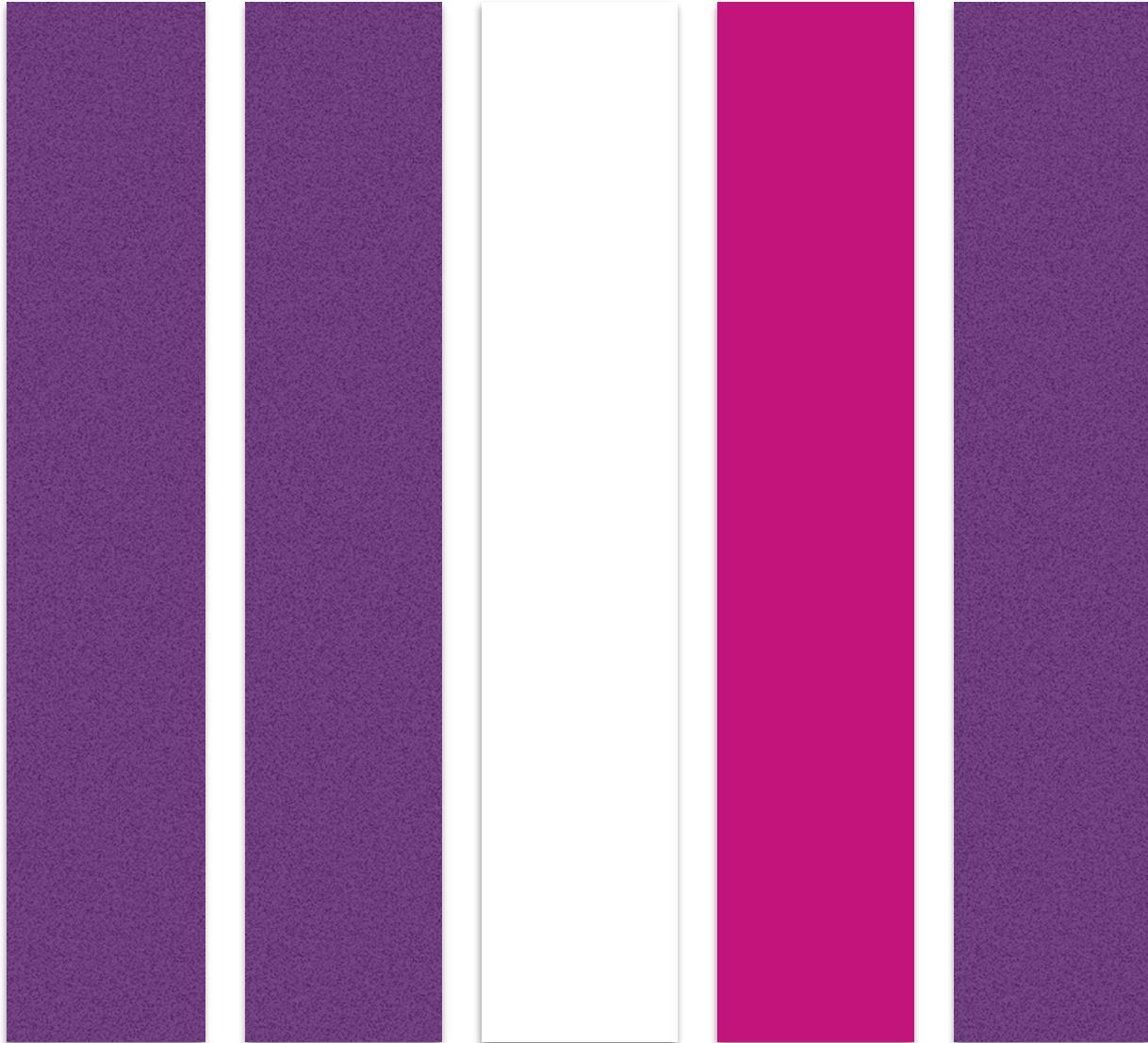


Anticipation

Hope in Jesus during Advent



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Preface

For generations the nation of Israel anticipated the birth of a Savior. There was great mystery and yearning in those who trusted that God would send One to lead them from continual exile and into a permanently peaceful reign. There were many who came and went but none who fulfilled the Law as was prophesied by many.

I was born in the mid-1980s in south Texas to Christian parents. Although I have been taught the truths of Scripture since childhood, anticipation of the Savior has never been a big part of my journey of faith. While many these days have a much different childhood experience, it is difficult to understand what incredible joy the people of Israel experienced when they realized their Savior had finally arrived on the scene. This was the man they had hoped for over the course of many hundreds of years. Jesus is the One they heard prophesies about, the mighty warrior king who would free the captives and establish the throne of the One true God for all eternity. Their longing and anticipation had been satisfied in the person of Jesus. Each year the Christian calendar sets aside the 4 weeks before Christmas to remember those days of anticipation.

How to use this devotional:

Each chapter begins with a short description and a hymn for the week. This song is designed to bring more fullness to your study as you see how great songwriters of the church have gone through the same journey as you. Feel free to lookup the hymn and listen to it each morning before you begin with prayer, worshiping through song before you worship in the Word. This 4 week devotional (5 days per week) is designed to guide you to search the Scriptures for insight into Israel's anticipation in an attempt to catch a glimpse of what those early converts knew very well: The Savior had come!



Interact with the community on social media by using: **#AnticipateJesus**

Enjoy the anticipation.

