



Unending

JOY

DAILY ADVENT DEVOTIONAL READINGS
BCEC 2020

NLT VERSION

They will enter
Zion with singing;
unending joy will
crown their heads.
Gladness and joy
will overtake them
and sorrow and
sighing will flee away

Isaiah 35:10

Unending Joy
Daily Advent Devotional Readings
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Introduction

It has always been a dream of mine to write a book, a novel or a memoir? A book that's worth pouring time, sweat and effort getting written, a book that's worth getting published, a book worth people spending their valuable time investing in by doing the simple act of reading. Instead, I gift you this book, which I know has been worth every minute compiling: a devotional book that instead of being filled with stories, contains something even better, the ultimate weapon, that's beautifully written, God-breathed and useful for teaching us, rebuking us, correcting us, training us in righteousness: His Word.

This is a Christmas gift to you and your walk with God. I pray that it will help you flourish and grow deeper in your walk, experiencing a deeper sense of His ever-increasing, everlasting, unending joy, especially as we come to the end of 2020. May the pages of this devotional inspire, transform, encourage, challenge, move and breathe life into your soul, daily. And may it help you develop a habit to pick up his sword, the word after you have completed this book.

Everyday there are set readings with questions which you have the option of answering. There are also action prompts, usually prayer, but occasionally a task which can be useful to challenge you and others to do together. The focus of this can either be for yourself individually, your family/household, the church community, the nation or as wide as the world.

Please do share with your lifegroup leaders or someone on the pastoral team if you've had any special moments or encounters during this Advent season—it's always super encouraging and inspiring to hear what God is saying to brothers and sisters in our church.

Special thanks to Henna for the artwork and beautiful calligraphy. And big heartfelt thanks to Dan Li for helping me with this project!

May God's word on the following pages speak and bless your soul with unending joy!
Love, Ansy

How to use this book

While there are many methods out there on how to spend time with God in His word, here are some tips to help you get the most out of reading scripture in this Advent Devotional book during the next 27 days.

1. Find a quiet spot that you know you won't fall asleep in, maybe have plenty of light to help you focus better on the words and as you let God speak to you.
2. Before you start reading the set scripture, pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal either something new, or an old truth you need reminding about.
3. Spend some time reading and be open to the Holy Spirit's leading.
4. If you are printing this book, there's space for you to take notes, scribble or doodle. If you're reading this via an electronic device, feel free to add comment and annotating the pages. Alternatively, you can journal alongside this devotional.

Day number and dates are next to the title for your information

The bible passage is printed out for ease of reading, and so you are free to use a pen and annotate all over the passage!

There are lines provided for you in case the Spirit prompts you to take notes

Day 18:
18, 12-20

Son of the Most High

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

²⁹Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

³⁴Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

³⁵The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷For the word of God will never fail."

³⁸Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

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Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

²²All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

²³"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Which key words or individuals' situation in the passage you read, do you most relate to and why?

The world, with those same words, pray them over the world, or a specific country. Praying for the joy of the Lord to be moved in those areas of the world.

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Sunday of Advent

JOY TO THE world

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 15:13

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Daily questions and action / prayer prompts to help spur and challenge you. Optional.

Rest Day

Use this extra day to rest, pray, meditate on the following scripture, or to simply catch up. This space also allows you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

Unending Joy (NLT) BCEC Advent 2020 7

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 15:13

What were some small joys from today that spring to mind?

Unending Joy (NLT) BCEC Advent 2020 8

Sundays are marked as a "rest day". You can use this day to rest, pray, meditate on the scripture set for that day, or to simply catch up from previously missed days. There is also space for you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

Day 1:
29.11.20

Rest Day

*Use this extra day to rest, pray,
meditate on the following
scripture, or to simply catch up.
This space also allows you to take
notes from the Sunday sermon.*



May the God of
hope fill you with
all joy and peace
as you trust in Him,
so that you may
overflow with hope
by the power of
the Holy Spirit

Romans 15:13

What were some small
joys from today that
spring to mind?

