

The background of the entire page is a night sky with a gradient from dark blue at the top to a warm orange and red glow at the bottom. A bright, multi-pointed star is positioned in the upper right quadrant. In the lower half, the silhouettes of three figures are shown against the horizon. One figure is riding a donkey, and another is walking beside it, holding a lead. The third figure is partially obscured. The overall scene is reminiscent of the nativity story.

The
Promises
of **God**

2024 Advent
Devotional

The Promises of God

Many people make promises, but they don't always come through on their promises. When God promises something, He always follows through. We see this through His mercy, grace, and love, and we see it through the Scriptures, God's Word to us. This Advent season, we will be looking at several promises that God makes to His people. The promise of a Savior, the promise to Abraham, the promise of Bethlehem, and the Promise of Immanuel. All of these promises are fulfilled in the birth of Christ which we celebrate on Christmas. May God guide our Advent season, and help us to see His gracious promises to us.

The Promise of a Savior - Week 1

Adam and Eve had a place in perfection, and threw it away when they fell into temptation and sinned. Yet as early as Genesis 3:15, God promises a Savior, His Son Jesus Christ. The Son of God would come into the world to pay the price and punishment for the sins of all mankind. Jesus lives a perfect life, which we could not, in order that He might die the death which we deserve, to give us everlasting life and the forgiveness of our sins.

The Promise to Abraham - Week 2

Through Abraham, God would bless all nations. God promised Abraham that He and His family would inherit the promised land. Abraham's offspring would be numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God blessed and made the family and descendants of Abraham a blessing. Through this family comes the line from which our Savior Jesus comes.

The Promise of Bethlehem - Week 3

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel..." Why Bethlehem? Why this place? This is the promise of the ruler coming forth from this place that no one would expect. Jesus is a descendant of King David, who was also from Bethlehem. This is the promise of the ruler coming from the little town of Bethlehem.

The promise of Immanuel - Week 4

"God with us." That is this promise of Immanuel. God will be with His people, and Jesus will make His dwelling place among man. No longer is God hidden in the Holy of Holies, but He dwells among us, amidst us, and within us. The Holy Spirit dwells within us that we might share His name and the Joy of the promise of God being with us.

December 1

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.”

Today's Bible verse reminds us of changes in nature and spiritual view. Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect Eden, but change came. When we see the beauty of Fall colors, we are reminded change is coming.

Satan's interaction with mankind created hatred (enmity) and brought about separation from God, hard work, and imperfection. So, the wonderful leaves fall off the trees. We must work hard to rake them up. The landscape becomes brown and bare. The Advent season and coming covering of snow reminds us of the second part of our devotional verse. God promises to send a Savior, who will be the perfect sacrifice for sin and “crush the serpent's head”, for Adam, Eve, and us. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we will have strength to endure life's changes and enjoy our perfect Eden in Heaven.

Lord, during this time of Advent, we struggle with the enmity between us and Satan, sinful consequences, and a constantly changing world. Open our hearts to listen to and believe the promise of Jesus our Savior, first given to Adam and Eve. Amen.

Hymn – “Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord” (LSB 352 – Stanza 5)

Bruise for me the serpent's head
That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to You in faith,
Safely kept through life and death.

Devotion by: Scott Davenport

December 2

Micah 5:4

He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will live securely, for then His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

When the prophet Micah prophesied about the coming of a Savior and named the small, weak town of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus, people were shocked. How could it be that God would choose to have His Son, the Lord and Savior of the world, born in such a humble place?

Yet, we see over and over in the Bible that His ways are very different from the ways of the world. God consistently chooses unlikely people and unlikely places to further the Gospel and good news of salvation. Thankfully, even as we go about our lives in Lansing, Michigan, sometimes feeling small and insignificant, we can be assured that the Creator of all things has written our names in the book of life, granting us the gift of eternal salvation through faith. As unlikely as it may seem, God has chosen us, in this place, to be his people.

Heavenly Father, thank You for showing us that no matter who we are or where we are from, if we have a believing heart, we belong to You. Amen.

Hymn – “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” (LSB 711 – Stanza 1)

Savior, like a shepherd lead us;
Much we need Your tender care.
In Your pleasant pastures feed us,
For our use Your fold prepare.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
You have bought us; we are Yours.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
You have bought us; we are Yours.

Devotion by: Sarah Felsing

December 3

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to son-ship.

It's sometimes hard to imagine, but the old covenant (the Ten Commandments plus more than 600 other laws), was never intended to be a permanent arrangement. Yes, the Commandments are wise to follow, but as sinners, we know we will consistently fall short. The old covenant was about law, chief priests, sacrifices, and actions we needed to do for God. Can you imagine trying to adhere today to all the Levitical requirements of the Old Testament, the temple rituals and the rules concerning codes of conduct? And what about the Gentiles? They had no access to a relationship with God as they weren't even adhering to any of the old covenant's requirements.

No, things had to change because God wants a relationship with each and every one of us. In His perfect timing, He sent his Son. Born to a woman under the very law He was changing.