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Week 1: Jesus is Hope in the OT

Israel hopes in a Savior

Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

When Adam and Eve heard this curse, spoken to the Devil by God, the anticipation of the Messiah was birthed. Although they had been deceived by the Devil and were deserving of the full wrath of God, there was hope. One would come from their offspring who would crush the Serpent beneath His feet. More on that in Week 2. For now, as we begin to delve into the anticipation of the Savior of God’s people, we recognize that this anticipation is of old.

The hope of a Savior began with the fall of man.

Hymn for the week: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee

Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring

By Thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

DAY ONE - WE HAVE SINNED. JESUS IS OUR SACRIFICE.

Opening Prayer

God, your name is great and greatly to be praised! As I begin celebrating this season of Advent give me hope in Jesus. Give me understanding as I seek you today.

Scripture: Genesis 3:21

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

There was a time when I was in my early twenties and dating my soon-to-be wife, Lindsey, that I was terrified of her wrath. I had cheated on her and had been hiding the truth for quite some time. I was afraid she would say, “I’ve had enough, it’s over,” and worse, that she would hate me for it. Fueled by this fear, I hid it from her and lived in secrecy, telling lie after dirty lie. Eventually I could not do it anymore - I confessed one night outside my house and told her every detail. Something amazing happened that night; I realized, for the first time, that this was the girl I would one day marry. Was she confused and devastated? Yes. Did she doubt my love for her? Most definitely. Despite her confusion and heartbreak, with tears streaming down her face, she said something I will never forget, “I can’t explain it but I love you more now than I did before you told me.”

Adam and Eve had it great! They walked with God in the garden in the stillness of the morning. They enjoyed an intimacy with Him that you and I have never realized. Then they cheated. The Devil told them that all they had was not enough, that there was a way for them to enjoy the privileges of being God instead of just enjoying being *with* God. When they cheated they did what we do, hide. They tried to cover their iniquity with the leaves of a fig tree, but that was not enough. God sought them out and told them the consequences of their actions.¹ Then He did something they would never forget. He killed one of His creations and clothed them with the skin of that animal.

Do I deserve Lindsey’s love? No. Are there lasting consequences in our relationship because of my sinful actions? Yes. But you see, Lindsey’s selfless love in that moment of despair gave me hope that despite my failures I could enjoy a reconciled life with her. She revealed something strikingly beautiful about her character, grace. I did not deserve to be loved by her at all, yet she loved me even more.

Just before the Garden of Eden was sealed, God sacrificed an animal to cover the shame of Adam and Eve, showing grace when they deserved death. Why did God sacrifice an animal He loved and created to cover the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve? It was to give them hope. Hope that, although they had fallen away from their once flawless relationship with Him, they would one day enjoy full reconciliation with their Father. A few thousand years later in

¹ [Gen. 4:16-20](#)

Bethlehem, Jesus was born to reconcile all mankind to the Father. Jesus was hope for Adam and Eve and Jesus is hope for you and me.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you for covering the sin of Adam and Eve. Thank you for sending your only Son to be our covering. We confess that we have sinned and cheated your great name. Jesus is our only hope for reconciliation with You. Teach us to hope in Jesus.

DAY TWO - THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

Opening Prayer

Lord, I praise your name, You are holy and worthy. Teach me through your word today.

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3

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."

From the Garden of Eden to the tower of Babel there was one nation, the "children of man."² When this nation became too great, the LORD came down and separated it into many nations which spread across the face of the earth. God had promised Eve that her son would conquer Satan, but now, with so many nations, from where would the One to save mankind come? Enter Abram and Sarai.³

When God decided the time was right to reveal His plan to save the world through Abraham's offspring, Abraham was 75 years old... with no sons and no daughters. He and his wife, Sarah, grew so old without a child that she decided to take things into her own hands and give one of her female servants to her husband to help speed things along. Of course, God had things under control and in His miraculous fashion gave them a son, Isaac, even after Sarah was well passed child bearing age.

In the passage above we see the beginning of the nation Israel. More than that we see a further clarification of the promise God gave to Adam and Eve. God will bless the earth and all who dwell in it. After Babel, the new nations were not only spread out but without the blessing of the LORD. They were hopeless and wandering. How would God bring it all back together? It is here that God begins to reveal the answer to that question. It will be through a nation, a great nation, that will be started by a miraculous birth to an elderly couple who impatiently took matters into their own hands. A family that spent their days wandering the region lying to kings and scoffing at the promise of God.

Abraham was told to hope in God, to have faith that He had things under control. Abraham had to trust that even though nothing he could see made sense, the LORD was sovereign and would provide a son and "establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him."⁴ Abraham had hope that a son would be born and he was. This covenant that God made with Abraham and his offspring was not exclusive. The blessing was not only for this new nation alone but, as shown in the close of verse 3, "in you all of the families shall be

² [Gen. 11:5-6](#)

³ They become 'Abraham' & 'Sarah' when God promises them a son

⁴ [Gen. 17:19](#)

blessed.” From the beginning, this covenant was not only for Israel (the nation of Abraham’s offspring) but extended to the Gentiles as well. We will discuss this more in week 3.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you for your sovereignty. Thank you for blessing the world through the nation of Abraham and Sarah’s son. Teach me to hope in Jesus like they did.

DAY THREE - THE PROMISE TO DAVID

Opening Prayer

Father, I give you glory and honor. Thank you for establishing your kingdom through Jesus. I pray your kingdom come, your will be done here on earth just as it is in Heaven.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:12-13

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.

The LORD revealed to David through the prophet Nathan that He would establish his kingdom forever through David's offspring.⁵ This covenant did not only reassure God's people that He would reign forever but also gave them new insight into how he would bring about that reign.

