



Unending

JOY

DAILY ADVENT DEVOTIONAL READINGS
BCEC 2020

NLT VERSION
(LARGE PRINT)

Isaiah 35:10 ESV

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
unending joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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 1: Sunday 29th November — Joy To The World

First Sunday of Advent

Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rest Day

Use this extra day to rest, pray, meditate on the above scripture, or to simply catch up.

This space also allows you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

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

Day 2: Monday 30th November — Come and 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.

¹² You will live in joy and peace.

The mountains and hills will burst into song,
and the trees of the field will clap their hands!

¹³ Where 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.”

Matthew 11.28-30

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.”

James 4:8a

Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

Revelations 3.20

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

Questions: When we come to Jesus, we have to go from point A to point B. What does your point A look like? And what would you like your point B to look like for this Christmas season? What would you like to achieve by the end of this devotional study?

Prompt: Individual: spend some time praying over your answers, coming to the Lord bringing your point A, in surrendering any baggage or hardships that might affect your journeying with Him in this season. Pray into what you would like to achieve by the end of this devotional study, (point B).

Day 3: Tuesday 1st December — 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."

John 12.35-36

³⁵ Jesus replied, "My light will shine for you just a little longer. Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

Colossians 1.15-20

15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,

16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

18 Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body.

He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead.

So he is first in everything.

19 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,

20 and through him God reconciled everything to himself.

He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

Questions: What does Jesus being the light of the world mean to you? How does that change the way you view life?

Prompt: Families/Household: take turns in your household/family to share prayer requests, and share about what Jesus being the light of the world means to each of you. Then have each person light a candle and pray together.

Day 4: Wednesday 2nd December — 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.”

1 Corinthians 15.45-49

⁴⁵ The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶ What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. ⁴⁷ Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. ⁴⁸ Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. ⁴⁹ Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

Hebrews 2.14-16

¹⁴ Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. ¹⁶ We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham.

Question: How can we have hope for the world based on these passages?

Prompt: The world: turn on the news channel / find something on the news website to pray about. pray for those who are living in the world of darkness. Why do you think they are there? How can we as those living in the light make a difference to them? Pray about the things of this world, may our God of hope set them free.

Day 5: Thursday 3rd December — 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.

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 “Once you had no identity as a people;
now you are God’s people.
Once you received no mercy;
now you have received God’s mercy.”

Questions: What are some of the key truths from today’s passages that encourage you to stand firm in your faith?

Prompt: The church: is there someone within the church that is struggling right now to have hope? If no one comes to mind, consider going on your phone contact list and ask God to reveal to you who to pray for. If you’re feeling courageous, why not message them asking how you can pray for them today.

Day 6: Friday 4th December — 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.”

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.’”

1 John 4.7-10

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Revelation 21.3-5

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.”

Questions: How has God expressed His deep love and concern for you, based on what you have just read? How can this motivate you to express God’s love to others?

Prompt: The nation: a great way to pray for our nation is to pray for the government. Look up online by searching “how to pray for parliament” there are many useful guides on how to pray. Consider reading the prayers the members in parliament pray before they engage in debate too! Let your prayers be motivated by God’s love, and pray God’s love to reign through our nation.

Day 7: Saturday 5th December — 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. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.”

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.”

Isaiah 11.1-6

¹ Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot

—

yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—

the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,

the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ He will delight in obeying the LORD.

He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

⁴ He will give justice to the poor
and make fair decisions for the exploited.
The earth will shake at the force of his word,
and one breath from his mouth will destroy the
wicked.

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

⁶ In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together;
the leopard will lie down with the baby goat.
The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion,
and a little child will lead them all.

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.

³ He was despised and rejected—
a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.
We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.
He was despised, and we did not care.

Matthew 22.41-46

41 Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: 42 “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

They replied, “He is the son of David.”

43 Jesus responded, “Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah ‘my Lord’? For David said,

44 “The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.’

45 Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?”

46 No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Revelations 22.16

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star.”

Questions: What did God promise David? Of the passages read, which jumps out and brings you the most joy and encouragement?

Prompt: Individual: in reflection of this past week, pray for joy, for yourself, for your family/household, church, nation and the world. Spend some time in silence waiting upon the Holy Spirit to reveal any wonderful gems of joy and counsel to you. Note down any visions or words of encouragement He might reveal, and if He wills, share them with someone.

Day 8: Sunday 6th December — Joy & Gladness

Second Sunday of Advent

John 1:14

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

Rest Day

Use this extra day to rest, pray, meditate on the above scripture, or to simply catch up.

This space also allows you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

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

Day 8: Monday 7th December — 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.

Luke 2.4

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.

⁴⁰ When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting." ⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee?" ⁴² For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born." ⁴³ So the crowd was divided about him. ⁴⁴ Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him.

John 10.11-18

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, 15 just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

17 “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”

Questions: “Bethlehem” means house of bread. From these passages read, what spiritual bread flavours or nourishment do these words give us to our souls? What jumps out to you the most and brings you great comfort today?