The free GIFT of Jesus Christ is the one permanent covenant available to every last one of us. With it, comes eternal life, and a relationship with God. This Christmas season, don't lose sight of why God sent His Son to bear our punishment. He loves you that much!

Heavenly Father, Help us to never lose sight of how much You love us, and show us how to love You and our fellow man. Amen.

Hymn – "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" (LSB 556 – Stanza 5)

God said to His beloved Son:
"It's time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of My crown,
And bring to all salvation.
From sin and sorrow set them them free;
Slay bitter death for them that they
May live with You forever."

Devotion by: Steve Boyce

December 4

Luke 1:28

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Picture yourself a 13/14 year old girl (think eighth grade). You are doing your daily chores, when suddenly an angel appears and tells you that you are so favored by God, that He chose you to be the mother of the long-awaited Savior. As startling as the appearance of an angel must have been, the message was even more so. The logistics were very confusing to her, as she was a virgin.

But when the angel explained to her that the Holy Spirit would accomplish this, she did not question any further. Instead she humbly said she was God's servant and to let it happen as God proclaimed. Would she have known the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14? Perhaps not the exact words, but surely she knew that a Savior was promised to them and trusted that it would happen. Mary is a wonderful example to us as to how we are to put our trust into God's promises. If God is calling us to something, He will take care of it. We don't have to be afraid, or worry. God will handle it.

Dear God, thank You for the witness of Mary as she showed her trust in Your promises. May we also be so humble and accepting to Your calling to us. Amen.

Hymn – “The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”
(LSB 356 – Stanza 1)

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
With wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame;
“All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

Devotion by: Wendy Greve

December 5

Isaiah 8:14

He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah He will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem He will be a trap and a snare.

Looking around the world today, we can feel overwhelmed by sin and suffering. At times, we may even feel hopeless. The Israelites probably felt hopeless too when they were about to be invaded by the Assyrians. God reminds us and the Israelites that even in dark times, God provides a sanctuary of safety. God says to the Israelites in Isaiah chapter 8 verse 14, "He will be a holy place..." God continually cares for the Israelites, providing them love and care in the form of a holy place, but also reminding them of His promise that He made to Adam and Eve.

Although sin is now in the world, a Savior will come. The Israelites had to look forward to our Savior coming. In this Advent season, we too anticipate Jesus being born. We find refuge in Jesus, who lived a perfect life for us. Jesus is holy because we cannot be. Jesus, the light that defeated all darkness and sin. Jesus, our sanctuary and holy place.

Dear Jesus, We thank You for coming to be our holy place. Turn our hearts to You when we feel overwhelmed. Remind us that You are our sanctuary, and have defeated all sin by dying on the cross for us. Thank You for the forgiveness and safety You give to us. Amen.

Hymn – "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" (LSB 338 – Stanza 1)

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 ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Devotion by: Faith Korte

December 6

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Rejoice greatly! This is an easy thing to do during the joyful and easy times in life when everything is going according to plan. But Zechariah's message to the Israelites doesn't come at a time of joy. Instead it is a time of despair and corruption when they were taken captive. Definitely not a time to rejoice greatly!

It is during this time of despair that the Israelites are given a beautiful promise of a Savior who would come riding on a donkey to give salvation. A promise later fulfilled on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey.

As followers of Christ, we get to live in that promise fulfilled everyday! A righteous King did come to save us! So when Jesus promises that He will come again to give us eternal life, we can rejoice greatly on both the easy and challenging days that we have the promise of a Savior who gives us salvation and eternal life. So let's rejoice greatly this season knowing that we have the most precious gift- Our Savior!

Dear Jesus, May I rejoice greatly in the promise that You will come again and give me and all believers eternal life. Give me strength and patience for the days ahead as I await Your coming. Amen.

Hymn – “Ride On, Ride On in Majesty” (LSB 441 – Stanza 5)

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, Thy pow'r and reign.

Devotion by: Rebecca Young

December 7

Isaiah 35:5-6

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Can you think of a time when you were worried? In a world filled with chaos and anxiety, it's hard for us not to worry. Whether it's about things that happen at work, upcoming tests at school, approaching sports games or races, or our political world, it's difficult to ease the nervousness in our bodies.

Can you think of a time when you were promised something? Today's bible verse comes from Isaiah in the Old Testament. Isaiah was one of the first major prophets in the Bible. In this passage, he prophesied about one who would open the eyes of the blind, allow the mute to speak, and make the lame leap to their feet. It sounds like the works of Jesus in the Gospels. Isaiah promised the world that there would be someone to save the hurt and the sick. Not only did Jesus save these people, but He saved all people because of His death and resurrection. Isaiah's prediction of Jesus' birth is the greatest promise we could ever receive. With the promise of a Savior we have no reason to worry. We no longer have to live our lives in fear because God is always in control.

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your son Jesus into the world to take away our worries. Help us remember that the promise of Jesus' birth was the greatest promise of all. Amen.

Hymn – “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”
(LSB 358 – Stanza 14)

My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song.