Imagine living during this time as a Jew. You have been taught your entire life that there is One God who has saved your fathers, who has led your people in many conquests; however, there have also been great times of tribulation, exile and defeat. You may be wondering whether or not the stories of one kingdom united under the one true God are even true. This new Davidic covenant was another confirmation from God that He was working for Israel, whether they believed it or not. He was establishing His kingdom and now they knew to look to the line of David to find their King.

This eternal kingdom commences with Solomon, David's son and successor, and closes with Jesus. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."⁶ After David, Israel experienced the roller coaster of blessing, idolatry, division, restoration and defeat of earthly kings. They hoped for a day when one would rule in victory and blessing forever! They were looking to each king to re-establish the throne and reign like David had.

Israel hoped a king would come who would not only deliver them from the enemies but restore them as a blessed people. They found a broken version of that in the kingdom of David and we have now realized the perfect, completed version in the kingdom of Jesus. He is the one who reigns in perfection, eternally alive and ruling with justice and righteousness like no earthly king ever could. He has delivered us from our sinful nature and hopeless lostness and restored us, making us holy⁷ heirs to a throne only He deserves.

Closing Prayer

⁵ David is a descendant of Abraham. The new covenant with David is not apart from, but in line with God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis. (See [Matt. 1:1-6](#))

⁶ [Rev. 11:15](#)

⁷ [Col. 1:22](#)

Father, You have established your kingdom through Jesus. your kingdom is without defect - the poor and orphaned are cared for, every injustice is made right, sins are forgiven and grace flows freely through your Son, Jesus. I praise you for your kingdom. Establish it in my heart and in my city. your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

DAY FOUR - OUR SINFULNESS IS OUR EXILE

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are king. I honor your name today, above every name. I confess my sinfulness to you now. I place my faith in Christ alone, thank you for your grace which you give freely and generously. Illuminate your word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:8-9

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

I have often wondered what it would be like to be in solitary confinement in a prison. Could I survive? What would I cling to in my loneliness? I like to challenge myself to be honest about my motivations to survive. Would it be my family, my job, the desire to converse with my best friend again? You see, solitary confinement usually leads people to the desired outcome of their judge. It works so well because when we are left only with our “thoughts” we will do anything to be free. Our only hope for getting out is mercy from the judge.

Exile for Israel was like solitary confinement. In our passage today, Nehemiah quotes the Lord as he spoke generations earlier to Moses. It is clear that as a result of their disobedience, God's people were subject to life apart from their comfort, convenience and familiar surroundings. Israel hoped so desperately for a Savior because they were alone, in exile. Just as Adam and Eve were banned from the Garden as a consequence of their sin, God's people were banned from their land on several occasions because of their disobedience. Exile was a lonely place and only obedience could bring them back into the land of promise.

When we read the pages of the Old Testament it can become difficult to recognize the conviction for our lives. The Israelites deserved their solitude. They had placed Asherah poles and altars to Baal before a God who had never left their side, had provided food for them when they were hungry, had parted seas and continued to show favor, even in times of terrible sin. I am assuming most of us have never built statues to other gods in our church. However, many times we allow worldly idols to slip into the throne in place of our Lord. If we will understand this sinfulness as our exile from God then our hope and anticipation for a savior will not only be increased and enriched but also desperate and devoted like that of the Israelites.⁸

Our sin has alienated us from our Creator and thrust us into a deserved and justified state of solitary confinement. Our only hope is that our judge would show us mercy we certainly do not deserve. No matter how often we plea or how relentlessly we attempt to free ourselves, our efforts

⁸ We may not have Asherah or Baal idols in our churches but a closer study of idol worship will reveal many idols of our day and illuminate the sinfulness of our hearts.

are in vain because God's justice is perfect, our sentence must be served. It is at this point that we need to hear these words spoken to Moses and repeated by Nehemiah. Reading the entire first chapter of Nehemiah will reveal a confession of guilt and a returning to God.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I praise you for saving me from imprisonment sin. Thank you for looking to the work of Christ instead of my vain efforts to attain righteousness. I place my faith in His name and His atoning work on the cross today, save me.

DAY FIVE - UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for sending Jesus to lighten our burden. I praise you for how you love your children and fight for us. Give me peace in Christ today.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7

<i>But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.</i>	
<i>The people who walked in darkness</i>	<i>will be burned as fuel for the fire.</i>
<i>have seen a great light;</i>	<i>For to us a child is born,</i>
<i>those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,</i>	<i>to us a son is given;</i>
<i>on them has light shone.</i>	<i>and the government shall be upon his shoulder,</i>
<i>You have multiplied the nation;</i>	<i>and his name shall be called</i>
<i>you have increased its joy;</i>	<i>Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,</i>
<i>they rejoice before you</i>	<i>Everlasting Father, Prince of</i>
<i>as with joy at the harvest,</i>	<i>Peace.</i>
<i>as they are glad when they divide the spoil.</i>	<i>Of the increase of his government</i>
<i>For the yoke of his burden,</i>	<i>and of peace</i>
<i>and the staff for his shoulder,</i>	<i>there will be no end,</i>
<i>the rod of his oppressor,</i>	<i>on the throne of David and over his kingdom,</i>
<i>you have broken as on the day of Midian.</i>	<i>to establish it and to uphold it</i>
<i>For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult</i>	<i>with justice and with righteousness</i>
<i>and every garment rolled in blood</i>	<i>from this time forth and forevermore.</i>
	<i>The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.</i>

Israel didn't hope for a Jesus like we hope it doesn't rain when we head to the park for a jog. They did not want him to save them like we want to be saved from a never-ending conversation with a co-worker who never seems to have any work to do. Israel's anticipation of the coming Messiah was a part of their *culture*.

