



ADVENT 2020

THE GLADE CHURCH

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

During this Advent season we would encourage you to take some time each day, perhaps around the dinner table, to pause with your family and reflect on the story of Jesus' coming to earth. We believe that this practice will serve to focus every family member on the miracle of Jesus' birth and the enormity of his sacrifice.

- 1) Read:** Choose a family member to read the scripture out loud. Each passage of scripture has been carefully chosen to give your family an opportunity to focus on the years of anticipation of the coming messiah, on his life and ministry here on Earth, and on his return, which we still await today.
- 2) Reflect:** Choose another family member to read the short devotional around the day's scripture reading. Our desire is to reflect together on the way all of scripture points to Jesus' arrival, earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ultimate return. These paragraphs will help to make clear the Christ-centeredness of all of scripture through all of time.
- 3) Respond:** The next generation team has prepared a discussion prompt for each day to help your family reflect on and apply the daily scripture. Feel free to leave room for more questions and engagement with your family.

ADVENT,

A SEASON OF ANTICIPATION

“There’s something in observing Advent that awakens not only joyful remembrance over Christ’s first coming, but also deep eagerness for his second coming (Rev. 22:20). In many ways, the church in this age is in a similar position to God’s people toward the end of the Old Testament—marginalized in exile, hoping in darkness, waiting in stillness for the Day when Christ returns to, in Tolkien’s words, make ‘every sad thing come untrue.’

“We are living between the Hallelujah of Christ’s resurrection and the Maranatha of Christ’s return.”

Like a child on Christmas Eve caught between joyful memories of the Christmas that was, while waiting with breathless anticipation for the Christmas about to be, so it is with God’s people. We

are living between the Hallelujah of Christ’s resurrection and the Maranatha of Christ’s return. And here—in the waiting of Advent—God’s people discover a unique species of joy that can only be glimpsed through the lens of worshipful anticipation.

Timothy Paul Jones puts it well:

In Advent, Christians embrace the groaning, recognizing it not as hopeless whimpering over the paucity of the present

moment but as expectant yearning for the divine banquet Jesus is preparing for us. . . . Just as the ancient Israelites awaited the coming of the Messiah in flesh, we await the coming of the Messiah in glory. In Advent, believers confess that the infant who drew his first ragged breath between a virgin's knees has yet to speak his final word.

Advent is a way of reminding us that we are pilgrims passing through; that the brokenness of this world isn't how it's always going to be; that the true King is indeed coming soon.”¹

¹ This excerpt in its entirety was taken from, Ramsey, Adam, et al. “Tired Just Thinking About Advent? Slow Down and Savor Christ.” *The Gospel Coalition*, The Gospel Coalition, 26 Nov. 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/advent-slow-down-savor-christ/>

DAY 1

AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

-Luke 1:1-4-

In this passage, Luke declares the intent and purpose of what he is writing throughout the entire book. Luke intends to give an account of the life of Jesus. As Christians, we look to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the foundation of our faith. Luke communicates to the reader these events that took place when Jesus physically walked on the earth. Luke carefully gathered the information from reliable sources. The content he is communicating originated with those who were eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. After seeing Jesus walk the earth, it is no wonder that these eyewitness were excited to communicate the reality of what they saw.

Talk with your family about something you've witnessed that was so wonderful, you just HAD to tell people about it.

DAY 2

THE SCEPTER OF JUDAH

Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a young lion— my son, you return from the kill. He crouches; he lies down like a lion or a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until he whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to him. He ties his donkey to a vine, and the colt of his donkey to the choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine and his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk.
~Genesis 49:8-12~

From the very beginning, all the way back to Genesis, the Tribe of Judah was set apart for a holy purpose. It was prophesied that from this line would come the Messiah and that one day all of creation would bow down to him. This thread remains intact throughout the Bible, from the Old Testament to the Gospels, and through to Revelation (Revelation 5:5). The Bible is indeed the story of Jesus. We pause this season to reflect on his coming to Earth and we take hope in the victory of his return.

Talk with your family about what it means to be set apart for a holy purpose. How can this Advent season be set aside?