Devotion by: Ryan Couser

December 8

Genesis 12:3

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Do you ever wish you could go back in time to change a decision? Yes, the lure of having the power of foresight is real. I believe that urge is in a large part due to knowing that we should have turned to God, before we made our poor decision. That's what amazes me about the story of Abraham. Being old enough to have great grandchildren, yet not having been able to father a son with his wife Sarah for many years. Yet he had ears to hear God's voice saying to him to uproot his comfortable life to caravan to an unknown and hostile land. Imagine listening to God tell you that your descendants would be as many as the stars in heaven while having no children at 75 and thinking your wife is barren. Then packing everything up and planning to live in a tent while searching for said land. Abraham turned to, and then listened to God. This Advent season I pray that we will turn to God first, with the faith of Abraham.

Dear Lord, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, give us the faith of Abraham. Help us to understand that turning to You first is a sign of strength of faith. Your promise is clear that all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham. The birth of Jesus is the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise. Let us rejoice together as we praise him! Amen.

Hymn – “Arise and Shine in Splendor” (LSB 396 – Stanza 4)

Lift up your eyes in wonder
See, nations gather yonder
From sin to be set free.
The world has heard Your story;
Her sons come to Your glory;
Her daughters haste Your light to see.

Devotion by: Allen Broskey

December 9

Genesis 28:14

“Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, the north and the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”

God speaks profound promises to Jacob, declaring that his descendants will be as numerous as the dust. This imagery encourages us to reflect on the boundless nature of God's blessings and love. Dust is everywhere, similar to how God's people are intended to spread His word and love to all corners of the world. God works through us, so others may come to know His love and grace. We were created as part of a legacy to spread His word; a legacy that includes generations of people from all walks of life.

As we go about our daily lives this Advent season, let us remember that we are all included in this promise. Even Jacob, who deceived his own family, is included in God's promise of love and forgiveness. May we embrace our role as blessings in our families, our communities, and beyond, trusting that God will multiply our efforts for His glory. Let's spread His love in every direction, knowing that through us, all people can be blessed.

Heavenly Father, lead me to be a legacy of Your love and devotion to everyone in my life. Like Jacob, I don't always deserve Your love and forgiveness. Thank you for loving sinners like me. Amen.

Hymn – “My Soul Rejoices” (LSB 933 – Stanza 2)

His arm now baring, His strength declaring
Sing the greatness of the Lord!
The proud He scatters, Their rule He shatters
Sing the greatness of the Lord!
Oppression halted; The meek exalted.
Full are the hungry; Empty, the wealthy
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!
Here is the token All that was spoken
To Abr'ham's offspring God is fulfilling
O sing the greatness of God the Lord!

Devotion by: Meghan McDowell-Morris

December 10

Isaiah 42:4-5

“He will not falter or be discouraged till He establishes justice on earth. In His teaching the islands will put their hope.” This is what God the Lord says – the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

We as Christians should expect to walk through tough times that threaten to overwhelm us. As His followers, Jesus wants us to cast our cares upon Him. We're not supposed to try and do life on our own. We're certainly not bothering Him when we send up yet one more prayer! Jesus, our Savior and Friend, loves to hear from us. Yes, it can be hard trusting God when we lose a job; when our family is falling apart; when we discover that we have something like cancer.

But in sharing our fears and doubts with the creator of everything, we invite Him to take action. We learn to trust. We learn to live with expectation. We learn to wait patiently. We learn that in rushing to “do something,” we often make a mess. God speaks to us all the time. Sometimes through our gut, sometimes through our conscience. Sometimes through other people and always through His Word. We should make it a frequent practice to meet God through scripture and prayer to navigate the tough times.

Almighty God, I pray that, in Your infinite kindness and grace, You bestow hope and good faith amongst those who need it. Amen.

Hymn – “O Love, How Deep” (LSB 544 – Stanza 4)

For us He prayed; for us He taught;
For us His daily works He wrought,
By words and signs and actions thus
Still seeking not Himself but us.

Devotion by: Dan Brunk

December 11

Isaiah 11:10

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Trees are marvelous creations. Not only are they beautiful for landscapes, their leaves also provide shade on hot days and can even produce fruit for our bodies. The tree's lifeline is the roots growing deep underground. Without the roots, the tree would not stay anchored in place. It could not receive the nutrition and water that it needs to grow and thrive.

Our verse today talks about the Root of Jesse standing as a banner for all peoples. Jesse, who was an ancestor of Abraham and the father of King David, would become part of the family tree of Jesus, the promised Savior. As the root of this family tree, Jesus anchors all past and future peoples to Himself. Through His death on the tree of the cross, He brings eternal life to those who come into His family. Jesus washes our sins clean through the waters of baptism and keeps us firmly planted, giving us the nutrition of His word and sacraments to help us not only to grow, but to thrive. Because of Jesus we become marvelous new creations, producing fruit for others to see.

Dear Father, thank You that You have rooted and established us in Your love. May we learn to grasp how deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn – “Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming” (LSB 359 – Stanza 1)

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As prophets long have sung,
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.

