one's shoulders in place of dampened hopes. Isaiah was preparing the people for the one who would come and make all these things possible so they waited, having to choose whether they would live by a faith-filled hope in God or sadness and despair instead. We decorate for the season, gather for worship, pray, read Scripture, and do things that help us remember God's faithfulness toward us. May we all know a confident hope in God through Jesus the Christ, the light which shines in the darkness, the miracle of salvation made possible for us by the babe born in Bethlehem who we celebrate at Christmas.

Tuesday, December 15, 2026

Psalm 126:1-6 NLT

1 When the LORD brought back his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! 2 We were filled
with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, "What amazing things the LORD
has done for them." 3 Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us! What joy! 4 Restore our
fortunes, LORD, as streams renew the desert. 5 Those who plant in tears will harvest with

shouts of joy. [6] They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

God's being with us, even in the hard times of our lives, is a key theme in this psalm. Whether it be the Exodus from Egypt, the return of the exiles from Babylon, or Jesus' birth and Resurrection, our redemption and salvation comes from God. Sometimes we tend to focus only on the negative of a situation and miss the parts where we can and should be grateful to our God who can restore things and bless us in the end. As verse 5 says, *Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy.* How have you known the amazing works of God in your life, especially when you think of the work of Christ in the events of your life?

Wednesday, December 16, 2026

Mark 16:9-18 NLT

[9] After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. [10] She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. [11] But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her. [12] Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. [13] They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them. [14] Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead. [15] And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. [16] Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. [17] These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. [18] They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."

This passage is a difficult read when it comes to the passages on belief in Jesus we find in the New Testament. The irony comes as these disciples, the very ones who had heard his teachings and were given the commission to "go into all the world," are here themselves depicted as having refused to believe twice! This paradox found within the story might give us pause when read and seen only from a judgmental perspective. Instead of judgment, maybe we should see the seriousness by which belief is said to make a difference in a person's life by grace (verses 17-18). Belief is the doorway through which everything about how we live our lives can change. What difference is a belief in Jesus really making in your life?

Thursday, December 17, 2026

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 NLT

16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's
will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 19 Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. 20 Do not scoff at
prophecies, 21 but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. 22 Stay away from every
kind of evil. 23 Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole
spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 24 God will
make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

As followers of Jesus, we have a reason to be joyful for both the salvation we have and for the future hope of our continued growth in him. When are we to do this? Paul says always, never stopping, in all circumstances. While life makes it impossible to pray and give thanks without interruption, it can be done regularly and often along life's journey and is part of changing our lives. God is faithful and will indeed transform us but we must let God have us, inviting him into our hearts, minds, and lives. We must allow God to reign in these places as we take part in disciplines such as daily devotions, weekly worship, generous giving, serving humbly, and meeting in small groups. In what ways are you actively engaged in this ongoing spiritual growth process?

Friday, December 18, 2026

John 1:6-8, 19-28 NLT

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, 7 to tell about the light so that everyone might believe
because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell
about the light.

19 This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from
Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" 20 He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."
21 "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No," he replied. "Are you the
Prophet we are expecting?" "No." 22 "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who
sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of the prophet
Isaiah: "I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!' " 24
Then the Pharisees who had been sent 25 asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the
Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?" 26 John told them, "I baptize with water, but right
here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. 27 Though his ministry follows mine, I'm
not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal." 28 This encounter took
place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

We might say that we are like John the Baptist, not being the light of heaven ourselves but showing the way to the true light of heaven. We become a light to the world as followers of Jesus, continuing to point the way to Him. We are challenged to share the life and the light of Jesus with others, offering others a tangible and ongoing expression of God's love, practicing

the Kingdom ways so that others may become Jesus followers, too. For God has already 'done' what is needed for one's salvation and all that's required is to believe. Faith, not what we do, brings salvation and it's available for all who will believe. But how will they know? Messengers must be sent and the message must be shared so that people have the opportunity to hear that message and respond in faith and belief. Our God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus. How are you sharing the message of Jesus with others today?

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday, December 21, 2026

Luke 1:26-38 NLT

[26] In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, [27] to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. [28] Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" [29] Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. [30] "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! [31] You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. [32] He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. [33] And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" [34] Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." [35] The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. [36] What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. [37] For the word of God will never fail." [38] Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

The angel Gabriel comes to the small, and sometimes looked down upon, town of Nazareth to deliver a great message to a young woman, probably no older than fourteen, that she never expected to hear. She was favored by God but this didn't mean riches and wealth. The favor of God would bring many challenges (beginning with trying to explain her pregnancy to Joseph and her parents) but also blessings along the way. When God calls you to serve in some way, how might your response be influenced by Mary's story?