DAY 3

A CHILD IS BORN

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

-Isaiah 9:6-7-

Isaiah reveals the truths about the coming Messiah. The Messiah will be born a child. He will come in the flesh and the government will be on His shoulders. He is a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Eternal Father, and a Prince of Peace. He will reign from eternity to eternity. Isaiah communicates that Jesus' reign will be characterized by righteousness and He will show no partiality. The coming Messiah will exercise justice and the wicked will be slain.

How do you think God's people felt as they looked forward to the coming Messiah? What are you most looking forward to right now?

DAY 4

A RULER BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return to the people of Israel. He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD his God. They will live securely, for then his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth.

-Micah 5:2-4-

Micah describes the birth of a ruler in this passage. The birth is to occur in the city of Bethlehem, which is located about five miles from Jerusalem. Bethlehem was not a major town or even considered a significant area. Rather it was considered a small, insignificant place. Yet, Micah is describing that the Messiah will be born there. The Messiah, Jesus, will restore the nation, care for His people, and in His sovereign power will rule over the entire world.

God has a habit of working with people and places who are “too little”.
Where do you see God working in your life?

DAY 5

JESUS' ANCESTRY

An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

*Abraham fathered Isaac,
Isaac fathered Jacob,
Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers...*

*...Eleazar fathered Matthan,
Matthan fathered Jacob,
and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is
called the Messiah.*

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations.

Matthew 1:1-17

Jesus is the focus of the entire book of Matthew. In the opening statements, Matthew is connecting Jesus to two covenants from the Old Testament, the Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic covenant. This would have sparked questions around Jesus' genealogy from Jewish scholars of the day. Matthew, therefore, traces the genealogy of Jesus directly to David. Showing this genealogy would have rebutted any potential objections from Jewish scholars claiming the lineage of Jesus did not match the prophecies of the coming Messiah.

What are some of the names in Jesus' family tree that surprise you? Do you think they knew they were a part of this larger story?

DAY 6

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

*Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
See, the virgin will become pregnant
and give birth to a son,
and they will name him Immanuel,*

which is translated "God is with us." When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

~Matthew 1:18-25~

After tracing the earthly genealogy of Jesus, Matthew makes clear that the birth of Jesus will be unlike any other man. An angel of the Lord appeared to Mary and then to Joseph, to communicate that Mary was with child from the Holy Spirit. The child was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He could be fully God and fully man. Jesus was to be born with Mary as his mother and Joseph as his earthly father. They were to call Him Immanuel, which can be translated as "God with us!"

Immanuel means "God is with us". All believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside them. Share a time when you could feel God was with you.

DAY 7

THE VISIT FROM THE MAGI

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

~Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11~

After all of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. After his birth, Magi, whom we often refer to as wise men, came to worship the King of the Jews. They followed the star for their journey to Bethlehem. Once they arrived in Bethlehem, the star guided them to the house where Jesus had been taken by his father and mother. Upon arrival, the first response they had in the presence of Jesus was to fall on their knees and worship.

The star guided the wise men to Jesus. Before going to bed tonight, go outside and look at the stars. Talk with your family about what it must have been like to follow the star and see Jesus as a baby. What do you think your response would be in that moment?

DAY 8

ESCAPE TO EGYPT

After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called my Son.
-Matthew 2:13-15-

Immediately following the visit from the Magi, Joseph received another warning from an angel of the Lord. This was the second of four such dreams for Joseph. The angel warned Joseph of Herod's plan to search for Jesus. He planned to search for Him, find Him, and then kill Him. Joseph listened to the instruction from the angel. He wanted to protect Jesus and his family. In the cover of darkness, they fled to Egypt.

Discuss with your family how Joseph and Mary must have felt fleeing to a foreign country with an infant. What challenges could they have faced along the way?

DAY 9

HEROD'S ORDER

Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
and she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.*

~Matthew 2:16-18~

Herod came to the realization that his plan to kill Jesus was not going to work. In that moment, he reacted out of anger, rage and sought to kill all of the male children in Bethlehem. However, because Joseph and Mary had taken Jesus to Egypt, they would be safe from Herod's drastic action. Once again, God had been faithful to protect Joseph and his family by warning them of danger. While at the same time, Joseph once again displayed obedience to the Lord by heeding the warning the Lord gave in the dream.

God protected Joseph's family by sending them to Egypt. Share about a time when you knew God was protecting you.

DAY 10

RETURN TO NAZARETH

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead."