Devotion by: Kelli Schaedig

December 12

Romans 4:16

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

The faith of Abraham! Something to strive for. God gave many promises to Abraham. To receive them he had to have faith. He trusted God for direction in his life. He left his home to go to an unknown land and God blessed him. He trusted God to give him a son in old age, and God blessed him. Then, he entrusted God with the life of his son, Isaac, and God blessed him. Abraham was blessed not because he obeyed the laws of the time, but because he had faith in the promises of God.

If we rely on laws to save us, faith means nothing and the promises of God are worthless. Abraham didn't know or necessarily understand the path on which God was leading him. Today we have the road map, the word of God in the Bible, to guide us toward that wonderful promise of God, the gift of eternal life with Him in heaven. To receive that gift, we need to have the faith of Abraham. Believe the Gospel message that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from our sins; grace through faith. When you look up to the night sky and see the stars, think of Abraham's faith that led to the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Gracious Father, we pray, give us faith to accept Your son, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Help us to share this wonderful Gospel message. Amen.

Hymn – "Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come"
(LSB 350 – Stanza 3)

My hosannas and my palms
Graciously receive, I pray Thee;
Evermore, as best I can,
Savior, I will homage pay Thee,
And in faith I will embrace,
Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.

Devotion by: Darryl Warncke

December 13

Matthew 1:17

Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

When I was young in my faith, I wondered why the lineage of Jesus was spelled out. It seemed like a lot of detail and I didn't realize it's importance. I came to understand why Matthew took the time to show Jesus' family line. In ancient Israel, family lineage was not just a matter of heritage, but also the foundation of identity. Showing that Jesus descended from Abraham, the patriarch of Israel, showed the promise from God that through Abraham's descendants, all nations of the world would be blessed. The fact that Jesus was a descendant of David, proves that He is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel, emphasizing His role as the Messiah! This lineage is not just a tedious detail of family history, but an account of God's long-standing, faithful promise to His people by providing the path for salvation and eternity with our loving Father. Jesus is not just a teacher or prophet, but the fulfillment of God's covenant bringing His plan to completion.

Gracious Father, we thank You for sending Your Son as the fulfillment of Your promise, giving us a path to be with You forever in Heaven. Help us to live in a way that spreads the good news of Your redeeming son. Amen.

Hymn – "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage" (LSB 582)

God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations.

Devotion by: Stan Ferris

December 14

Romans 4:17

As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not."

God has the power over death and the ability to create life. Abraham believed this, through faith. Abraham's trust in God's promise to make his descendants as numerous as the stars, and his belief that God could raise Isaac from certain death, gives us hope today for whatever problems we face. We need not fear. As we can see, God is in control.

Satan will tell us, when there are bills left unpaid, when there is sickness and death, when there are children that have gone astray, when jobs are lost, when the attacks on the unborn continue, there is no hope. Our gracious Father, through His son Jesus, says differently.

Dear Lord, as Christmas approaches this year, we ask that You renew in our hearts, as You demonstrated through Abraham, that Your promises never fail: promises to save us from our sinful ways, and to one day welcome all believers to our heavenly home are reasons to celebrate and give You thanks. Lord, thank you for the ultimate promise, amazingly fulfilled, in a tiny baby - your son, Jesus. Amen.

Hymn – "Sing Praise to the God of Israel" (LSB 936 – Stanza 2)

God spoke by the prophets long ago,
His promise on oath recalling
To Abraham made in former years;
Of vanquishing foes appalling,
That those He delivered from their fears
Might gladly and truly serve Him.

Devotion by: Clyde Kamm

December 15

Micah 5:2

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

“Oh little town of Bethlehem...” Have you ever stopped to consider the deeper meaning in this beloved Christmas song? How this small town would be home to the greatest ruler of all time? As prophesied, and with such specificity, the prophet Micah leaves no doubt that the Christ Child would be born in little Bethlehem. Despite Jesus' lowly beginnings, His lineage can be traced (and prophesied) from ancient times. God often chose the most humble of his servants to do great things: Joseph, Rahab, David, Mary, John the Baptist; at first glance, these people would seem insignificant.

In taking a closer look, it wasn't their significance that God used, it was their faith. By the same token, it's our faith, even if it's as small as a mustard seed, that makes us great by Jesus, the Son of God Himself, who took on flesh and humbled Himself to be born in the little, unsuspecting town of Bethlehem.

Dear Lord, please use our faith in You to do great things for Your Kingdom here on earth. Amen.

Hymn – “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (LSB 361 – Stanza 1)

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

Devotion by: Meghan Sternemann

December 16

I Samuel 17:14-15

David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

There is a lot going on in this pivotal section of Scripture! Saul had been rejected as king, with David then anointed by Samuel. David was "back and forth from Saul" as a de facto music therapist, playing his harp to soothe the king from the torment of an evil spirit. David's brothers "followed Saul" to war against the Philistines where the champion Goliath stood in daily defiance of the Israelite army.

