



Advent is the season traditionally marked for preparing for the coming of Christ. The word "advent" means "coming"; thus, this is the season for remembering the first coming of Christ to the world as a baby, enjoying His coming to us day by day, and preparing for His second coming as reigning King. This is a time to make the most out of Christmas. It is a chance to lead your family in a Biblical emphasis on Jesus as we prepare for Christmas. This Advent devotion will help redirect your family's attention from material things to the glorious story of our Lord and Savior's birth. A family advent celebration can help your family eliminate much of the rapid, hectic pace of Christmas today by taking less than 15 minutes per day to worship and learn about the Lord Jesus Christ. Advent puts the joy, celebration, peace of God, and the deep awareness of God's love for us back into our Christmas celebration! Isn't that the way Christmas should be?

The celebration of Advent always begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. Because of this, the length of Advent varies from year to year. The **Advent log** dramatically symbolizes the coming of Light into the world, as each night the glow becomes brighter and brighter until finally the whole room is filled with light. It is much more dramatic to begin in a dark room where the only source of light is the advent candle. Watch the light grow as a new candle is lit each night! Also, since the candles are lit alternately from one end of the log to the next, working your way toward the center candle each night, the effect of a mountain peak beautifully points to Jesus on Christmas Day.

The family devotion time will probably be most appropriate at the close of each day, before going to bed. A suggested procedure is as follows. It may be freely modified to meet the needs of your family.

1. Get your Bible and devotional materials ready. All scripture references are included in your devotional, but children enjoy reading from their Bible.
2. Light your advent candle(s). Children love doing this! If you have more than one child let them take turns. Be sure that the log is in a safe place, level, and there are no flammable materials that can come into contact with the flames.
3. One family member should read the scripture verses for the day as the others listen.
4. Another family member should read the devotional for the day.
5. Share prayer requests together and allow each family member to pray.
6. Blow out the candles. You can't allow them to burn too long each night or they will not last the full number of days. 10-12 minutes is just about right. Be careful when blowing the candles out (kids like to do this too) because you can get melted wax all over things. It is better to use a candle snuffer.
7. Share some fun activities together as a part of your Advent celebration, like roasting marshmallows, baking Christmas cookies, fixing homemade hot chocolate, sing Christmas carols, look at Christmas cards, or go look at Christmas lights. Have fun!

### **Preparing Your Advent Log**

- \* Log - 6 feet long
- \* Holes drilled 2 ¼ inch apart from center of hole to center of next hole
- \* Drill holes 1" deep with ¾ inch "butterfly" drill bit or bore bit
- \* Drill 29 holes in a straight line at the top of the log
- \* Leave about 4 ½ inches from the end of the log to the first hole
- \* Shave the bottom of the log or brace it to prevent tipping over
- \* Use at least 12" tapered candles
- \* Use a different color candle for Sundays.
- \* Alternate lighting the candles from one end to the other. The center candle will be lit on Christmas Day.

## **Sunday, November 29, Day 1**

### **The First Sunday of Advent - The Prophet's Candle**

*(The first candle of Advent is called the Prophet's Candle. It reminds us of the prophets, those special spokesmen of God who proclaimed God's Word to the people during the hundreds of years before Jesus was born. The prophets told the people what God was going to do, and they taught the people how to get ready for the coming Savior. Over and over again, the prophets warned the people to stop sinning and begin obeying God.)*

#### **Isaiah 11:1-10**

Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked. He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment. In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord. In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

Isaiah lived and wrote this book 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Of all the OT prophets/preachers Isaiah gives us the clearest, most detailed prophecies (predictions about something future) concerning the coming Savior. Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. God allows Isaiah to foresee details about the One who would come to be the Savior of the world. Isaiah even sees to the end of time, when good triumphs over evil and the Savior establishes a new Heaven and Earth. Throughout this book, God does something amazing and wonderful – He explains in detail His greatest gift to mankind, the Savior of the world!

In the passage above, which verses talk about the coming Savior (The New Testament tells us in Romans 15:12 and Revelation 5:5 that the

"Branch" of Isaiah is Jesus). How is the Savior described in verses 1-5? What will He be like? Can you think of a story in the Gospels that describes Jesus like that?