Tuesday, December 22, 2026

2 Samuel 7:4-16 NLT

[4] But that same night the LORD said to Nathan, [5] "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD has declared: Are you the one to build a house for me to live in? [6] I have never lived in a house, from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until this very day. I have always moved from one place to another with a tent and a Tabernacle as my dwelling. [7] Yet no matter where I have gone with the Israelites, I have never once complained to Israel's tribal leaders, the shepherds of my people Israel. I have never asked them, "Why haven't you built me a beautiful cedar house?" ' [8] "Now go and say to my servant David, 'This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies has declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the leader of my people Israel. [9] I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before your eyes. Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! [10] And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel,

planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed. Evil nations won't oppress them as they've done in the past, [11] starting from the time I appointed judges to rule my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. " 'Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! [12] For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong. [13] He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will secure his royal throne forever. [14] I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like any father would do. [15] But my favor will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from your sight. [16] Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.' "

Gabriel told Mary that her son would receive the throne of his ancestor David (Luke 1:32). The meaning of this statement for a devout Jew like Mary would have been great. In David's time, people probably looked to Solomon as this promised king but the promise of David's rule enduring forever may have looked doubtful because of Israel's exile and later coming under Roman rule. However, while humanity tends to look at things from a 'here and now' perspective, God has an eternal perspective in mind, in this case the future hope in God's own Messiah. How are you developing patience and trust in God's promises for you?

Wednesday, December 23, 2026

Luke 1:46-55 NLT

[46] Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. [47] How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! [48] For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. [49] For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. [50] He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. [51] His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. [52] He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. [53] He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. [54] He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. [55] For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Mary's Magnificat (the Latin verb for 'glorifies' or 'praises') was not ordinary "church talk." In verses 52-54, this young girl in a Roman occupied land praised a God who scatters the proud, brings down rulers, cares for the humble, and feeds the hungry. How does Mary's song offer you hope, as well as a challenge, to serve God in new and even humbling ways (whether you feel rich or poor, powerful or powerless) today?

Thursday, December 24, 2026

Luke 2:4-14 KJV

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, good will toward men.

It's Christmas Eve! The trees are trimmed, presents are (mostly!) wrapped, and Santa's on his way! Today and tomorrow will most likely be spent with loved ones and friends, both old and new, in a variety of ways (some new for us due to the events of this year). However, don't let these days only be times of food, fun, and laughter. Make them first and foremost times centered on the love you have been shown by Jesus, God's greatest gift to and for us. Do you know the one who was born in a Bethlehem stable and accompanied by a host of angels to announce his arrival? Use this time as a key part of your adventure in the journey to know and become who Jesus wants you to be!

Friday, December 25, 2026

Today's devotion is simply a creed I discovered years ago (author unknown) that summarizes Jesus' arrival into our world. Merry Christmas!

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town and whose spirit still speaks to people all over the world.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, but who transformed the place by his very presence.

I believe in the one who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: the need of forgiveness for my selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.

I believe in Jesus, the Son of God, born in Bethlehem, for me and for the world. Amen.

THE WEEK AFTER CHRISTMAS

Monday, December 28, 2026

Titus 2:11-14 NLT

11 For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. 12 And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, 13 while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. 14 He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

Jesus came into the world to offer us a way to become the people God wants us to be as his followers. How does this happen? Read the passage again and note how Jesus does the work when we accept the invitation he offers to do a good work in us.

Tuesday, December 29, 2026

Hebrews 1:1-4 NIV

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The author of Hebrews states clearly that God had spoken through the prophets and by dreams, visions, and the messages of angels. Now God has revealed his character and his glory through his Son. Like John 1, we're told that he was with God from the beginning and is now the ruler of all as God's heir. It is through the example of Jesus, his life and his teachings, that we see what God is really like. Just as important is the saving work Jesus would do as our Savior, making it possible for us to enjoy God's promises for us through our belief in him. All of this to say that in Jesus we can begin to see God 'face-to-face'. Is this how we know and follow Jesus in our lives?

Wednesday, December 30, 2026

Galatians 4:4-7 NLT

4 But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into

our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." [7] Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Jesus' promised birth, foretold through God's prophets, is used by the Apostle Paul to make clear the message he preaches to all, Jew and Gentile alike, that we can be adopted as one of God's children. According to Paul, Jesus has bought our freedom to live God's way so we are prompted to both believe and obey. Why would you obey someone you don't believe in? How can you fully believe in someone you aren't willing to obey? As we grow into deeply committed followers of Jesus, our character should become more controlled by love and growing in the true knowledge of God. How are you growing in both believing and obeying Jesus in your life?

Thursday, December 31, 2026

Take a moment and consider John Wesley's words and his *Covenant Prayer* as we head into 2027: "Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants. Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful. Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves. But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ. Let us go to Christ and pray:

WESLEY COVENANT PRAYER
Let me be your servant, under your command.
I will no longer be my own.
I will give up myself to your will in all things.
Lord, make me what you will.
I put myself fully into your hands:
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you;
let me be full, let me be empty;
let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
you are mine, and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."

Let us look toward Jesus as we enter the new year, coming to know his saving grace and grow in its wisdom, resolving to become the kingdom servants we are called to be. How do you see God challenging you to grow and serve in 2027? Remember, *God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.* (1 Peter 4:10 NLT)

Peace and Happy New Year, Pastor Ed