Meanwhile, the family work continued as David tended to his father's flock in Jesse's hometown of Bethlehem. From here we know what happened in David's life, his triumphs, failures, sin and redemption. Consider these examples of how God wove together so many seemingly unrelated events to turn the focus to Bethlehem, where the promise of a Savior would be fulfilled some 28 generations later.

During that time, imagine the darkness and despair of the exile, where the Lord seemed far away, only to redeem His people in His time and according to His promise. If the Lord seems far from you today, rest on that same promise, that the same Jesus promised at Bethlehem is the same Jesus who lives and cares for you, today and always.

Heavenly Father, thank You for lining up these events in Your perfect timing and sending Jesus to accomplish all that was necessary for our salvation. Amen.

Hymn – "The Royal Banners Forward Go" (LSB 455 – Stanza 3)

Fulfilled is all that David told
In sure prophetic song of old,
That God the nations' king should be
And reign in triumph from the tree.

Devotion by: Harlan Schaedig

December 17

Matthew 1:20-21

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”

The previous scripture verses tell us that Joseph had “considered” things prior to his dream where this announcement was made. He was labeled a righteous man; he knew Jewish law, Old Testament prophecies, and the Holy Spirit's power. Joseph knew his heritage of David's line. He listened and obeyed because he knew the Lord God was a promise keeper and trustworthy. Confidently, he and Mary ushered Immanuel into the world, to be our Savior from sin-the Baby Jesus!

Heavenly Father, Thank You for helping Joseph to look back, obey, then look to the future. The Scriptures You gave us remind us of who You are and what You've done. May we consider and obey Your Word. And, with no fear of what lies ahead, trust Your unfailing promise of our future in Heaven forever. Amen.

Hymn – “Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love” (LSB 900 – Stanza 5)

Jesus, only name that's giv'n
Under all the mighty heav'n
Whereby those to sin enslaved
Burst their fetters and are saved.

Devotion by: Kathy Davenport

December 18

Luke 1:39-40

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

The unexpected challenges, disappointments, uncertainties and loss were times that I couldn't fully understand and have wondered why my family was experiencing such things. As I look back on those times, I see God's faithfulness and His plans unfolded in the midst of the trials. He carries us through the storms and holds us so tightly as we navigate through all the areas that are before us. Life isn't perfect, but God still is.

As I sit and ponder on areas related to Bethlehem, house of bread and the meaning behind the given name, I'm reminded of His promises and how He has been very present in my life and the lives of others around me. Jesus declared in John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus, the Bread of Life was and is God's promise to each and every one of us. The hope, comfort, peace and presence of Christ is always near, He is where we find substance.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the many blessings that You have provided. Open our eyes to see the needs around us and hearts to embrace and serve others as You have called us to serve. Amen.

Hymn – "Mary Hurried to the Country"

Mary hurried to the country,
For Elizabeth lived there.
Both of these expectant mothers
Had so much they longed to share;
For God's Spirit came upon them,
Filled with their lives with humble care.

Devotion by: Tina Ferris

December 19

Genesis 49:10

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between His feet, until He to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be His.

The Patriarch Jacob was on his deathbed, delivering blessings to his sons and prophesying what will come of his family. Nearing death, he must've recalled the sins of deception towards his brother in his past and the sins of his sons, selling their brother as a slave and lying to their father about it. The weight of his sin at the end of his life was truly unbearable.

However, he also must've been at peace recalling the promises God gave him that the Messiah would come from his family line. Imagine that! Not only was there a promise of a Savior from his sins to free him of his burden that he put his faith in, but that Savior would also be a descendant of his family. He knew he in no way deserved the honor, but God gave him the grace to even know which of his sons the Messiah would come from! Little Bethlehem in the land of Judah would not only be home to the greatest king of his people (David) but also the greatest King this world could ever know: Jesus the Christ, Son of the living God.

Oh Holy Spirit, increase in us faith in the promise of the forgiveness of sins we have through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Amen.

Hymn – "A Great and Mighty Wonder" (LSB 383 – Stanza 5)

All idols then shall perish
And Satan's lying cease,
And Christ shall raise the scepter,
Decreeing endless peace.
Proclaim the Savior's birth:
"To God on high be glory
And peace to all the earth!"

Devotion by: Matt Sternemann

December 20

Luke 2:4

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

O Little Town of Bethlehem. God had big plans for Thee!

God is working out His perfect plan of salvation by way of Caesar's taxation decree. Seven hundred years earlier He promised through the prophet Micah, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." And God always keeps His promises.

Mary and Joseph travelled over 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem even though it was late in her pregnancy. Upon arrival the road-weary couple are told "there is no room for you." People are still refusing to make room for Him, even at Christmastime.

That holy night, the King of Kings was born in conditions far from royal. The Bethlehem promise was fulfilled in an unexpected way. But doesn't the unexpected prove to be wonderfully expected in the life and ministry of Jesus?

O Little Town of Bethlehem. You don't seem so little anymore!

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to save us. Your amazing love and grace are the best Christmas gifts ever. Amen.