Which verses talk about the new Heaven and Earth He will someday bring? What will the new earth He creates be like one day?

### **Monday, November 30, Day 2**

Isaiah 35:4-10

Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will sing for joy! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the wasteland. The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived. And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. Lions will not lurk along its course, nor any other ferocious beasts. There will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will walk on it. Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness. Here Isaiah describes what the coming Savior brings and does. Once again, what are some stories and verses in the Gospels that show how Jesus fulfilled these promises? How do the words "wilderness", "wasteland", "parched ground", etc. describe not just physical but spiritual conditions? Since only the "redeemed" walk on the "Highway to Holiness", what does it mean to be redeemed (see Romans 3:24 and 1 Peter 1:18-19)? Are you on the Highway to Holiness? Rejoice with singing, filled with joy and gladness!

### **Tuesday, December 1, Day 3**

Isaiah 7:14

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

The Savior would be born to a virgin! He would be God in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us! The same Wonderful, Mighty, Everlasting,

Heavens-holding Messiah that Isaiah gloriously details in this book, the One who is SO great that the universe itself can't contain Him, IS WITH YOU!

God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He was WITH them. Sin broke and separated their relationship. But what sin separated, the Savior restores! Because He is WITH me, I never have to be afraid, I am never alone, the struggles of life can't overwhelm me, death and the grave can't scare me neither can they keep me, sin can't separate me from Him, Hell can't touch me and Satan can't conquer me! Why?? Because my Savior, my Messiah is Immanuel! GOD WITH ME!

### **Wednesday, December 2, Day 4**

Isaiah 9:6-7

**For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.** The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

Jesus is God. John 1:1 says *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* "The Word" in this verse means that Jesus is the expression of an invisible concept or idea. The words that you read now are expressions of concepts and thoughts.

And, if you couldn't read or hear my words, you couldn't know my thoughts. Now, Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the expression of Deity. Jesus is the expression, the revelation of the invisible God. And so, He is divine. He is God. Again, Hebrews 1:8—here speaking of the Lord Jesus: *"But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.'" Not to the Father, but to the Son it says "Your throne, O God".* Jesus is God. In Titus 2:13: we read *"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."* John 3:16 gives us the most wonderful news ever, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life."*

Jesus is the only begotten Son, our Savior and the great God! Jesus did not begin with the manger and Mary. Jesus is from all eternity. He never had a beginning; He will never have an ending. He is fully God and He is forever God!

Dr. Adrian Rogers tells of a time he witnessed to Muhammad Ali, considered by many to be the GOAT heavyweight boxing champion of the world. Dr. Rogers said, *"We sat together for an hour or so and*

*discussed the Bible. He practices the Muslim faith. And, he said to me, 'You say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He was born of a virgin.' He said, 'Adam didn't have a father or a mother. Wouldn't that make Adam more a son of God than Jesus?' I said, 'Champ, listen to me: Jesus was not the Son of God because He was born of a virgin; He was born of a virgin because He was the Son of God.' I want you to understand this, dear friend: He existed eternally as the Son of God. That Son was given. That Son was with God the Father in the bosom of the Father from eternity past. He is forever God."* Amen! Amen!

### **Thursday, December 3, Day 5**

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: **Wonderful Counselor**, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

The Savior, the Child born of a virgin, the Child given to us is called the Wonderful Counselor. The word "wonderful" has the idea of miraculous, marvelous, and amazing. The One who was born an infant was no less than the Infinite. God, the One who eternally exists, the One who spoke the universe into existence would become a human being. Can you conceive of something more wonderful than that? And wonder of wonders, He did this to redeem you and me! He did this to be Immanuel, to be with us. Do you have any needs? Any problems? Any concerns, difficulties or hurts? Have you consulted the Wonderful Counselor? Because He is wonderful, everything He touches is made better. He makes all things wonderful!