Come & Seek the Lord

Isaiah 55:6-13

⁶Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

⁷Let 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.

⁸“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.

“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so my ways are higher than your ways

and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

¹⁰“The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth.

They cause the grain to grow,

producing seed for the farmer

and bread for the hungry.

¹¹It is the same with my word.

I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

It will accomplish all I want it to,

and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

¹²You will live in joy and peace.

The mountains and hills will burst into song,

and the trees of the field will clap their hands!

¹³Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow.

Where nettles grew, myrtles will sprout up.

These events will bring great honor to the LORD’s name; they will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.”

Day 3:
1.12.20

Light of the world

Genesis 1.1-5

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

John 1.1-5, 9-10

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

John 8.12

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

Day 4:
2.12.20

The first joyful promise

Genesis 3:1-15

3 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

2 “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. 3 “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

4 “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. 5 “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

6 The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. 7 At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10 He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

11 “Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

12 The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

13 Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

Day 5:
3.12.20

God's Covenant

Genesis 12:1-9

12 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹ Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Genesis 21:1-7

21 The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ² She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. ³ And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴ Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶ And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷ Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

Genesis 22:15-18

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶ “This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷ I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸ And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

John 8:54-58

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I want glory for myself, it doesn’t count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, ‘He is our God,’ ⁵⁵ but you don’t even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷ The people said, “You aren’t even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?”

⁵⁸ Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!”

Romans 4:13-25

¹³ Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴ If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. ¹⁵ For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

¹⁶ So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.” This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

¹⁸ Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” ¹⁹ And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. ²² And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³ And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴ for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

Galatians 3:7-18

⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God.

⁸ What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

¹⁰ But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." ¹¹ So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." ¹² This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life."

¹³ But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

¹⁵ Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ God gave the promises to Abraham and his child. And notice that the Scripture doesn't say "to his children," as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says "to his child"—and that, of course, means Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise.

Christ Prophesied

Isaiah 7:10-14

¹⁰ Later, the LORD sent this message to King Ahaz: ¹¹ “Ask the LORD your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want—as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.”

¹² But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I will not test the LORD like that.”

¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? 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’).

Jeremiah 23.1-8

“What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the LORD.

² Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them.

³ But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁵ “For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line.

He will be a King who rules with wisdom.

He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

⁶ And this will be his name:

‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’ In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

⁷ “In that day,” says the LORD, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ ⁸ Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

Root of David

2 Samuel 7.8-16

⁸ “Now go and say to my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies has declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the leader of my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before your eyes. Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! ¹⁰ And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed. Evil nations won’t oppress them as they’ve done in the past, ¹¹ starting from the time I appointed judges to rule my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

“Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! ¹² For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will secure his royal throne forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like any father would do. ¹⁵ But my favor will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from your sight. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.”

Jeremiah 23.1-8

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² Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. ³ But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the LORD, have spoken!

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says the LORD,

“when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line.

He will be a King who rules with wisdom.

He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

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In that day Judah will be saved,

and Israel will live in safety.

⁷ “In that day,” says the LORD, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ ⁸ Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

Isaiah 11.1-6

¹Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—
yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

²And 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.

³He will delight in obeying the LORD.
He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

⁴He 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.

⁵He will wear righteousness like a belt
and truth like an undergarment.

⁶In 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.

Isaiah 53.2-3

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.

³He 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.

Day 8:
6.12.20

Rest Day

*Use this extra day to rest, pray,
meditate on the following
scripture, or to simply catch up.
This space also allows you to take
notes from the Sunday sermon.*

JOY AND
gladness

The Word
became
flesh and
made dwelling
among us.
We have
seen his glory,
the glory of
the one and
only son, who
came from
the father, full
of grace and truth

John 1:14

What were some things of today
that make your heart glad?

Day 9:
7.12.20

Joyful Town of Bethlehem

Micah 5.2-5a

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.

Yet a ruler of Israel,
whose origins are in the distant past,
will come from you on my behalf.

³ The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies
until the woman in labor gives birth.

Then at last his fellow countrymen
will return from exile to their own land.