So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

~Matthew 2:19-23~

In this passage, Joseph receives instruction from an angel for the third time. The angel alerted Joseph that Herod was dead and that he could return to Israel. Joseph being obedient to the Lord, got up and returned to Israel. However, Joseph then got word that Archelaus was ruling over Judea. Archelaus was the son of Herod and similarly, was known for instability. Again, through a dream, God warned Joseph of Archelaus. The warning from God led Joseph and his family to settle in Nazareth, which was in Galilee, a separate region from Judea.

Joseph's family settled in a town called Nazareth. This was planned out by God. Why do you think God planned to plant you in your own town?

DAY 11

JOHN'S BIRTH FORETOLD

An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people."

"How can I know this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years."

~Luke 1:11-18~

Zechariah was fulfilling his priestly duty of serving God in the temple when an angel appeared to him. He was overwhelmed when the angel shared that he and Elizabeth would become parents. After years of pleading for a child, God answered his prayers. Yet, even in such a holy moment, Zechariah doubted. He couldn't imagine how having a child in his old age would even be possible. Sometimes, if we are honest, we can find ourselves just like Zechariah. Maybe you have begged the Lord for something for so long and have not seen the miracle. Maybe you are fatigued from longing to see a result. Don't give up. Continue to pray and seek the Lord. Zechariah was so consumed with how he wanted God to move that he forgot about what God has already done. The same God Zechariah was crying out to is the same God who parted the Red Sea. He is powerful enough to do the impossible. Press in and trust the Lord to do immeasurably more than we can imagine.

Zechariah thought that what God foretold was impossible. What do you need to trust the Lord with this season? Take some time to pray with your family over it.

DAY 12

JESUS' BIRTH FORETOLD

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged, to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. Then the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?" The angel replied to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. For nothing will be impossible with God."

"See, I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

-Luke 1:26-38

God is really good at doing the impossible. Mary finds herself overwhelmed and scared as Gabriel tells her that she will give birth to the Son of God. As she begins to question how having a child as a virgin is even possible, Gabriel reminds her of what God had already done in the life of her cousin. Elizabeth's story of being too old to have a baby helped Mary have confidence in God's plan. Elizabeth and Mary both found themselves exercising trust in the midst of the impossible. God often uses our most fearful moments to be a catalyst of faith in our lives.

Mary demonstrated tremendous faith. Talk with your family about a time when you placed your faith in the Lord and He proved faithful.

DAY 13

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!"
~Luke 1:39-45~

Mary and Elizabeth experience first hand that God is able to do immeasurably more than they could even imagine. Elizabeth recognized just how special their pregnancies were. She used her season to encourage Mary and speak truth over her life. Elizabeth affirmed Mary's confidence in God to do what He had promised. She pointed Mary back to God's power and plan. Who is someone in your life that needs to be reminded of God's promises? We can find hope knowing that God is faithful to finish what He started.

Mary and Elizabeth were a great encouragement to one another. What are some ways you could be an encouragement to someone this week?

DAY 14

MARY'S SONG

And Mary said:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and his name is holy. His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him. He has done a mighty deed with his arm; he has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts; he has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.

*And Mary stayed with her about three months; then she returned to her home.
~Luke 1:46-56~*

Mary's story wasn't anything like she had originally planned. She had no clue she would be giving birth to the Son of God. She could have easily let the disappointment of her plans dictate her future. Instead of wallowing in her feelings, she chose to praise God. She recognized that God's ways are far better than she could even imagine. Mary pressed into her season and worshiped the Lord. She was so grateful that God would use her and allow her to be a part of something bigger than herself. When we learn to let go of our personal agendas, we get a front row seat to seeing God move in our lives and use us for His glory.

Mary felt privileged to be used by God. How has God used you in a way that you have been grateful to be chosen?

DAY 15

JOHN THE BAPTIST IS BORN

Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she had a son. Then her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her his great mercy, and they rejoiced with her.

When they came to circumcise the child on the eighth day, they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. But his mother responded, "No. He will be called John."

Then they said to her, "None of your relatives has that name." So they motioned to his father to find out what he wanted him to be called. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they were all amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came on all those who lived around them, and all these things were being talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard about him took it to heart, saying, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the Lord's hand was with him.