### **Friday, December 4, Day 6**

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

The Savior is also called the Mighty God. Powerful! The Savior, the child born to us, the son given to us is God, the Mighty God! As God

He is all powerful. Ephesians 3:20 says that He is able to do "exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think." He is the Mighty God! He is mighty to save you. He is mighty to support you and strengthen you and sustain you! Colossians 1:15-17 tells us, "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together." He is the Mighty God! Trust in Him! In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a known English atheist was taking a walk in the country one day where he met a country boy and asked him, "Where are you going?" The boy answered, "I'm going to church, sir." The atheist responded, "Oh, you're going to church. Tell me, is your God a big God or a little God?" The country boy answered, "He's both, sir!" "How can he be both?", the atheist shot back. "Well, He's big enough that the Heavens can't contain Him and He's small enough to live in My heart." That's the mighty God you can trust today!

### **Saturday, December 5, Day 7**

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, **Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

The Everlasting Father. This name is almost confusing. How can "the child born, the son given" be the Everlasting Father? Isaiah is saying the same thing Jesus said in John 14 when Philip asked Him to show them the Father. Jesus answered Philip with the words, "*he that has seen Me HAS seen the Father.*" The Savior, Jesus, is the everlasting God and gives everlasting life to all who believe in Him. In John 10 Jesus says, "*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.*" (John 10:27-30)

Because He is the Everlasting Father, He can give everlasting life. Do you believe in Him?

## **Sunday, December 6, Day 8**

### **Second Sunday of Advent - The Bethlehem Candle**

*On the second Sunday in Advent we light the Bethlehem Candle. This candle reminds us of the time when Jesus came to earth as a baby and was born in the small town of Bethlehem. This candle also reminds us that Jesus promised to come again. According to Luke's gospel, these are His words: "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near!" (Luke 21:27-28). When you look at the Bethlehem candle, think of Jesus returning to earth in glory and honor.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

The Prince of Peace? This seems to be a contradiction. The most brutal wars and conflicts of all human history have been fought since Jesus, the Prince of Peace was born. What does this name mean then?

It refers to two different kinds and times of peace. Like many verses about the Savior in Isaiah, these verses speak of the first and second coming of Jesus.

At His first coming, which we are celebrating now, Jesus brought peace between God and mankind. Without the Savior Jesus, you and I are enemies of God. Sin has brought division between us and God. Sin brings hostility between mankind and mankind, and mankind and God. Colossians 1:20-21 says *"He (God) made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions."* You see, when Adam and Eve sinned, God set in motion a peace plan that would be accomplished by His own Son, the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Savior. Through His death on the cross, Jesus abolished the hostility between God and mankind. This peace is available to all who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. *"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."* (Romans 5:1)

But there is also coming a day when Jesus will physically return to this earth and He will end all hostility here too. Isaiah describes it like this: *"In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will*

*be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord."* (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Do you know the Lord? Have you made peace with God through faith in Jesus?

### **Monday, December 7, Day 9**

Isaiah 9:1-2

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

A Light will shine! Light brings hope. Today you lit nine Advent candles. Notice how the brightness is growing, the warmth, the excitement, the hope! Light always brings hope in the darkness. Darkness can be frightening! Darkness can be dangerous. It is easy to stumble, trip and fall when you are walking in the darkness. Groping along, hoping to navigate your way to safety. How do we get rid of darkness in a room? Can we sweep it out with a broom? Can we vacuum it out? Darkness is the absence of light. To rid the room of darkness we merely need a little light! Jesus said "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.*" How desperately these words of Jesus are needed today to the dark world in which we live. He is the Light. He is the Way. He is the Answer. Many of us are stumbling along, confused, barely able to take the next step, wondering what life is all about. If only we had a light to guide our path! Jesus says, "I am the Light!!"

### **Tuesday, December 8, Day 10**

Isaiah 42:1-8

"Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to

all who have been wronged. He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction. God, the Lord, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath to everyone, life to everyone who walks the earth. And it is he who says, "I, the Lord, have called you (the Messiah) to demonstrate my righteousness . . . And you will be a light to guide the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons. "I am the Lord; that is my name!"