Israel was a nation defined for generations by its wavering from exile to freedom and back again. During times of exile they struggled with ruling governments that oppressed them into slavery, forced them into a yoke of hard labor, mandated intermarriage and stripped away their joy. The darkness of these times was deepened by the way God's people continually chased after foreign gods and customs. The Promised Land their forefathers wandered 40 years for had been stripped from their grasp and laid to waste because of their disobedience. They were a hopeless people who could not see a glimmer of light in their future.

They yearned for the day when they would experience the shalom they had heard their grandfathers reminisce about. A time when David ruled, the armies conquered and the people prospered. They were waiting for eternal peace to be ushered in by a perfectly just and righteous King. They needed a Wonderful Counselor to comfort them, a Mighty God to fight for them, an Everlasting Father to ensure their well being forevermore and a Prince who would return shalom to their families.

They needed Jesus. He is the One prophesied here by Isaiah.

While we may not have wandered for forty years in the desert, we have certainly experienced darkness and seasons in ‘the wilderness.’ The Israelites needed hope and so do we.

“Unto us a child is born” is a promise that rings true today. Jesus is your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Hope in Him today.

Closing Prayer

LORD, You counsel me when I am distressed, you are mighty when I am weak, you are my Father forever and peace in the midst of chaos. You alone are worthy of my praise. Teach us to hope in Jesus.

Week 2: Jesus is Fulfillment

Jesus fulfilled the plan of God to redeem His people & the nations

A *type* of Christ was a biblical figure or office that pointed to or gave us a glimpse of Jesus. As we study *types* over the next week we will understand more clearly how the anticipation of Christ was enriched by the Father. God used these types to reveal many aspects of Jesus' character, office, power and heart. As Israel experienced these glimpses, it caused them to anticipate the One who would embody them entirely.

Hymn for the week: O Come O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
R: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
shall come to thee o Israel!

O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.

O come, o come, Thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law,
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
from ev'ry foe deliver them
that trust Thy mighty power to save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home,
make safe the way that leads on high,
that we no more have cause to sigh.

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight.

O come, Desire of the nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid every strife and quarrel cease
and fill the world with heaven's peace.

DAY ONE - TYPE: ADAM

Opening Prayer

Lord, holy be your name in all the earth! You are worthy of praise and majestic in all you do. Teach me today from your living word and may I respond with an open heart, ready to be transformed.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

I remember it like it was yesterday. My family and I were living in Great Falls, Montana and were headed to the local grocery store to pick up a few things. I was six or seven at the time and was in major need of some Bazooka bubble gum. I thought that if I asked I would be told no so I decided to take matters into my own hands by way of the “five-finger discount.” That is, I stole it. I knew what I was doing was wrong. I hid it in my jacket and popped in the first piece as soon as we sat down in the car. I got away with it too, the heist of the century.

All mankind comes from the lineage of Adam, the first man. We have life and are ‘of the dust’ as Adam was. This association with Adam is not simply that we are human but also that we are sinful and will all die.⁹ This terrible fate means that our sinful bodies will certainly return to the dust from whence they came; just as Adam sinned and died, we sin and die.

This impending sinful demise and eternal separation from God is not the purpose of your life. You were created to worship The Lord. You were created for life, not death. This is why Jesus came and corrected Adam’s fall. He is the “last Adam,” referred to in the passage. He did what Adam could not. He resisted every temptation to be his own God and served his Father alone. It is through unity with Him that you “bear the image of the man of heaven.” The beauty of bearing the image of Jesus is that now we inherit his life instead of the death of Adam, a death that we deserve.

As 1 Corinthians reminds us, Adam was a type of Christ; he gave natural, physical life. In this physical life we are tempted with all kinds of evil. Some may seem innocent, like a child stealing a pack of bubble gum; however, it is by our falling into this temptation and revolting against our Creator that we join Adam in his death. Christ fulfilled his purpose by giving spiritual life, life that is abundant and eternal. It is in salvation by grace through faith that we join Him in this life.

Closing Prayer

⁹ [Romans 5:12](#)

Father, thank you for sending us a new Adam, one who has been tempted in every way we have and still remained without sin. Remind me today of the grace given by Jesus as I trust Him for life.

DAY TWO - TYPE: PROPHET, PRIEST, KING

Opening Prayer

Lord, You are the great High Priest, the faithful Prophet and Eternal King. I open my heart to your instruction today.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Before sin entered the world, man enjoyed fellowship with God. Sin formed a chasm that cut off communication with the Father. It also covered man in iniquity, making it impossible for him to enter the presence of Holy God. Instead of following the leading of the sovereign, powerful King who loves and works for our good, our desires have become self-centered and self-gratifying. Because of the hopelessness of our state of sinfulness, we are in need of a Prophet to speak the things that are true, a Priest to bring a worthy sacrifice and a King to rule with peace and lead with omnipotence.

In the Old Testament God provided men and women to fill these roles yet each did so with limited capability because of their sinfulness. At times prophets spoke words that weren't true¹⁰, priests made unworthy sacrifices¹¹ and acted for personal gain and kings ruled with tyranny and led the people of God astray.¹² These offices were never meant to be filled by sinful man, they were created for the Messiah, the Savior who would only speak truth, become the pure sacrifice and rule with peace and power.

What Israel needed is the same thing we need today, the Prophet, Priest and King Jesus. The only way for us to enjoy fellowship with God, as He intends, is for us to listen to the words of the True Prophet, rely on the sacrifice of the great High Priest and submit our lives to the King of Kings! Be encouraged by the words of Peter, who encourages that once we submit our lives to Christ, we have the joy of becoming prophet, priest and king to our communities.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. -1 Peter 2:9

¹⁰ [Ezekiel 13:1-15](#)

¹¹ [Malachi 1:1-14](#)

¹² [1 Kings 11:1-15](#)

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, form my identity in the work you have done. May I trust you with my soul and proclaim your excellencies to those around me.