⁴ And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

Then his people will live there undisturbed,
for he will be highly honored around the world.

⁵ And he will be the source of peace

Ruth 4.11-17

¹¹ Then the elders and all the people standing in the gate replied, "We are witnesses! May the LORD make this woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, from whom all the nation of Israel descended! May you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² And may the LORD give you descendants by this young woman who will be like those of our ancestor Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ Then the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the LORD, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!"

¹⁶ Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. ¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

Day 10:
8.12.20

God with us

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’).

Hebrews 1.1-3

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. **2** And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. **3** The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

Matthew 1.22-23

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

Law fulfilled

Exodus 20.1-17

20 Then God gave the people all these instructions:

- 2** “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.
- 3** “You must not have any other god but me.
- 4** “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. **5** You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. **6** But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.
- 7** “You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.
- 8** “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, **10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. **11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

- 12** “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
- 13** “You must not murder.
- 14** “You must not commit adultery.
- 15** “You must not steal.
- 16** “You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.
- 17** “You must not covet your neighbor’s house. You must not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.”

Righteousness through Christ

Romans 3.21-28

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

John 1.1-5

1 In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Joy & Sacrifice

Isaiah 1.11,18

¹¹ “What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?”

says the LORD.

“I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle.

I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

...

¹⁸ “Come now, let’s settle this,”

says the LORD.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,

I will make them as white as snow.

Though they are red like crimson,

I will make them as white as wool.

Isaiah 53.4-5

⁴ 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!

⁵ 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.

John 1.29

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Hebrews 9.11-14

¹¹ So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. ¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. ¹⁴ Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

The Nations will be glad

Micah 4.1-7

⁴ In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house
will be the highest of all—
the most important place on earth.
It will be raised above the other hills,
and people from all over the world will stream there to
worship.

² People from many nations will come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of Jacob's God.

There he will teach us his ways,
and we will walk in his paths.”

For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion;
his word will go out from Jerusalem.

³ The LORD will mediate between peoples
and will settle disputes between strong nations far away.
They will hammer their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will no longer fight against nation,
nor train for war anymore.

⁴ Everyone will live in peace and prosperity,
enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees,
for there will be nothing to fear.

The LORD of Heaven's Armies
has made this promise!

⁵ Though the nations around us follow their idols,
we will follow the LORD our God forever and ever.

⁶ “In that coming day,” says the LORD,
“I will gather together those who are lame,
those who have been exiles,
and those whom I have filled with grief.

⁷ Those who are weak will survive as a remnant;
those who were exiles will become a strong nation.
Then I, the LORD, will rule from Jerusalem
as their king forever.”

Psalms 46.4-11

⁴A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred home of the Most High.

⁵God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will protect it.

⁶The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!

God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!

⁷The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress. *Interlude*

⁸Come, see the glorious works of the LORD:
See how he brings destruction upon the world.

⁹He causes wars to end throughout the earth.
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world."

¹¹The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress. *Interlude*

Isaiah 53.4-12

⁴ 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!

⁵ 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.

⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the LORD laid on him
the sins of us all.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.
Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.
He will enjoy a long life,
and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.
And because of his experience,
my righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for he will bear all their sins.

¹² I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
because he exposed himself to death.
He was counted among the rebels.
He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Day 15:
13.12.20

Rest Day

*Use this extra day to rest, pray,
meditate on the following
scripture, or to simply catch up.
This space also allows you to take
notes from the Sunday sermon.*

JOYful Mysteries



After me comes
the one more
powerful than
I. The one
whose sandals I
am not worthy
to stoop down
and untie. I
baptize you with
water but He
will baptize
you with the
Holy Spirit

Mark 1:7b-8

What took you by
surprise today?

Day 16:
14.12.20

Joyful messenger

Luke 1.5-17

⁵ When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. ⁶ Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. ⁷ They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸ One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. ⁹ As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

¹¹ While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. ¹² Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. ¹³ But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. ¹⁴ You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord." He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. ¹⁶ And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God.

¹⁷ He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.