Hymn – "What Hope An Eden Prophesied!" (LSB 342 – Stanza 2)

A shoot will sprout from Jesse's stem,
A branch from David's line,
A Prince of Peace in Bethlehem:
The fruit of God's design.

Devotion by: Deb Kamm

December 21

Luke 2:11

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.”

In the quiet of a Bethlehem night, a promise, centuries in the making, is fulfilled.

The angel's proclamation to shepherds heralded not just a birth, but the arrival of hopes fulfilled, and incarnate as promised. Verse 11 captures the essence of God's redemption in our Savior, unveiling the identity and purpose of the newborn child in three marvelous ways:

As Savior, Jesus came to rescue us from the death of sin, offering salvation to the lost.

As the long-awaited Messiah, prophesied in the Old Testament.

And as Lord, the rightful sovereign ruler of all creation.

The promise of Bethlehem still touches our hearts. In the midst of our trouble and uncertainty, our joy in salvation can never be lost. Jesus Christ, who came into our world that holy night is with us today.

Our hopes are realized in the One who came to save us.

*Heavenly Father, let us marvel at the fulfillment of Your promise.
Fill our hearts with joy to share the good news. Our Savior is born!
Amen.*

Hymn – On Christmas Night, All Christians Sing" (LSB 377 – Stanza 1)

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring,
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

Devotion by: Nate Wagner

December 22

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.”

Who Do You Want On Your Side?

Ahaz, king of Judah, declined to ask God for a sign. The offer was made as he decided if the Lord could be trusted to deliver His people. Ahaz had already decided. Ahaz trusted the Assyrians to deliver instead. That alliance led to disaster.

Can we be tempted, as Ahaz was, to find answers to problems in ways that ignore the presence of God? Lies are sometimes rationalized as “there was no other way out”. Peer pressure can be present whatever our age. Sometimes to “fit in” we may act, or speak, in ways we know are wrong. There are various “alliances” that ignore the presence of God.

Despite Ahaz's faithlessness, God gave a sign. “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14) We rejoice its ultimate fulfillment. Jesus was born of a virgin.

God is with us. May He forgive us for times we have ignored His presence. May He strengthen our faith to trust His will and His ability to deliver.

What a blessing to have Him on our side.

Jesus, you are Immanuel. You are God with us. May Your presence guide and help me in every need. Amen.

Hymn – “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357 – Stanza 1)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Devotion by: Pastor Bob Riggs

December 23

Luke 1:41-42

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

In Luke 1:41-42, we witness a beautiful moment between Elizabeth and Mary, where Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, feels her child leap within her at the arrival of Mary. Her immediate response is one of joy and blessing: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" This scene captures the joy of recognizing God's work in someone else's life. Elizabeth could have felt envious, but instead, she celebrates Mary's unique role and the miracle within her.

In our lives, we may sometimes struggle to celebrate others' blessings, but Elizabeth's reaction calls us to lift up and rejoice with those God is using. When we honor and encourage others in their journey, as Elizabeth did for Mary, we also open ourselves to God's work in our hearts. Let us strive to respond with joy and encouragement, trusting that God's blessings are abundant and perfectly timed for each of us. This passage reminds us to embrace the blessings in others' lives with gratitude, knowing that their joy can enrich our faith journey.

Lord, help us rejoice in others' blessings, celebrating Your work in their lives. Open our hearts to encourage and lift them with joy. Amen.

Hymn – "When All the World Was Cursed" (LSB 346 – Stanza 2)

Before he yet was born,
He leaped in joyful meeting,
Confessing Him as Lord
Whose mother he was greeting.
By Jordan's rolling stream,
A new Elijah bold,
He testified of Him
Of whom the prophets told.

Devotion by: Duane and Simone Margraf

December 24

Matthew 1:23

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us).

Immanuel, “God with us”. How wonderful and comforting those words are to us! In the beginning God walked in the garden among Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8). Their sin then separated them from God. For years the Israelites anxiously awaited the coming of the Messiah. The name Immanuel is very fitting and was comforting to the Israelites because Jesus' birth was the physical presence of God with His people again.

On Christmas Eve, as we celebrate the anticipation of Jesus' birth, it is a great time to reflect on these words. Whether you already feel God's presence knowing the full story and His saving grace or in the hustle and bustle of the season it is hard to feel that God is near, take comfort in knowing that He came to be with you, to save you from your sins, and promises you will be with Him eternally one day.

Heavenly Father, help us focus on the saving grace Your presence provides this season. As we go about our daily lives, may we remember You are with us and will be always. Thank You, Amen.

Hymn – “O Sing of Christ” (LSB 362 – Stanza 4)

Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to dwell
Among us here on earth
As God with us, Emmanuel,
To bring this holy birth.
Though rich, You willingly became
One with our poverty,
That we might share Your wealth and name
For all eternity!

Devotion by: Amanda Koschmann

December 25

Luke 2:7

She wrapped Him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Remember back to all the promises you have made to your children or grandkids. The special present that you would get them for a birthday or Christmas. The trip or vacation they waited expectantly to take. Recall the excitement when they opened the gift or you departed on the trip. Who was more ecstatic upon fulfillment of the promise, you or the kids?