DAY THREE - TYPE: SHEPHERD

Opening Prayer

God, you are all I need. I praise your great name for you are worthy. I confess my sin to you now and ask for mercy. Save me from my hopeless plight.

Scripture: John 10:9-16

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. 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.

Early one morning a young boy was in the fields, tending his sheep. From his position on the rock, overlooking the meadow where they grazed, he spotted something rustling in the thicket to his right. Fearing the sheep resting near there were in danger he quickly leapt to his feet and sprinted toward them. As he ran, the mysterious animal lurked forward to devour one of the sheep. A lion. Quickly the boy reaches into his pouch and pulled out a stone, hurled the rock from his sling and struck the lion with a deadly blow directly between the eyes.

The sheep rested.

Before David was a giant-killer, he shepherded a flock of sheep for his father, Jesse. With this job came certain occupational hazards, including attacks from wild animals like lions. These sheep represented the family's well being. They provided food, warmth and sacrifices. In order to be a good shepherd he had to be prepared for this type of attack. He had to know his flock, they needed to trust him. Most of all, he had to be willing to lay down his own life so that they could be saved.

Jesus came to fulfill the role of the good shepherd. As he explains in today's passage, the good shepherd is not like one who has no concern for the sheep. He knows his flock and they know him; this trust is built by the shepherd's willingness to do whatever it takes to preserve the lives of his sheep, even if that means giving up his own life.

Knowing that Jesus is the good shepherd, read Psalm 23 and rest in the truth that Jesus has come, he is your shepherd and he has laid down his life for you.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

*for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

Closing Prayer

Lord, you are my shepherd, I trust in you. Give me peace in the midst of chaos and courage in the face of evil.

DAY FOUR - TYPE: JUDGE

Opening Prayer

Lord, You are King! I praise You for your faithfulness and love. Be faithful to teach me through your word today.

Scripture: John 5:22-24

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

For many years of their history before the commencement of the monarchy, the nation of Israel teetered in and out of obedience to God. In order to guide them during these times the Lord appointed judges who would execute judgement based on the law he had sent forth. These judges generally followed the letter of the law and executed judgements accordingly. They were a glimpse of the coming Messiah who would come to free those who followed Him from the bondage of the law.

In today's passage we read about God the Father handing over the judgment duties to His Son who is to be honored, trusted and obeyed. Jesus came to judge, but his judgement of believers did not reflect their sins but His own righteousness. Instead of being escorted out of the courtroom and into the wrath of God, Christians are declared innocent because of the perfect sacrifice of their High Priest and are given His just inheritance, eternal life.

Being a Christian does not exempt us from judgement. We will be judged. Praise God we are judged by the One who is always just and who has given His life to save us.

Closing Prayer

God, I am not worthy to be counted righteous. Thank you for Jesus' judgment on the cross and my righteousness because of His work, not my own.

DAY FIVE - TYPE: TEMPLE

Opening Prayer

God, You are holy and just. your judgments are true and your works, majestic. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so I will understand your word and respond accordingly.

Scripture: Revelation 21:22-23

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Last summer I went on an 8-day trip with two of my sons. We left mom at home and traveled halfway across the country to see the grandparents and speak to some churches. While we were away we texted, sent pictures, Skyped and called mom back at home. We missed her and wanted to get as close as we could fro so far away.

Have you ever walked into a church that was majestic and ornate? One that was decorated with breathtaking artwork depicting the words of scripture? One that was so awe inspiring that it led you to worship the Lord? There is something special about being in a place that was constructed for one purpose, to bring glory and honor to God. The temple in Jerusalem was a place like this. It was the crown of Israel's love for God; a place where the Lord dwelled and His people worshiped.

It was because of these things that when Jesus told the leaders in Jerusalem that He would destroy the temple¹³ they were enraged enough to crucify Him. Jesus was not claiming that He would destroy the physical temple which sat in Jerusalem during those days, He was trying to explain that *He is the temple*. You see, in ancient Israel the people needed the temple for several things: gaining access to God through the Holy of Holies, preparing and offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins finally, its the place where God's people went to see the Glory of God.

The veil that divided the people from the Holy of Holies was torn during the crucifixion, Christ has become our sacrifice and His innocent blood is the last that will ever be shed for the forgiveness of sins and Jesus has become the glory of God. In our passage today, John sees a vision of the great city, Jerusalem, only there is no temple besides the Lamb. The temple shines so gloriously that no outside light is needed in the entire city.

When the boys and I returned home from our trip we did not Skype her or call her. She was not far away anymore, she had come within reach and we ran straight up to her and gave her a hug. We spent as much time with her as we could because she was there, in our presence. Christ coming to earth and revealing Himself as the true temple is just like this. During the temple period the closest anyone could get to God was in that building. With the arrival of Jesus, the

¹³ [Matt. 26:62](#), [John 2:19](#)

temple had come near, there was no need for a distant relationship any longer. Christ has become our temple and through Him we have access to the redemption and the glory of the Father.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you for removing the veil and granting a sinner like me access to your throne through Jesus. You alone are God and I worship You today.

Week 3: Jesus is Hope for the Nations

Unless you are Jewish, the coming of a savior *for* Israel does not bring hope. From early on, though, God the Father revealed that the Savior would come, not merely to save Israel but also to save the nations. It is this important aspect of the Father's salvation that gives hope to all men and women who trust in Jesus.