Isaiah 40.1-5

40 "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.

² "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the LORD has punished her twice over

for all her sins."

³ Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD!

Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!

⁴ Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!"

Day 17:
15.12.20

Miracles & Mysteries

Genesis 18.9-15

⁹ “Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

Psalms 113

1 Praise the Lord!

Yes, give praise, O servants of the Lord.

Praise the name of the Lord!

2 Blessed be the name of the Lord now and forever.

3 Everywhere—from east to west—praise the name of the Lord.

⁴ For the LORD is high above the nations; his glory is higher than the heavens.

⁵ Who can be compared with the LORD our God, who is enthroned on high?

⁶ He stoops to look down on heaven and on earth.

⁷ He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump.

⁸ He sets them among princes, even the princes of his own people!

⁹ He gives the childless woman a family, making her a happy mother.

Praise the LORD!

Luke 1.18-25

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.”

¹⁹ Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! ²⁰ But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. ²² When he finally did come out, he couldn’t speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

²³ When Zechariah’s week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. ²⁴ Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. ²⁵ “How kind the Lord is!” she exclaimed. “He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.”

Son of the Most High

Luke 1.26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail."

³⁸ Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Rejoicing in His faithfulness

Psalm 107.1-9

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.
- ² Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out!
Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.
- ³ For he has gathered the exiles from many lands,
from east and west,
from north and south.
- ⁴ Some wandered in the wilderness,
lost and homeless.
- ⁵ Hungry and thirsty,
they nearly died.
- ⁶ “LORD, help!” they cried in their trouble,
and he rescued them from their distress.
- ⁷ He led them straight to safety,
to a city where they could live.
- ⁸ Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
- ⁹ For he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

Luke 1.39-56

³⁹ A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town ⁴⁰ where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁴² Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. ⁴³ Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? ⁴⁴ When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

True Light

Isaiah 9.2-7

² 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.
³ You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.
They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.
⁴ For you will break the yoke of their
slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their
shoulders.
You will break the oppressor's rod,
just as you did when you destroyed the
army of Midian.
⁵ The boots of the warrior
and the uniforms bloodstained by war
will all be burned.
They will be fuel for the fire.
⁶ 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.
⁷ 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!

Isaiah 60.1-5

60 "Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light
shine for all to see.
For the glory of the LORD rises to
shine on you.
² Darkness as black as night covers all
the nations of the earth,
but the glory of the LORD rises and
appears over you.
³ All nations will come to your light;
mighty kings will come to see your
radiance.
⁴ "Look and see, for everyone is
coming home!
Your sons are coming from distant
lands;
your little daughters will be carried
home.
⁵ Your eyes will shine,
and your heart will thrill with joy,
for merchants from around the world
will come to you.
They will bring you the wealth of
many lands.

Preparing the way

Luke 1.57-80

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰ But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!"

⁶¹ "What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." ⁶² So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. ⁶³ He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴ Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

⁶⁵ Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

⁶⁷ Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

⁶⁸ "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has visited and redeemed his people.

⁶⁹ He has sent us a mighty Savior
from the royal line of his servant David,

⁷⁰ just as he promised
through his holy prophets long ago.

⁷¹ Now we will be saved from our enemies
and from all who hate us.

⁷² He has been merciful to our ancestors
by remembering his sacred covenant—

⁷³ the covenant he swore with an oath
to our ancestor Abraham.

⁷⁴ We have been rescued from our enemies
so we can serve God without fear,

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness
for as long as we live.

⁷⁶ "And you, my little son,
will be called the prophet of the Most High,
because you will prepare the way for the Lord.

Day 22
20.12.20

Rest Day

*Use this extra day to rest, pray,
meditate on the following
scripture, or to simply catch up.
This space also allows you to take
notes from the Sunday sermon.*

Unending JOY

But when the fullness of
time has come, God sent
forth His Son, born of a
woman, born under law,
to redeem those who
were under law, so that
we might receive
adoption as sons. And
because you are sons,
God has sent the Spirit of
His Son into our hearts,
crying, "Abba Father!" so
that you are no longer
a slave, but a son and
if a son, then an
heir through God.

