

WHAT
Child
IS THIS?



SHELTER ROCK
CHURCH

Advent Devotional

Table of Contents

Day 1 The Word	Nathan Gasaway
Day 2 The Light of the World	Jack Crabtree
Day 3 The Lamb of God	Darlene Benz
Day 4 The Son of God	Gregg Farah
Day 5 The Son of Man	Jenny Jeng
Day 6 The Good Shepherd	Jerry O'Sullivan
Day 7 The Glory of God	Leslie Stols
Day 8 The Advocate	Helena Nagel
Day 9 The Mediator	Corey Johnson
Day 10 The Alpha and Omega	Peter Ladenheim
Day 11 The Righteous Judge	Mike Sciara
Day 12 The Author and Perfector of Our Faith	Jim Owens
Day 13 The Great I Am	Sean Heyward
Day 14 The Great High Priest	Kayla Wong
Day 15 The Man of Sorrows	Michel Tomlinson
Day 16 The Messiah	Jen Schrage
Day 17 The King of Kings	Joshua Martinez
Day 18 The Reconciler	Jennifer Yee
Day 19 The Redeemer	Jamie Nicholas
Day 20 The Arm of the Lord	Helen Tay
Day 21 The Horn of Salvation	Tracey Edouard
Day 22 The Prince of Peace	Christopher Rivera
Day 23 The Bright Morning Star	David Mera
Day 24 Jesus	Steve Tomlinson
Day 25 Immanuel	Henry Fuhrman

Foreword

I grew up in the church and always remember having a relationship with Jesus. However, throughout my Christian life, I can recall many times feeling disappointed with Christians and disillusioned with the church. There seemed to be a disconnect between the Bible that was preached on Sunday and the life I saw many Christians live throughout the week.

At one point, when close friends of mine were walking away from the faith, a friend handed me *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey. It was a formative book for me, because the author cut through all my preconceptions of Jesus and presented the Jesus of the Bible: “a complex character who generates questions as well as answers, a disturbing and exhilarating Jesus who wants to radically transform your life and stretch your faith.”

While the devotional in your hands hardly compares to *The Jesus I Never Knew*, our heart behind it is the same. It can be easy for us to lose sight of Christ, even among Christians, even at Christmas.

This Christmas season, we invite you on a journey to deepen your understanding of who Jesus Christ is by studying the names the Bible uses to describe him. Did you know there are over 200 names given in the Bible to describe Jesus? Each name tells us more than what He was called; they speak to His character and reputation. The names of Jesus reveal who He is and why He came.

As you read and reflect on this Advent devotional prepared by our staff and elders, we pray that Jesus will encounter you with all His complexity and beauty and that your heart and your faith will be radically transformed to be in deeper communion with Him.

Pastor Henry
Advent 2021

WHAT
Child
IS THIS?

The Word



PASTOR NATHAN GASAWAY

Day 1

What's in a name? What's in a word? What if your Name is the Word—God's Word incarnated in a Child? In and through this Child, God's Word created and sustains; in this Child, God's Word spoke and revealed the depths and riches of God's Wisdom; in this Child, God's commands became concrete, a new command and better way of living. What Child is this? This Word defies definition, defines reality, and displays God's love and life. Jesus is no mere word. He's the Word—the Living Logos. This Word is God—and He speaks to us today.

But do we hear Him—the Word that was and is and is to come? Do we trust Him, Wisdom personified? Do we obey Him, the One Who created and sustains all things? Do we love Him, the Word Who communicates God's love to us?

**“IN THE BEGINNING
WAS THE WORD,
AND THE WORD WAS
WITH GOD,
AND THE WORD
WAS GOD”**

JOHN 1:1

PRAYER

Father, reveal Your Son to me, Your living Word. Create in me a clean heart. Help me to hear and obey Him, love and trust Him, Your Wisdom manifested for me. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

The Light of the World

PASTOR JACK CRABTREE

Day 2

Have you ever been in complete darkness—not a speck of light anywhere?

On a trip to Belize, I visited an underground cave. Descending the long stairway, the darkness enveloped us. With every step, I was thankful for my headlamp. It was absolutely essential to keep it focused on the narrow rocky path. When we reached a large cavern, someone suggested turning off our headlamps to “see” total darkness. When we clicked off our lamps, it swallowed us. I became afraid to move—unable to see anyone—not sure where I was or which direction I should go. Finally, one person switched their headlamp back on and that beam penetrated the darkness pushing back my fear. As we sang a praise song, our voices sounded like a choir in that dark expanse. That single beam of light transformed the cave from a prison into a cathedral.

We all have days when we feel surrounded by darkness or discouragement. Jesus is the “Light of the World.” He brings the light of God’s love, forgiveness, and protection to you and me. Let His words and His promise to never leave us or forsake us be the light in our lives today.

PRAYER

Jesus, shine Your light brightly into my heart and onto my path. Drive out all darkness so that I can see You clearly and live for You completely unobstructed. In Your Name, I pray. Amen.

**“WHEN JESUS SPOKE AGAIN
TO THE PEOPLE, HE SAID,
“I AM THE LIGHT
OF THE WORLD.**

**WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME
WILL NEVER WALK
IN DARKNESS,
BUT WILL HAVE
THE LIGHT OF LIFE”**

JOHN 8:12



The Lamb of God

DARLENE BENZ

Day 3

There is a worship song that we sing at SRC that always makes me want to shout out—in fact, if you’ve been in Manhasset when it has been sung, you may well have heard me shout, “Amen!”

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness, alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

For centuries, in accordance with God’s law, Jews brought lambs to the temple as sacrifices for their sins. They kept coming back year after year because no lamb could take away all of their sins. In Genesis 22, Abraham told his son, Isaac, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering my son.” And that has been God’s plan from the beginning: God has provided the very Way and Person to achieve our forgiveness, righteousness, and everlasting life. Jesus purchased our redemption with His own blood. We stand blameless before the throne when we stand with Him, dressed in His righteousness.