God's plan from the beginning was to call the nations to His throne to behold His glory.

Hymn for the week: Joy to the World

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and
nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks,
hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

DAY ONE - ALL THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED

Opening Prayer

Lord, I bless your name today for You are worthy of all glory, honor and praise! Bless me with the understanding of your word.

Scripture: Galatians 3:8-9

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

As new nations formed after the incident at the Tower of Babel, God's plan to redeem all creation to himself came into focus in the man Abraham. God would use Abraham and his descendants to be a light to the nations which surrounded them. He would bless them to show His love, save them from enemies that were vastly more powerful than they to reveal His power and punish them for injustice to prove His holiness. He did all of these things despite Israel's frequent disobedience and rebellion to show the nations that He alone is worthy of worship. To teach them that salvation and peace flow from His mercy shown to undeserving people, not based on the people's righteous deeds. God chose to bless Israel, not to play favorites or because of what Israel had done to deserve Him but so that the world might be blessed through them.

In our passage today, Paul helps us to see this big picture plan that God has had from long ago. He proclaims that the scriptures of the Old Testament preached the gospel before Jesus even came onto the scene. After all, the gospel is the good news that a savior is coming to bring hope to all the nations. Abraham was not blessed because he was an Israelite, in fact, he was declared righteous by his faith in God as a pagan and was circumcised as a seal of that covenant. Just as Abraham was chosen and by faith received the blessing of God, the nations were always a part of this blessing. We are chosen and by faith in Jesus receive the blessing of God!

The coming of Jesus brought hope to the nations because it is the fulfillment of the covenant between God and Abraham. "All the earth shall be blessed," is a promise given to Abraham that has been made complete by the work of Jesus in bringing the hope of abundant life to all the earth!

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you for abundant life! Thank you for planning long ago to redeem the earth through Abraham based on your righteousness, not his. Give me confidence in You that I might be a blessing.

DAY TWO - THE NATIONS SHALL COME

Opening Prayer

God, your Word is true and your name, great. I come to You with an open heart and an open mind. Please transform my desires and make them holy.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-4

*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

*It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,*

*that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”*

*For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

*He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Over the next three days we will break down this wonderful text from the prophecy of Isaiah and see this beautiful picture of the nations coming to worship the Lord through the salvation of Jesus.

My favorite family picture is from a one-day ski trip we took on Christmas Day in 2012. We traveled north out of the city into the Catskill Mountains. After riding the lift to the top, we sat down to rest and play in the snow on a deck perched out over the edge overlooking a majestic landscape of snow covered trees diving from mountaintops into deep gorges. As we looked out I could not help but be in awe of the vastness of creation. There is something special about being in the mountains, something that calls one, believer and non-believer alike, to recognize and appreciate the beauty that stands before them. For the believer this can easily become a time of worship, giving glory to the one who sits enthroned on high having charge over all that is before them.

Isaiah sees the *last days* during his vision and describes the scene at the mountain of the Lord. The mountain of the Lord throughout scripture referred to a place where divine encounters take place and worship was enjoyed partly because of the closeness to the Creator. In this scene, the mountain becomes a destination for the nations. The picture Isaiah paints is as if the mountain is a lake into which the rivers of the nations of the earth flow. This image of “flowing” paints a beautiful picture of the way God is calling all people at all times to come to him. It is as if the mountain of the Lord is their natural home and if they will simply lay themselves down they will find their rest there.

Jesus' arrival digs the riverbeds in which the nations flow to the mountain of God. Without His coming, there is no way for the nations to reach this place of worship, refuge and salvation.¹⁴ Jesus is hope for the nations because He is the one who brings the nations to the holy mountain of the Lord.

Next time you are in the mountains remember to give glory to the One who gives you hope for a day when you will worship with the nations on the mountain of God.

Closing Prayer

Majestic Creator, you have outdone yourself in the beauty of this earth. Call me to worship You as I enjoy beautiful landscape and give me a yearning for the day I will see you face to face on the Holy Mountain!

¹⁴ [Is. 56:7](#)

DAY THREE - THE NATIONS WILL LEARN HIS WAYS

Opening Prayer

Lord, your ways are true, your good works abound. Teach me your ways today.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:3

and many peoples shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob,

that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go the law,

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Do you know someone that you would consider truly a man or woman of God? Often when we know people like this, we hopefully try to observe their life, attitudes, daily practices and ideas that make them holy and implement those into our lives. When God puts someone like this in our lives it is wise to walk in their path.

When the nations come to the mountain of God seeking what comes forth from Zion they are not seeking power or political leadership, they are seeking the truth. In the law they find what they seek. Remember Isaiah wrote about future things. With that in mind, we should read “law” and “word of the Lord” here as they are to be understood when these future things take place. Jesus came to fulfill the law because he is the Word of the Lord. The nations come to the mountain seeking Christ. Their desire is to learn His ways so that they may walk in His paths.

Jesus is the only way the nations can know truth. Without Him we cannot find our way through all of the lies and deceptions of our flesh and the Accuser. God revealed Himself to Israel through the law, which was never meant to save but simply to shine light on the sin of the people. From out of this nation, though, would come the Light of the world who would be a beacon of hope for the nations, shining light on the grace of God who calls all people to learn his ways and walk in his path.

Having men and women of faith to look to and follow while we journey through faith on this earth is valuable and biblical. Remember, though, the truth has been revealed to you in Jesus. Walk in His ways.

Closing Prayer

Father, I have seen the truth in Jesus. Give me grace to walk in His ways.