Galatians 4:4-6

What were some joyful
moments from today you
can give thanks to God for?

Heirs with him

Matthew 1.1-17

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.

4 Ram was the father of Amminadab.

Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).

Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).

Obed was the father of Jesse.

6 Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).

7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

Abijah was the father of Asa.

8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.

Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.

9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham.

Jotham was the father of Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.

10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh was the father of Amon.

Amon was the father of Josiah. **11** Josiah

was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).

12 After the Babylonian exile:

Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.

Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.

Abiud was the father of Eliakim.

Eliakim was the father of Azor.

14 Azor was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Akim.

Akim was the father of Eliud.

15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar.

Eleazar was the father of Matthan.

Matthan was the father of Jacob.

16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

17 All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

Joy through Jesus's birth

Luke 2.1-20

2 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. **2** (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. **4** And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. **5** He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. **7** She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. **9** Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, **10** but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! **12** And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. **17** After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. **18** All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, **19** but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. **20** The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Matthew 1.18-25

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Isaiah 7.14

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’).

Why is Jesus Lord over your life?

individual: reflect on how far God has helped you in your walk with him, and spend some time praising and thanking God in adoration and thanksgiving. If you have time, why not track your journey of how far you’ve come on paper (such as making or updating your spiritual timeline, see youtu.be/coj1wKU0XXY)

Joy in the journey

Matthew 2.1-23

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, **2** “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

3 King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. **4** He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

6 ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’”

7 Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. **8** Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

9 After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! **11** They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. **13** After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

14 That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, **15** and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

16 Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance. **17** Herod’s brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

18 “A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead.”

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. **20** “Get up!” the angel said. “Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.”

21 So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. **22** But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. **23** So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

At the temple

Luke 2.21-40

²¹ Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

²² Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ²³ The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD.” ²⁴ So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord —“either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him ²⁶ and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, ²⁸ Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.

³⁰ I have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared for all people.

³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

³³ Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

Jesus is Lord

Matthew 11.25-30

²⁵ At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. ²⁶ Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

²⁷ “My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

²⁸ Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

John 3.16

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 14:17

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Extra pages for note taking

Bonus:

Year in Review 2020 reflection questions for personal journalling or sharing in small groups.

1. What are some things from this year that you're thankful for?
2. Why do you think hope is so important? And how do you remain hopeful in a world full of hopelessness?
3. Was there a moment this past year that you felt was an "enlightening" moment for you? What was it?
4. Share four achievements you are particularly proud of from this year.
5. What significant event happened in 2020, in which your reaction towards it surprised you, because in previous times you would react a certain way, but this time round, in 2020, your attitude towards it changed (for the better or for worse)?
6. What's been a verse / inspirational quote that has kept you motivated this past year?
7. Name seven people you are grateful for that went above and beyond this year for you.
8. What was one thing from this year that you wished you didn't waste time on? And how can you ensure it won't happen again next year?
9. Is there something that you wished you had done differently this past year?
10. List your top 10 songs of 2020 (most listened to or your favourites of this year).
11. Is there someone you need to forgive from this year? Why? Why have you been putting it off?
12. Using 12 words, sum up each month of this past year.
13. Is there someone you need to apologise to, from this year? Why? Why have you been putting it off?
14. What was an unexpected joy of this year? What was an unexpected obstacle of this year?
15. What bad habit would you most like to kick from 2020?
16. What major milestones happened with your family this past year. How has this affected you?
17. Describe an event in the world that has impacted you this year. How? Why?
18. What were some answered prayers of this year?
19. If you were to be so bold, what audacious prayer request do you want answered for next year?
20. Who is the person you most want to invest and encourage in the next year?
21. What skills or hobbies would you like to improve, develop or start next year?
22. Describe one thing you'd like to achieve by this time next year. Why is this important to you?
23. What aspects of God did you learn or relearn this year? And what areas of theology would you like to learn about next year?
24. Write a message of advice to the "future you" so you can read it this time next year.