~Luke 1:57-66~

After Zechariah encountered the angel of the Lord in the sanctuary, he couldn't talk. He spent at least nine months unable to speak because of his doubt of God's promise. It wasn't until his son, John the Baptist, was born, and he obediently named him John that he was able to speak. The first words out of Zechariah's mouth were filled with praise to God. If you had lost your voice for that long, would you respond in praise like Zechariah? Being able to communicate with others is a gift we should cherish. As believers, we have a responsibility to trust the Lord and to use our words to speak truth and life into others. May we not take the ability to speak for granted. Let's use this blessing to serve others and communicate the hope of Jesus to those around us.

Zechariah's first words in months were used to bless God and it was talked about all over! How can you bless God with your words to your friends and neighbors?

DAY 16

ZECHARIAH'S SONG

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times; salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us. He has dealt mercifully with our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant—the oath that he swore to our father Abraham. He has given us the privilege, since we have been rescued from the hand of our enemies, to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of our God's merciful compassion, the dawn from on high will visit us to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The child grew up and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

~Luke 1:67-80~

Zechariah had just spent the duration of his wife's pregnancy unable to speak. And the first words bursting forth after John's arrival was a song of heartfelt praise. Praise that God's sovereign rescue mission to bring a Savior to His people was carrying out right in front of him. We too, would do well to lift our hearts in praise this season. God's sovereign plan to redeem His people is carrying out right in front of us. Christmas is a time where we see, celebrate, and worship the miraculous way that God is making all things right and new through His Son, Jesus.

What have been some meaningful worship songs to you? Take some time to find one, play it, and listen as a family.

DAY 17

BIRTH OF JESUS

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

-Luke 2:1-7-

What a marvelous display of how God bends even the greatest of worldly powers to His will. He does this to accomplish His purposes. God saw fit to instill in the mind of a Roman emperor that a census should be taken to ensure that the prophecy of Micah 5:2 would be fulfilled. But it wasn't only the birth of Christ set in motion, long before Jesus' earthly arrival the path to Calvary was fixed. The cross was no "plan b." In the promise, in the coming, and in the life of Christ we find hope, eternal. Wherever you are, you can rest assured that you are right where God wants you, knowing that He is working all things for your good and for His glory. No detail overlooked, no sight unseen, God is sovereignly working out His plan of salvation for His people.

Jesus came "in the fullness of time". What are some things you are waiting for in this Advent season?

DAY 18

THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people he favors!*

When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

-Luke 2:8-15-

We get to proclaim good news for *all* peoples. Note here how missionally-minded the angels are in their praise. This is good news for *all* peoples. Christianity is not culturally isolated. It's not a pastime for only one type of person or nation. But we will know a day where people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will praise the glory of God (Revelation 7:9). You will look to your left and your right and see multitudes of people with whom you have nothing in common other than the fact that you were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. That will be a sight to see! The Shepherds responded with immediate excitement to this news. How will you respond?

When is a time that you received GREAT news? What is your response to the news of Jesus' birth?

DAY 19

SIMEON'S PROPHECY

There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,

*Now, Master,
you can dismiss your servant in peace,
as you promised.
For my eyes have seen your salvation.
You have prepared it
in the presence of all peoples—
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and glory to your people Israel.*
~Luke 2:25-32~

What kept him going? What was Simeon holding on to? What else, other than a promise from God that he would indeed see with his own eyes Israel's hope and consolation. Christians are called to a similar sense of longing. Simeon held on to this promise until he was very old. No doubt he waited with great anticipation. We too are to hold on in hope, that as Christ came here the first time, He will soon return as the hope of God's people. He is the one who brings great comfort and consolation. This world is not our home, but we journey on as pilgrims. And much like Simeon, we long for the day of Jesus' coming.

Simeon endured until the end to witness the Messiah. What are some areas where you need God to help you to endure in your own life?

DAY 20

THE PREEXISTENT WORD

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

~John 1:1-5~

Were you afraid of the dark as a child? It can be scary. It can be lonely. But if we are honest with ourselves, there's a part of us that loves to run to the shadows. There, we can keep parts of our lives a secret. If we shrink back and hide, we don't have to open ourselves up in vulnerability. C.S. Lewis once said, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken... Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable." What Christ brings us is an invitation to step into the light. But instead of crumbling in fear, we can step out of darkness and into His marvelous light knowing that what Christ offers in a loving relationship with Him is abundant life. Christ shines forth in the presence of darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome Him. What beautiful news!