This is wonderful, liberating, hopeful news! The Coming One, the promised Savior will right every wrong. He is Creator. He is Life. He is Righteousness. He is Justice. He is Light. He is Healer. He is Deliverer, Redeemer and Liberator! He is the Lord! Where do you turn if you are groping in the hopelessness of darkness? Where do you turn if you are lost in the maze of sin? Where do you turn if you are shackled to habits and decisions that have brought ruin to your life? Turn to the Servant, the Chosen One, the Lord. Turn to Jesus.

### **Wednesday, December 9, Day 11**

Isaiah 40:9-11

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!" 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. 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.

Go, tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere! Go tell it on the mountains that Jesus Christ is born! What great news to share! What great news for which to praise God! C.S. Lewis wrote *"The world rings with praise – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, cars, horses, colleges, countries, children, flowers, mountains, even sometimes politicians and scholars . . . Just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" . . . I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment."* Do you enjoy and value knowing Jesus? Praise Him! And urge others to join you in praising Him too.

## **Thursday, December 10, Day 12**

Isaiah 40:25-31

"To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One. Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. (He is the Holder of the Heavens! Because the Savior is divine, because He is God, He can do that! He holds the universe together! And if He can do that . . . then look at what He promises to do in the following verses) O Jacob, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Hallelujah! This is what our Savior Jesus does for us. Why not trust in Him? Why worry? Why not leave everything to follow Him? Are you weak, weary, exhausted? Jesus said, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28) God told us there would be times when we would grow tired and weary, times when we would feel like we couldn't continue on. But God promised that if we wait on Him, our strength will be renewed, that we will be like the eagle who opens his wings, is lifted up by the wind and soars through the sky.

This is a promise of both physical strength and spiritual renewal, of spiritual power. But first you must wait upon the Lord, ask Him to guide you in everything you are to do. Ask Him and He will renew your strength.

## **Friday, December 11, Day 13**

Isaiah 44:6,8

This is what the Lord says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord of Heaven's Armies: "I am the First and the Last; there is no other God. Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim my purposes for you long ago? You are my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!"

There are two names for God in these verses that clearly connect us to Jesus in the New Testament. In Revelation 1 we read this dramatic

description of Jesus: *"And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid! **I am the First and the Last.** I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'" (Revelation 1:13-18)* If we know and trust in Jesus we never have to tremble or be afraid. He is the First and the Last, He is eternal, He is God, all things are created by Him and are sustained by Him. As Isaiah says, He is the Rock! The Apostle Paul declared the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10:4, *"For they drank from the spiritual Rock that traveled with them, and **that Rock was Christ.**"* If you set your feet upon the Rock you will never slip, never fall, never thirst and never need to be afraid.

## **Saturday, December 12, Day 14**

Isaiah 44:24

This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer and Creator: "I am the Lord, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. Who was with me when I made the earth? I expose the false prophets as liars and make fools of fortune-tellers. I cause the wise to give bad advice, thus proving them to be fools. But I carry out the predictions of my prophets! By them I say to Jerusalem, 'People will live here again,' and to the towns of Judah, 'You will be rebuilt; I will restore all your ruins!' When I speak to the rivers and say, 'Dry up!' they will be dry. When I say of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,' he will certainly do as I say. He will command, 'Rebuild Jerusalem'; he will say, 'Restore the Temple.'"

God always keeps His promises. No matter what may be going on in the world around you, God always does what He promises. All of creation belongs to Him. He alone "stretched out the heavens" and "made the earth." He bends and interrupts the processes of events and nations and people any way He wants, no matter what anyone else may say or do, so that His promises and purposes are fulfilled. In our scripture for today Isaiah is writing to the people of Israel who are being defeated and carried away into captivity in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Through Isaiah, God promises to bring His exiled

people home one day. So, over 100 years in advance, God promises to raise up a Persian leader named Cyrus who will defeat the Babylonians, set the Jewish people free and send them home to rebuild their Temple and Jerusalem. Why would God do that? Because the promised Savior, the Messiah would not be born in Babylon but Bethlehem. God's people have to get back home, so God shapes all of human history in order to fulfill His promise and purpose. He shaped the entire world for Jesus to come. He is shaping it again for His return. God always keeps His promises!