The children of Israel had been promised a Savior and waited untold years waiting for the fulfillment of that promise. Isaiah 9:6 says: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and continues through verse 7 with the familiar words of scripture.

Luke 2 relates the magical words of the Christmas story that we hear annually this time of the year. Verse 11 says: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. The long awaited promise has been fulfilled. True then and fulfilled for us, today!

Celebrate and Rejoice. A Savior is born, Christ, the Lord!!!

Heavenly Father, we are all in need of a Savior. Thank You for sending Your Son to stand in our place, die on a cross and rise from the grave to forgive our sins and open the doors of Heaven for us. Amen.

Hymn – “Away in a Manger” (LSB 364 – Stanza 1)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed.
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky Looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Devotion by: Bill Burmeister

December 26

Luke 1:45

“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

Few things in life are as exciting as the anticipation of a baby. There is also a sense of mystery about this miraculous gift from God. In the past expectant parents had no idea what their new bundle of joy would be like. Modern medicine has all but eliminated the decision of what color to paint the nursery. Today couples come up with some fun and creative ways to announce a boy or girl via a reveal party.

In the first chapter of Luke we are invited to the greatest reveal party ever. The angel Gabriel comes to Mary and tells her she will have a son. Not only that but the angel tells her that her son's name will be “Jesus” and that he will be “the Son of the Most High” and that “His kingdom will never end.” Mary replies, “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

Soon after, Mary visited her relative Elizabeth who was also expecting a baby. Elizabeth's unborn baby leaped for joy and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit at the sound of Mary's greeting.

Mary believed and God fulfilled his promise to Mary. God fulfilled His promise of a savior and we believe.

Dear God, Thank You for Your promise of a savior fulfilled through Your Son our Lord. Thank You for revealing this through Your Word. Amen.

Hymn – “Once in Royal David's City” (LSB 376 – Stanza 1)

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

Devotion by: Bill Hall

December 27

John 3:16-17

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”

Have you ever received a gift from someone from whom you did not expect to receive a gift? This likely put you in a position where you were upset that you did not get that person a gift or the gift you gave did not “compare” to the gift you received.

My favorite word in the bible is grace – and that is summed up perfectly in the verse that we all know in John 3:16. Who can give a gift for the whole world? Only someone who created it and loves it as much as God does. I think it is very difficult, especially for the non-Christian, to understand that this great gift is freely given, and the only thing we need to do is believe in Him. There is no greater gift for the entire world and this great gift of a Savior was given once and for all.

Father God, we thank You for the undeserved gift of our Savior Jesus. Help us to daily realize that this is our only need on this earth and share the knowledge of this gift with others. Amen.

Hymn – “God Loved the World So That He Gave”
(LSB 571 – Stanza 1)

God loved the world so that He gave
His only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Devotion by: Brett Kaschinske

December 28

John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

In this verse, Jesus promises that whoever follows him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Jesus came to bring light into this world. In Him there is no darkness. When he died and rose again He sent the Holy Spirit to us and He gives us personal, 24/7 access to God.

To draw closer to Jesus' light, we have the awesome privilege to spend time in Bible study, worship and prayer. It is our personal choice how much time we spend in his presence reading the word, praying, and talking to God. When we take full advantage of this gift, we are filled with His light, His goodness, His love, peace and joy. We draw from our worship time to experience the benefits of a closer relationship with God through His gift of Jesus, the Light of the World, and, after he ascended, the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Dear God, thank You for fulfilling Your promise to bring Your light into this world. Help us to make our “God time” our first priority each and every day. Amen.

Hymn – “O Christ, Our True and Only Light” (LSB 839 – Stanza 1)

O Christ, our true and only light,
Enlighten those who sit in night;
Let those afar now hear Your voice
And in Your fold with us rejoice.

Devotion by: Tammy Hall

December 29

Isaiah 9:2

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

It's always about this time of year that I realize how much I miss the sunlight. These days the sun only seems to be up for just a few hours and then the darkness returns. I long for the days, when the sun will shine its light longer throughout the day.

The nation of Israel in Isaiah 9 also experienced darkness. Although this darkness didn't depend on the tilt of the world being away from the sun. Rather, they walked in darkness because their hearts were turned away from God's commands. But God didn't leave His people in darkness and God does not leave you and me in our darkness.

For God sent His Son into the world to be a light for the world. This light never changes or shifts. This light shines in the darkest of times and the darkness cannot overcome it (John 1:5). Whatever this New Year brings you, know with full confidence that Jesus' light will shine through your darkest of times. He did for Israel, and He will for you too!

Heavenly Father, Help us to follow the Light of the World and forsake our paths of darkness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn – "The People That in Darkness Sat" (LSB 412 – Stanza 1)

The people that in darkness sat
A glorious light have seen;
The light has shined on them who long
In shades of death have been,
In shades of death have been.

Devotion by: Vicar Joseph Bender

December 30

Matthew 28:19-20

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus gives his Great Commission to the disciples and to us even today. Calling all who believe in Him—profess their faith in Him, live out their life for Him—to a daily mission. To spread God's truth, love, forgiveness, and salvation.