Prompt: Families/Household: spend some time with your household/family thinking about the significance of Bethlehem, a humble place that God used mightily for His kingdom. Share with each other, or highlight to each other any gifts you see in each other and how that can be used to bring God glory. Pray for each member of your household/family to be used mightily for His kingdom with the gifts and nourishment he has blessed you all with.

Day 10: Tuesday 8th December — 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.'"

John 14.6-11

⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

⁹ Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹ Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do."

1 John 4.9-10

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Questions: When do you most feel God's presence? What do you think blocks you from feeling His presence? How can you be more intentional in experiencing Him on a more deeper and personal level?

Prompt: Individual: intentionally spend time with God, more than you would normally spend. Put your phone away, lock yourself away in private and just be still with God, meditating on those passages again and focus on a specific word and pray into it.

Day 11: Wednesday 9th December

— 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.”

Matthew 5.17-19

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Romans 8.1-4

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

Questions: How often do you try to keep the law, do works, but fail? How can you find hope and joy through the passages you have just read?

Prompt: the church: set an alarm for at least 15 minutes (more if you want!) and spend that time in quietness, praying specifically for an individual from church to experience fullness in the Spirit, not bound by the law, but finding freedom and joy in Christ.

Day 12: Thursday 10th December — 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.

John 1.14-18

- 14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.
- 15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

¹⁶ From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

Ephesians 1.7-10

⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

Colossians 1.13-14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Questions: Highlight the key words or phrases that jump out to you from the passages. What are some things God is challenging / helping you with?

Prompt: The nation: using those words that you have just highlighted, turn those words around and let those words lead you in praying for different people groups in our nation. They can be for those less privileged, those who are oppressed, those suffering, those in leadership, those helping the poor etc.

Day 13: Friday 11th December — Joy and 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.

Hebrews 10.1-14

10 The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. ² If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared.

³ But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. ⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings.

But you have given me a body to offer.

⁶ You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin.

⁷ Then I said, ‘Look, I have come to do your will, O God—

as is written about me in the Scriptures.’”

⁸ First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are

required by the law of Moses). ⁹ Then he said, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. ¹⁰ For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

¹¹ Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. ¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ¹³ There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. ¹⁴ For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

Questions: God does not desire sacrifice and offering anymore, because of Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice for us all. In what ways in the past or currently have we wrongly offered something to God? Why is it redundant?

Prompt: Individual: spend some time asking God to reveal to you something you need to confess to Him about and seeking forgiveness over. It could be an action or inaction, wrong sacrifice/offering, or an issue between you and another individual. Pray and let Christ's redemptive blood wash over it.

Day 14: Saturday 12th December — 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."

Psalm 46.4-11

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

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

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

God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!

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

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

⁹ He 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.”

¹¹ The 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.

Zechariah 9.9-10

⁹ Rejoice, O people of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem!

Look, your king is coming to you.

He is righteous and victorious,
yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—
riding on a donkey's colt.

¹⁰ I will remove the battle chariots from Israel
and the warhorses from Jerusalem.

I will destroy all the weapons used in battle,
and your king will bring peace to the nations.

His realm will stretch from sea to sea
and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the
earth.

Questions: Which words of the passages you just read, excites you and makes you feel joyful and glad?

Prompt: 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.

Day 15: Sunday 13th December — Joyful Mysteries

Third Sunday of Advent

Mark 1:7-8

⁷ John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

Rest Day

Use this extra day to rest, pray, meditate on the above scripture, or to simply catch up.

This space also allows you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

What took you by surprise today?

Day 16: Monday 14th December — 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!”

Malachi 3.1-4

3 “Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

2 “But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. 3 He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD. 4 Then once more the LORD will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.

Mark 1.1-8

1 This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began **2** just as the prophet Isaiah had written:

“Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way.

3 He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming!
Clear the road for him!’”

4 This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. **5** All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. **6** His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. **8** I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

Questions: How do these passages remind you of God's ultimate power and might?

Prompt: the church: John baptised with water, Jesus baptised with the Holy Spirit. Spend some time asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a brother or sister in church who needs a word of encouragement. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and lead them. Feel free to get in touch with them afterwards if you have a word to share with them!

Day 17: Tuesday 15th December — Miracles and 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.”

Psalm 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.”

Luke 7.18-28

¹⁸ The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, ¹⁹ and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”

²⁰ John’s two disciples found Jesus and said to him, “John the Baptist sent us to ask, ‘Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?’”

²¹ At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. ²² Then he told John’s disciples, “Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” ²³ And he added, “God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.”

²⁴ After John’s disciples left, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? ²⁵ Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people who wear beautiful clothes and live in luxury are found in palaces. ²⁶ Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he

is more than a prophet. ²⁷ John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way before you.’

²⁸ I tell you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!”

Romans 4.19-21

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.

Questions: In what areas of our life do we struggle to believe God can work miracles in? How do these passages reframe our minds to believe we have a God who is a miracle-worker?

Prompt: Individual: pray into the areas of your life you want God to have power and work miracles in. Be specific in surrendering to Him, asking for breakthrough. If you feel compelled to, it might be great to share with other brothers and sisters in Christ to pray with you in those matters.