DAY FOUR - THE NATIONS WILL EXPERIENCE PEACE

Opening Prayer

Lord, you are the Prince of Peace, teach me your ways today.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:4

*He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Justice is in the hands of the judge. The crime of theft is a great example: if convicted in one country, you may be sentenced to a few hours of community service while in another have your hand chopped off. In accordance with the respective laws, each sentence may be fully justified. The judge hears all sides of the argument and dispenses punishment as he sees fit. The judge has the final say.

As this great mountain of God scene comes to an end, the Judge has taken His seat and begun deciding judgment for the people of the earth. His judgments come down to the people and lead to times of peace.

Our human justice systems are obviously broken beyond repair. For rectification, though, we need not look to our human solutions, but to the one Judge who is always just. In looking for an answer to our corruption, greed and injustice, as corny as it may sound, the answer is Jesus. His coming brings the nations hope for righteous judgement and peace among the people of the earth. Our sinfulness needs to be sanctified, or made holy. It is then that our spirits are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit from proud and greedy to loving and peaceful.

Peace has come in Jesus. He uses His church to bring peace now and will one day begin executing judgments on the holy mountain of God. His judgments will lead the nations to return their weapons of war for instruments of peace. Jesus is not only hope for our salvation, He is the only hope we have for peace, both now on this earth through us and in the Day of the Lord through His righteous judgements.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for judging your followers based on the work of Jesus. Bring peace to my life today and may I be an instrument of peace to the world.

DAY FIVE - YOU ARE THE NATIONS, WALK IN LIGHT

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for salvation. You are glorious and have shed light into the darkness! I am yours, speak life into me today by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:5

*O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord.*

Ephesians 5:8

...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

At the end of the vision of the Lord, Isaiah charged the people of Israel to walk in the light of the Lord, knowing that it was through them that the nations would seek Him. We must remember that the great future scene of the nations flowing to God, worshiping Him on the mountain and having peace also has implications for how the hope of Jesus affects our lives in the present.

We are called to realize that the hope Jesus brings to the nations comes with a biblical mandate. Followers of Jesus are called to leave the darkness that once surrounded their hopelessness and walk in the light of their newfound life. Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to walk as though this transformation from dark to light has not only given them hope but also hope to their neighbor! Just as Israel was a beacon of God's love and mercy to the surrounding nations during the Old Testament, so are we to our family, friends, co-workers and even enemies.

Part of understanding the hope the nations find in Jesus is realizing that *we* are the nations and our charge is to be imitators of Him in order that we might bring hope to those who still walk in darkness. Having this knowledge, we must speak life into those around us who are hurting, be agents of biblical justice to those who are oppressed, show mercy to the sojourners (foreigners) in our community, be peace makers in our family and serve the least of these. As we anticipate the arrival of Jesus this Advent season let us not forget that his coming has brought light and his command is that we bring light in our scope of influence.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you for shedding light in the darkness of my life. Fill me with the Spirit so I will be a beacon of light to those around me.

Week 4: Jesus Arrives

We have covered a lot of ground over the past three weeks as we have sought to anticipate the coming of Jesus like the people of ancient Israel. Today we begin our final week, Christmas is only a few days away and we now transition to the events surrounding the arrival of the Messiah. Let us look back and see what was going on when Jesus finally arrived on the scene.

Hymn for the week: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see

Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

DAY ONE - HIS BIRTH WAS MIRACULOUS

Opening Prayer

Lord, you are holy and just. Thank you for your unfailing love. I praise you for counting me righteous because of the work of Jesus. As I begin to worship this Christmas week, remind me of the miracle of your Son.

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 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). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The gospel of Matthew has a theme of fulfillment. Matthew consistently points back to the words of the prophets and writers of the Old Testament in order to connect the dots for his reader, endeavoring to illuminate to us that all of these things that took place were to fulfill the promises God had made to His people, Israel. His account of the birth of Jesus is no different, and from it we see the fulfillment components alongside the miraculous.

In the text today, Joseph is faced with an incredible dilemma. His betrothed has come to him claiming to be pregnant despite never having been intimate with a man. He has just about decided what he'll do about this problem when the angel of the Lord came to him while he was sleeping and confirmed Mary's unbelievable story. Joseph must have been overwhelmed with emotions after this miraculous encounter with the Lord's messenger but he heard the word from God, laid his preferences aside and obeyed. Mary and Joseph realized they were experiencing something miraculous. The God of the universe, the God of Israel, the God of their fathers had charged them with the task of parenting Immanuel. They began to understand that their lives were intertwined with the fulfillment of God's master plan of redemption.

The birth of Jesus is a miracle. The virgin birth was a miracle. The fact that Mary and Joseph believed the angel of the Lord and obeyed was a miracle. God sending his Son to be "Immanuel, God with us" was a miracle. These miraculous things have taken place so that another miracles might happen in the lives of God's beloved. These miracles paved the way for the greatest

miracle of all, “for he will save his people from their sins.” In our struggle with pride, guilt and condemnation Jesus has given us the hope of abundant life! God has called those who have been saved by this Miracle Child to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Mary and Joseph understood their miraculous place in God’s plan. Maybe its time we did too.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for using me in your plan to redeem the world. Humble me to understand that your work in and through me can change lives. Give me the desire to see miracles happen in my neighbors' lives just as they do in mine.

DAY TWO - HE WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Opening Prayer

Lord, you are sovereign and you reign in power. your plan is perfect and your ways, matchless. I open my heart and mind to truth today, lead me by your love.

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 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, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 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.