### **Sunday, December 13, Day 15**

#### **Third Sunday of Advent - The Shepherds' Candle**

*On the third Sunday of Advent we light the Shepherds' Candle. Watch how the light grows brighter and brighter as we near Christmas day! The Shepherds' Candle reminds us of what the shepherds did.*

*Luke 2:8-20 - Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

*<sup>15</sup> So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.*

*First the shepherds listened and obeyed the angels even though they were very afraid. Then they saw Jesus and believed. The most important reason why we remember the shepherds and give them a special Advent candle is because of what they did next - they told all that had happened to them!*

Isaiah 61:1-3

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. 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. 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.

This is the text that Jesus read from in the synagogue to announce Himself as Messiah (Luke 4:17-21). This is why the Child was born and the Son was given. It is great good news! The message and mission of Jesus is that He was born to win the victory over everything that's against us, over everything that is broken in us. Because Jesus came, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:3-10) Do you mourn? Are you broken? Do you despair? Fear no more! The Messiah has come to turn your ashes into beauty!

### **Monday, December 14, Day 16**

These next few days of verses, all taken from Isaiah 53, are like the darkness of midnight. All the hope and light of the coming Savior seem to be snuffed out in these sad, painful verses. But these verses also explain that the Dawn of hope and light will return! Through the darkest hours rises the sunlight of salvation!

Isaiah 53:2

My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

We value and judge by the appearance of things. Nothing could be less important to the Messiah. In no way did He try to attract us by a majestic appearance. He appeared as an ordinary person growing up in a weak and failed nation. His own family misunderstood him, the

woman at the well didn't know Who she was talking to, John the Baptist doubted Him, even the disciples forsook Him. Jesus didn't appear in ways that WE count important. He didn't come as a Prince in shining armor but as a lowly Servant of God. But why? In order to accomplish God's plan for our salvation! Philippians 2 gives us the answer: Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Jesus appeared as an insignificant servant in order to die a sacrificial death on a cross so that you and I could be forgiven of all our sins and adopted into the royal family of God!

## **Tuesday, December 15, Day 17**

Isaiah 53:3,7-9

He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care . . . He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

Despised and rejected, and we did not care, no one cared. This is a sobering indictment of our darkened spiritual condition before God, yet this is precisely why Jesus came. John, in his gospel, described the birth of Christ in this way, "He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him" (John 1:10-11). He knew how he would be rejected by the very ones He came to save, but He came anyway! And because He did come full of sorrow, rejected, despised, oppressed, silent, unjustly condemned, struck down, and buried John tells us, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Hallelujah! What a Savior!

### **Wednesday, December 16, Day 18**

Isaiah 53:6a

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Sheep are defenseless, helpless wanderers. They usually don't flock together like geese, and they don't stay around in herds like cows. They have built into them this tendency to wander away from security, safety, and provision, and wander off all by themselves, each going his or her own way. We are a lot like sheep: defenseless, helpless wanderers.

In Matthew 9:36, Jesus looked at the people and said, "*They're like sheep without a shepherd.*" They're just going their own way, following their own sinful path down to eternal ruin. That's what shepherd-less sheep do. And that's what we do!

Isn't it interesting that the first people to hear that the Savior was born were shepherds? To the "sheep" who have gone astray the Great Shepherd of our souls was born! But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack for nothing!

### **Thursday, December 17, Day 19**

Isaiah 53:6b, 4-5

Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all . . . Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

The Lord Jesus was born to take our place, to be our substitute, to take our sins and our just punishment. Substitution is a familiar and repeated theme in the Bible. In fact, God repeatedly gives illustrations of substitution that point to the greatest act of substitution ever made: Abraham and Isaac (Gen.22:13), The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12), Scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (Lev.16:22). All of these Old Testament things were illustrations that point to the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross for you and me. The Bible uses the word "atonement" to describe His substitution, it means "payment for damage done." If you crash into somebody's car you have to pay for the damage done. That's called making atonement, making payment for the damage done.