Day 18: Wednesday 16th December

— 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.

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.

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

Prompt: Families/Household: ask the people in your household if there is anything you can do to help them, in action and in prayer. Commit to helping and commit to praying for them.

Day 19: Thursday 17th December — 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."

⁴⁶ Mary responded,

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵² He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

54 He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

55 For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and
then went back to her own home.

Luke 6.20-22

20 Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

“God blesses you who are poor,
for the Kingdom of God is yours.

21 God blesses you who are hungry now,
for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now,
for in due time you will laugh.

22 What blessings await you when people hate you and
exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil
because you follow the Son of Man.

Questions: Make a list of God’s faithfulness mentioned
in these passages. And make a list of God’s faithfulness
found evident in your life.

Prompt: the world: using the list from the Beatitudes (in Luke 6:20-22), use those words as a baseline to pray for breakthrough for those in the world.

Day 20: Friday 18th December — 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.

John 1.9-13

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. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

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.”

Revelation 22.1-5

22 Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

Questions: How can we experience joy from reading about these light passages?

Prompt: the nation: using Isaiah 9:2-7 as a prayer, pray for our nation to experience an increase in joy of the Lord.

Day 21: Saturday 19th December — 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.
77 You will tell his people how to find salvation
through forgiveness of their sins.
78 Because of God’s tender mercy,
the morning light from heaven is about to break
upon us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death,
and to guide us to the path of peace.”

⁸⁰ John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

John 1.19-23

¹⁹ This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹ "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?"

"No."

²² "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

²³ John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"

Questions: How was John preparing the way of the Lord? In what ways are you helping to lead people to the way of the Lord?

Prompt: Individual: ask God to help you discern how best to lead others to Him. Ask God to reveal to you individuals in whom you can reach out to.

Day 22: Sunday 20th December — Unending Joy

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Galatians 4:4-6

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

Rest Day

Use this extra day to rest, pray, meditate on the above scripture, or to simply catch up.

This space also allows you to take notes from the Sunday sermon.

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

Day 23: Monday 21st December —

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.

Galatians 4.1-7

¹ Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. ² They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. ³ And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world.

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Philippians 2.5-11

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest
honor

and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Romans 8.15-17

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you
fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when
he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him,
"Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to
affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are

his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Questions: How do these passages excite you and remind you who you are in Christ?

Prompt: the church: ask God to bring to the forefront of your mind a specific family from our church congregation. Spend some time praying for each individual, asking God to give them a tremendous sense of joy and peace today.

Day 24: Tuesday 22nd December — 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').

Questions: Why is Jesus Lord over your life?

Prompt: 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)

Day 25: Wednesday 23rd December

— 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.”

Jeremiah 31.15-20

15 This is what the LORD says:
“A cry is heard in Ramah—
deep anguish and bitter weeping.
Rachel weeps for her children,

refusing to be comforted—
for her children are gone.”

16 But now this is what the LORD says:

“Do not weep any longer,
for I will reward you,” says the LORD.

“Your children will come back to you
from the distant land of the enemy.

17 There is hope for your future,” says the LORD.

“Your children will come again to their own land.

18 I have heard Israel saying,

‘You disciplined me severely,
like a calf that needs training for the yoke.

Turn me again to you and restore me,
for you alone are the LORD my God.

19 I turned away from God,
but then I was sorry.

I kicked myself for my stupidity!

I was thoroughly ashamed of all I did in my younger
days.’

20 “Is not Israel still my son,
my darling child?” says the LORD.

“I often have to punish him,
but I still love him.

That’s why I long for him
and surely will have mercy on him.

Questions: Of the passage you've just read, what is God saying to you specifically?

Prompt: nation: spend some time meditating on the verse from Jeremiah 31:17. Pray for hope for the future of this nation, for revival for the next generation.

Day 26: Thursday 24th December — 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.”

³⁶ Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. ³⁷ Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. ³⁸ She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. ⁴⁰ There the child grew up healthy and

strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Leviticus 12.6-8

⁶ “When the time of purification is completed for either a son or a daughter, the woman must bring a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a purification offering. She must bring her offerings to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle. ⁷ The priest will then present them to the LORD to purify her. Then she will be ceremonially clean again after her bleeding at childbirth. These are the instructions for a woman after the birth of a son or a daughter.

⁸ “If a woman cannot afford to bring a lamb, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. One will be for the burnt offering and the other for the purification offering. The priest will sacrifice them to purify her, and she will be ceremonially clean.”

Questions: Mary and Joseph followed the requirements of the law, however, what was the significance of Anna and Simeon in this narrative? How can we too be challenged to learn from their examples?

Prompt: Families/Household: pray for individual members of your family/household as well as for yourself to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. Pray for visions or a word of encouragement for each other too.

Day 27: Friday 25th December — 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.

Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 35:10

Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return.

They will enter Jerusalem singing,
crowned with unending joy.

Sorrow and mourning will disappear,
and they will be filled with joy and gladness.

Questions: highlight in the passage the words that bring you great comfort, peace and joy today?

Prompt: the world: using these words you have highlighted, pray the same can be applied to the world.

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.