Once we have been baptized we are not done, we need to continue to learn and grow in Christ, while sharing our faith with others. We must have a humble spirit and humble hearts, to seek to glorify God in all we say and do, as we point people to Christ. Jesus promises He will be with us always and gives us the Holy Spirit who gives us wisdom, guides us, directs us, and uses us to reach others.

Lord, give me a teachable spirit, humble and always glorifying You. Help me to see how You are calling me to be a disciple to those in my life. Help me to grow daily in knowing Your truth and pour out Your Holy Spirit upon me. Amen.

Hymn – “Christ High-Ascended, Now in Glory Seated”
(LSB 840 – Stanza 3)

Christ, who in dying won for us salvation,
Lives now the firstborn of the new creation;
To win disciples out of ev'ry nation,
We are His witnesses.

Devotion by: Alissa Brandenburg

December 31

John 14:1-2

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

Imagine those people living during the time of Jesus. They knew of the Old Testament writings. They knew of God. They knew of the Jewish traditions up to that point. Then Jesus came along – with some changes. He brought salvation to everyone by restoring for us a right relationship with God. He did it with the authority of God. “You believe in God; believe also in me.” His disciples didn't quite know what was about to happen when Jesus uttered those words, but there was tension and uncertainty among them when he spoke these words. Jesus knew their fears. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

Jesus knows your fears. Jesus knows that a new year can bring tension and uncertainty. You may be troubled by what might change in the new year, but Jesus does not change. His promises do not change. He does not want our hearts to be troubled by an uncertain temporal future here on earth. He wants us to know that He promises a place for us to dwell together with him forever. Let His promises take away your fears and uncertainties.

Dear Jesus, thank You for calming our fears and preparing our hearts for eternity with You. Help us cling to Your promises this year and always. Amen.

Hymn – “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” (LSB 461 – Stanza 7)

He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

Devotion by: Dave Wright

January 1

Matthew 6:31-33

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Have you worried lately? Maybe you've worried about what to do now that the holiday season is over? Maybe you've worried about what the new year, 2025 will look like? Maybe you've worried about that new years resolution? Worry is around us, it encompasses us, and how often we let it engulf our lives.

My wife and I recently talked to our oldest daughter, Ida, about needs and wants. There are many things we want in this world: chocolate, a brand new car, the perfect gift for that loved one. And yet the things that we need, God will provide. All of the extra 'stuff,' all of our wants, they can be God-pleasing, but why let those things worry us? Focus on the kingdom of God, the joy that He gives you, and the Savior that fulfilled all of God's promises.

Your gracious God knows your needs. He cares for you, and He loves you. Never forget that.

You are His chosen child. You are His beloved heir. You are His today, through 2025, through 2026, and through eternity. So don't worry. (Easier said than done, I know...) Seek His kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Happy New Year!

*God, be with me today, tomorrow, this year and into eternity.
Thank You, Lord. Amen.*

Hymn – “Seek Ye First” (LSB 712 – Stanza 1)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
And His righteousness.
And all these things
Shall be added unto you!
Allelu, alleluia!

Devotion by: Pastor Chris Deneen

Advent at Our Savior Lutheran

Sunday Worship Services

Sunday, December 1 - 8:30am & 10:30am (Communion)
"The Promise of a Savior"

Sunday, December 8 - 8:30am & 10:30am
10am - Connect Worship
"The Promise to Abraham"

Sunday, December 15 - 8:30am & 10:30am (Communion)
"The Promise of Bethlehem"

Sunday, December 22 - 8:30am & 10:30am
10am - Connect Worship
"The Promise of Immanuel"

Events & Midweek Services

Advent Hymns Midweek Service
Wednesday, December 4, 7pm

Advent by Candlelight: "Wrapped with Love"
Saturday, December 7, 2-4pm

Early Childhood & Kindergarten Christmas Program
Sunday, December 8, 4pm

Grades 5-8 Christmas Concert
Wednesday, December 11, 7pm

Advent by Bonfire
Saturday, December 14, 5-8pm

Grades 1-4 Christmas Program
Wednesday, December 18, 7pm

Living Nativity
Saturday, December 21, 5-7pm

Christmas Eve

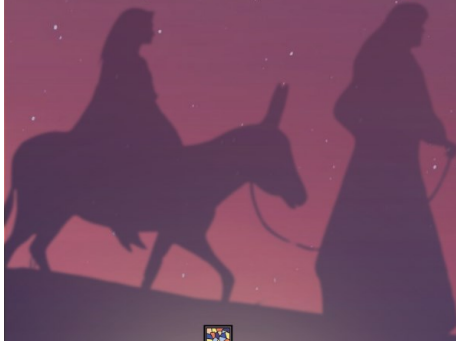
Tuesday, December 24

3:00pm: Connect Worship

5:00pm: Contemporary Worship

7:00pm: Choirs, Strings, Organ Worship

*All evening services will include
candlelight ceremony
and communion.*



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