Atonement satisfies justice. Justice demands that when crimes (sins) are committed somebody has to pay for it. We have all sinned, committed crimes against a Holy God. Because God is holy and perfectly just, all sin must be and WILL BE paid for, atoned for. The only question is "Who will pay for it?"

1 John 2:2 tells us "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." 2 Corinthians 5:21 says "He made Christ who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him]" (AMP)

That means all the things I've done wrong. Every lie I've ever told, every lust I've ever had, every cheating – everything I've ever done wrong, He poured all that onto Jesus. Everything you've ever done wrong; God poured all that onto Jesus on the cross. God took the sinless Christ and poured on him the sins of us all. He was beaten so we could be whole! That's why Jesus came into this world. That's the story of Christmas.

### **Friday, December 18, Day 20**

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

Isaiah 55:1,6-7

"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink— even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk— it's all free! Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously."

Isaiah has been called by many "The Fifth Gospel." Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Isaiah. "Gospel" means good news, and you will find no clearer explanation of the saving, forgiving work of Christ than the "Gospel" of Isaiah. This book, written 700 years before Jesus was born, clearly and soberly states our lost, sinful condition before God. We are hopeless, sinful, God-rejecting wanderers headed down a path of ruin, but God loves us so much that He sent His Son to Shepherd us to safety. As our scripture for today so clearly declares, God lovingly invites us to follow the Shepherd to generous forgiveness and mercy! And it's all free! Paid in full by Jesus! Will you turn to Him and seek Him? He is waiting for you!

## **Saturday, December 19, Day 21**

Isaiah 26:3-4

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.

Have you ever been caught out in a boat during a storm? It's happened to me twice and it was terrifying! Total upheaval, instability and fear. All I wanted was to make it to shore. If I could just make it to the Rock! The Rock is safety, stability, strength. It's immovable, it saves! Life can often be like getting caught out in a storm. This entire year has been like a never-ending storm for most of us. Total upheaval and instability. If we could just make it to the Rock. Jesus, the Child born, the Son given is the Rock, the eternal Rock. This means He will and can never fail or crumble or pass away. If you trust in Him, you will have perfect peace through any and every storm in life. Fix your thoughts on the Rock and not the storm, and He will bring safety, stability and strength.

## **Sunday, December 20, Day 22**

### **Fourth Sunday of Advent - The Angels' Candle**

On the fourth Sunday of Advent we light the Angels' Candle. The Angels' Candle reminds us of God's action to save people by sending His Son to earth and also of God's plan to gather His people to Himself on the last day.

Luke 2:1-20

*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup> So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*<sup>8</sup> Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an **angel** of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the **angel** said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the*

*city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."*

*<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the **angel** a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" <sup>15</sup> So it was, when the **angels** had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.*

In these verses one of the greatest celebrations ever held is recorded. On that special night, there were some shepherds out in the fields watching their sheep. It was dark and quiet except for the bleating of a few restless sheep. Suddenly, a great, bright light appeared in front of them! It was an **angel**! The shepherds became very frightened, but the angel told them not to be afraid because he was sent to tell them very good news. The celebration had begun! The angel told them that the promised Savior, Christ the Lord had been born in Bethlehem and they could find Him lying in a manger.

Suddenly, the sky was filled with 1000's of other angels praising God for sending His Promise to mankind. The shepherds joined in the celebration and they ran to tell others this great news.

We too can join in the celebration announced by the angels and give thanks to God for sending us the Savior of the world. Isaiah 52:7 encourages us to "go, tell it on the mountains!" *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

### **Monday, December 21, Day 23**

As we step back today and reflect on these prophecies of the Messiah as a complete collection, we see a theme emerge . . . God's incredible love for us. We see that all these prophecies by Isaiah tell the story that God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to provide forgiveness and eternal life to all who would believe in Him.

Isaiah saw this revelation as well and exclaimed in 63:7 – “I will tell of the Lord’s unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all He has done!”

Love – the final theme of Advent and the dominant theme of Isaiah’s prophecies of the Messiah!