Why do you think Jesus was referred to as the light of men? How can we be a light in our neighborhood, schools, & work places?

DAY 21

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S WITNESS

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'"

~John 1:6-8, 15

The John mentioned in this passage is John the Baptist. Through the sharing of his message, he had developed quite a following out in the wilderness. John the Baptist was constantly pointing those who would listen to him to Jesus. He did not use his notoriety for personal gain. Instead, He laid down his interests for the benefit of others as he pointed them to Christ (John 3:30). As followers of Jesus, we would do well to follow the example of John the Baptist and use whatever influence we may gain to invite others to follow Jesus.

God has given each of us a sphere of influence. How can you use your influence to point others to Jesus like John the Baptist?

DAY 22

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world., He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

~John 1:9-14~

In this passage, the apostle John is recounting a warning from John the Baptist. He is telling his audience that Jesus came into the world, but even his own people rejected Him because they did not recognize Him as the Messiah. For those who did recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they received the right to be children of God. We should count ourselves fortunate to have recognized Jesus for who He is. We should also accept the responsibility we were given to make Him known around the world (Matthew 28:16-20).

Who do you know in your life that you aren't sure has recognized Jesus as Messiah and "received" Him as Lord of their life? What are some ways you can share the Gospel with them in this season?

DAY 23

LAW, GRACE, AND TRUTH

*Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
~John 1:16-17~*

The image painted in this scripture is reminiscent of standing in the water at the beach. As one wave after another crashes into your body, each one is different, but all of them are a reminder of the sea's enormity and power. So it is with God's grace. The law, brought through Moses, is a stark and ever-present picture of our brokenness. Only Jesus could possibly fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). The life of a Christian is a series of one unique and powerful reminder of the love of Jesus after another. As we receive grace upon grace, let's be sure to pause and recognize the ways we routinely receive from God that which we do not deserve.

Talk with your family about the ways you can see God's grace in the every day, seemingly mundane events of your life.

DAY 24

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

*Yet the Lord was pleased to crush him severely.
When you make him a guilt offering,
he will see his seed, he will prolong his days,
and by his hand, the Lord's pleasure will be accomplished.
After his anguish, he will see light and be satisfied.
By his knowledge,
my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will carry their iniquities.*

~Isaiah 53:10-11~

We usually think about Jesus' sacrifice as His willingness to die for our sins. While this is true, His very life on Earth was a perpetual sacrifice; He constantly set Himself aside for the good of others. In John 19:30 we see Jesus cry out "It is finished" marking the end of His sacrifice and the beginning of His justification of those who believe. Jesus' life and death paved the way for Him to defeat death and satisfy the wages of our sin. The one-sidedness of Jesus' love toward mankind is staggering in this moment. The only reasonable response is to humble ourselves, accept this gift, and show this love to others.

Jesus sacrificially put his love on display. Talk with your family about some ways you can humble yourself and serve others.

DAY 25

A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

~Revelation 21:1-8~

In the Garden, Adam and Eve lived with God, blissfully unaware of their capacity for evil. When they ate the fruit and attempted to make themselves the judge of right and wrong, they unwittingly opened up the door to every kind of human suffering. This is the reality in which we live today. In Revelation 21, God promises that a new Heaven and new Earth are coming. In this new creation, there is no more suffering for those who have put their faith in Christ.

How do you feel knowing that one day Jesus will wipe away every tear? Have you ever thought about how today's celebration of Jesus' coming to Earth is also a way to look forward to his return?

OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

To anyone who may utilize this Advent resource,

Know that you and those whom you love have been prayed over with such hopefulness. We pray that in the midst of what is oftentimes a trying season, you have been able to spend these intentional moments with the ultimate lover of your soul.

Christmas is about so much more than the fanfare. It is more than all the pageantry. Christmas is the evidence that God's promises find their fullest meaning in Jesus.

In your darkest moments, encumbered by sin and shame, God loved you so much that he sent His Son so that in Him you might be made one with God for all eternity.

There is no sweeter news. There is no greater hope. This holiday season, our prayer for you is that you would look to Jesus with all the love in your heart, knowing that what he returns is infinitely more.

In Christ's Love,

The Glade Church Staff



THE GLADE CHURCH