Bethlehem is a small, sleepy town less than ten miles south of Jerusalem. One day around 1025 BC the prophet of the Lord, Samuel, came to visit the rural village with the intention of anointing the next king of Israel. In this unlikelyst of towns Samuel is presented with all of the likely candidates to rule. However, God had another plan. Samuel finally anoints the youngest son of Jesse, David, to be the next king of God's people. You see, the people of God had gone against the recommendation of the Lord and decided they wanted an earthly king. God gave them what they wanted in Saul, the obvious choice due to his stature, appearance and résumé. After that did not work out God showed Israel that he was not concerned with outward appearance but with the heart, and in the shepherd boy David, he found a future king who was a man after his own heart.

David was a temporary fix to an eternal problem. Sure, he led the Israelites into many great conquests, both militarily and spiritually, but his was by no means perfect. He was never meant to be the Savior of God's chosen people, just a foretaste of the true King to come. In today's scripture we see another journey to this small, seemingly insignificant town of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph make their way south from Nazareth in order to be counted in the census; or at least that was what they thought. As we look back from this side of history we can see clearly, though, how God used this political function to serve a bigger purpose in His redemptive plan. Jesus, the savior of the earth, entered the world to bring hope to us all in this most improbable place in the humblest of fashions.

Bethlehem is brought to the forefront yet again and this town reminds us today that our King is wholly other than the kings of this earth. He has come in humility, not to be served, but to serve. Today be reminded that just as Bethlehem is not a place from which you might think a king would come, Jesus' kingdom is not a kingdom you might think it is. Our King leads by example, instead of capturing His enemies He rescues them and sets them free, he loves and serves his followers, even making them heirs with him.

The town that gave Israel its first shepherd-king has now given all mankind its perfect Shepherd King.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for using the unlikeliest of people and places to execute your plan. Just like Bethlehem, I am weak and lowly, a sinner with no hope. Breathe life into me during this season of celebration. I trust in you.

DAY THREE - HE BRINGS GRACE AND TRUTH

Opening Prayer

Lord, I understand that you are the one true God. Thank you for redeeming mankind to yourself through Jesus. I worship Him now. Speak with power by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: John 1:14-18

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

The coming of Jesus brought about a paradigm shift in the way humanity related to God. The Law was sent by God through Moses to expose the sin of the people and it certainly accomplished its task. By the time Jesus came on the scene there were religious leaders who thought they had mastered the system by obeying each and every one of the commands, they were called Pharisees. These men endeavored to attain righteousness by their own strength; Jesus revealed their efforts to be in vain and offered some clarification for the true meaning of the Law.

John introduces Jesus to his readers as the Word of God, the one who was there in the beginning, through whom everything was created.¹⁵ He wanted his readers to understand that this man who walked the earth was not simply a great prophet, a talented orator or a wonderful magician; He was God. It is on this foundation that he builds these next few thoughts, these thoughts which teach us so much about how we can relate to God. Jesus is full of grace and truth; receive Him and receive grace upon grace, receive the truth.

Our flesh is full of pride and deception. They war with grace and truth. Our pride tells us there is no way we can be saved without our good works, after all, through the Law we realize that there is right and wrong in this world. It is our arrogance which leads us to the conclusion that if we perform well we deserve a reward; this is the ultimate deception Christ came to abolish. When we receive the fullness of grace given in truth by Christ we are enlightened to the fact that there is no good deed that can make us worthy. Grace must be accepted with humility because it demands our reliance on the work of Jesus, not of ourselves. The *truth* is righteousness can only be attained by Jesus; *grace* is Jesus giving His life on our behalf.

Praise God that Jesus has come! Rejoice that with His coming we can receive the fullness of grace and truth!

Closing Prayer

¹⁵ [John 1](#)

Heavenly Father, my flesh deceives me into thinking I have something of worth to offer you. I confess today that I do not. I lay my life at the mercy of your Son, Jesus. By grace would I believe the truth today, that Christ has come and I am righteous by faith in Him.

DAY FOUR CHRISTMAS DAY - HIS BIRTH CALLS US TO WORSHIP

Opening Prayer

Thank You Lord for Jesus! As I celebrate His birth today may I find peace in You. Lead me to worship you on this day of great blessing.

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. 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. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

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." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Here we are, Christmas Day! Let the celebration begin! We have spent the past 4 weeks anticipating the arrival of the Messiah and today our celebration leads us to one response: worship.

February in Houston, Texas is rodeo month. My wife, Lindsey, and I were at the rodeo in February of 2011 with a friend when we finally received the phone call we had been waiting for. "Larry," said Nanette, our adoption agent, "The judge and committee have chosen you and Lindsey to be the parents of little Michael (now Micah)." As I sat in a brand new Chevy Camaro convertible inside the Chevrolet exhibit, tears of joy streamed down my face. I was overjoyed and overwhelmed with emotion. I was going to be a dad and this orphan would have a family.

These shepherds we hear about in today's passage had a similar experience. They were going about their day-to-day activities when out of nowhere a choir of heavenly beings appeared before them singing the most beautiful song they had ever heard. At once, they journeyed to see this great thing they had been told about. When they arrived in Bethlehem they saw exactly what they expected, their long awaited Savior had been born! The anticipation of generations of their

forefathers had culminated in this majestic event which they witnessed firsthand. After all these years of waiting these shepherds had but one thing left to do, glorify and praise God for His faithfulness!

The news that Lindsey and I were going to have the privilege to be Micah's parents was great news! I love to go back and relive that moment from time to time. It brings back those emotions of excitement and joy. As we celebrate Christmas today let us relive the moment these shepherds heard the greatest news ever told! The long awaited Savior of the world has arrived! His name is Jesus and he has come so that you might have life and have it more abundantly!

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for the birth of the Savior. Let today be a day of worship!