Isn’t that what Christmas is all about anyhow? Love. God’s love for us, which when received, should flow out through us to others. “*Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and love thy neighbor as thyself.*”

Isaiah 63:7 - I will recount the **steadfast love** of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his **steadfast love**.

With just a few days before Christmas day, think of some ways that you can show love to others in the same way God has shown love to you.

## **Tuesday, December 22, Day 24**

Isaiah 43:1-3

" But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Read these verses a couple more times and let these comforting words wash over you and flood your heart with peace and joy. Consider the reassuring promises God makes to us in these verses, observe how personal they are: “I created YOU. I formed YOU I redeemed YOU. I called YOU by name. YOU are mine. I will be with YOU. I am YOUR God, YOUR Savior.” This is the “good tidings of great joy” the angels sang about on that starlit night outside Bethlehem. The wise men brought Him gifts, but none can compare to the gifts He gives to all who put their trust in Him.

## **Wednesday, December 23, Day 25**

Isaiah 2:2-4

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 forth 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.

Yesterday we read about the incredible gifts God promises to those who put their trust in Jesus as God and Savior. Today's verses talk about more gifts yet to come. A day when there will be no more war or conflict, a day of peace and prosperity for all, a day when all people will happily and excitedly stream to worship the Lord. This glorious time is yet to come. It will arrive when Jesus returns. But be sure, just as God kept all His promises through the prophet Isaiah about sending the Savior the first time, He will keep all His promises about His second coming as well! Jesus is coming again! Christmas, Advent not only help us focus on Jesus' birth, but also His promise to come again. *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* (John 14:1-3)

### **Thursday, December 24, Day 26 – Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 12:1-6

In that day you will sing: "I will praise you, O Lord! You were angry with me, but not anymore. Now you comfort me. See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has given me victory." With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation! In that wonderful day you will sing: "Thank the Lord! Praise his name! Tell the nations what he has done. Let them know how mighty he is! Sing to the Lord, for he has done wonderful things. Make known his praise around the world. Let all the people of Jerusalem shout his praise with joy! For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you."

These verses from Isaiah remind us of the joyful gift of salvation through Jesus. What great joy He brings! Do you know personally this great joy? Have you received the greatest gift ever? The gift of eternal life by believing in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Why not do so tonight?

If you want Jesus to be your Savior and Lord:

- Realize you are a sinner and need forgiveness. Romans 3:23 - *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*
- Agree with God that you are a sinner and tell Him you are sorry for your sins. Ask Jesus to forgive you. 1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- Believe Jesus died to save you from your sins and that He is the only Way to eternal life and salvation. Romans 5:8 - *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- Ask Jesus to come into your life, take control of your life, and forgive you of all your sins. Romans 10:9-10, 13 - *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*  
<sup>10</sup> *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation . . .* <sup>13</sup> *For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Jesus will never turn anyone away who comes to Him through faith. He is our only Way to God and we thank Him for the wonderful gift of Jesus!

## **December 25, Day 27 - Christmas Day**

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet (Isaiah), saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

<sup>24</sup> Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, <sup>25</sup> and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

We've spent a long time preparing our hearts for this special day. For four weeks we have walked with Isaiah through one of the most detailed descriptions in the entire Bible about the Good News that Christ the Savior would be born to save us from our sins. Today is that one very special day when we finally get to light the Christ Candle and celebrate God keeping His promise to send the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

As you look at your Advent log you will see that all the other candles have melted down and the Christ Candle is the tallest. They all seem to point to it. On this special day, we too should direct our best attention to the right place.

Today will be full of family, loved ones, opening packages and giving gifts to others. Children will be so excited with their new toys. Some families will be celebrating the birth of a new baby since last Christmas while other families will remember a dear loved one who passed away. What a memorable day it will be!

But whatever our day is filled with, we must make certain that we have received the greatest gift of all - the Lord Jesus Christ. Christmas would not exist without Jesus. He is the reason for the season. Begin this Christmas day worshipping Him. Before you open any presents, bow your heads and thank God for the best Present of all, the Lord Jesus Christ!



*Advent*

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