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we are Your people redeemed by Your precious blood. For all of eternity, we will rejoice that You laid aside Your majesty and submitted to death on a cross so that our sins might be forgiven. We stand complete and righteous in You. We cry out with all the hosts of heaven: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive glory and honor and power!"

**"THE NEXT DAY HE SAW JESUS
COMING TO HIM, AND SAID,
'BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD
WHO TAKES AWAY
THE SIN OF THE WORLD!'"**

JOHN 1:29

The Son of God

PASTOR GREGG FARAH

Day 4

It's dizzying to comprehend what Mary experienced when the angel visited her. How would that conversation have gone in your bedroom? I would have claimed it was a dream or that I needed a psychological examination. And that's a shame.

It is humbling that the God of the universe would know me or want to have a relationship with me, but He does. God did the unthinkable—He voluntarily and temporarily relinquished the use of His divine rights and privileges to walk amongst us.

Yet, don't dismiss the child as just another baby. The Christ-child is the Son of God. So, let's not ignore the rights and privileges we now enjoy in and through Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that “if Jesus is the Son of God who from his conception and birth assumed our own flesh and blood, then and then alone is he true man and true God; only then can he help us.” Jesus is here. Let's call on Him, for He can help us.

PRAYER

Dear God, Your gift of Jesus is the greatest ever given. Just as Mary listened to and responded to You, may we be ready and willing to do the same. We are listening, Father. Give us the courage to obey.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



**“THE ANGEL ANSWERED,
'THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME ON YOU,
AND THE POWER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL OVERSHADOW YOU.
SO THE HOLY ONE TO BE BORN WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD”**

LUKE 1:35

The Son of Man

JENNY JENG

Day 5

Throughout history, Jesus was known by many names. When He asked the disciples, “Who do people say I am?” Peter famously answered, “You are the Christ.” When Jesus called Nathanael to follow Him, he declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” All of these names were declarations of Jesus’ divine nature.

Interestingly, Jesus refers to Himself repeatedly as the Son of Man. In fact, it was His favorite self-designation. Many scholars believed Jesus was emphasizing His incarnate nature and it was a demonstration of His humility. Although that may be true, in John 3, Jesus was actually quoting Daniel 7:13, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven.” The Son of Man was in fact the One Who came from heaven! Jesus Christ is declaring to the world His divine nature.



PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for sending Your Son to be our Savior. He came from heaven. He is divine. We thank You and we love You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

**“NO ONE HAS EVER GONE INTO HEAVEN
EXCEPT THE ONE WHO CAME FROM HEAVEN—THE SON OF MAN.
JUST AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SNAKE IN THE DESERT,
SO THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP,
THAT EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE”**

JOHN 3:13-15

The Good Shepherd

PASTOR JERRY O'SULLIVAN

Day 6

Jesus is the devoted Good Shepherd to His “sheep”—all those who put their trust in Him. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus was willing to suffer and sacrifice for His sheep. In contrast, bad shepherds or hirelings would abandon the flock in the face of danger. But the flock guarded by a good shepherd enjoyed the protection of someone who would stay and defend the flock he loves, even at the cost of his life.

In John 10, Jesus explains how a good shepherd cares for his flock, protecting them from weather, thieves, and predatory animals. He loves and shields them and, if necessary, would lay down his life for them. Jesus does just that. And He is the only One Who can be trusted to never leave His sheep. He loves, protects, and saves us from destruction. He gives us everlasting life through His death on the Cross, His love demonstrated for His sheep.

**“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.
THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN
HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP”**

JOHN 10:11



PRAYER

Jesus, I surrender to You today as my Good Shepherd. I want to stay close to You so You can guide me (pray for specific area where you need guidance/discernment). I trust You and will follow Your leadership in my life. Thank You for being willing to lay down Your life for me on the cross; today, I lay down my will and I choose to follow You.

The Glory of God

PASTOR LESLIE STOLS

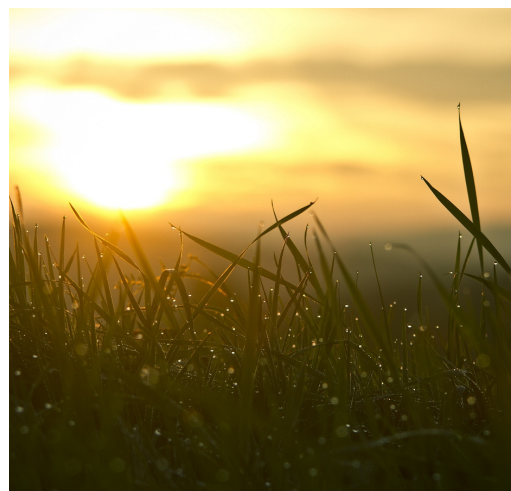
Day 7

A few years ago, my husband and I went to a gender reveal party that had more flair and festivities than our wedding. To top off the night, we watched as fireworks burst over the East River. All the guests stood and waited for the grand finale to see if pink or blue would light up the sky. This was quite the celebration for a tiny baby!

Isaiah spoke of an even greater reveal that all people would see. The “glory of the Lord” can be an abstract phrase tossed around in churches and Bible studies. Simply put, glory is the worth or importance of God. There is no one who compares to the greatness and magnificence of our God! When Jesus came to earth, He revealed to the world all of who God is and what God can do. Naturally, one would have expected a grand ceremony to match the significance of the moment of His birth. However, in the stillness of the night, our Savior was born. The reveal was not so much about the how, but more so the Who. God became human, made His home among us, and we have seen the glory of God.

PRAYER

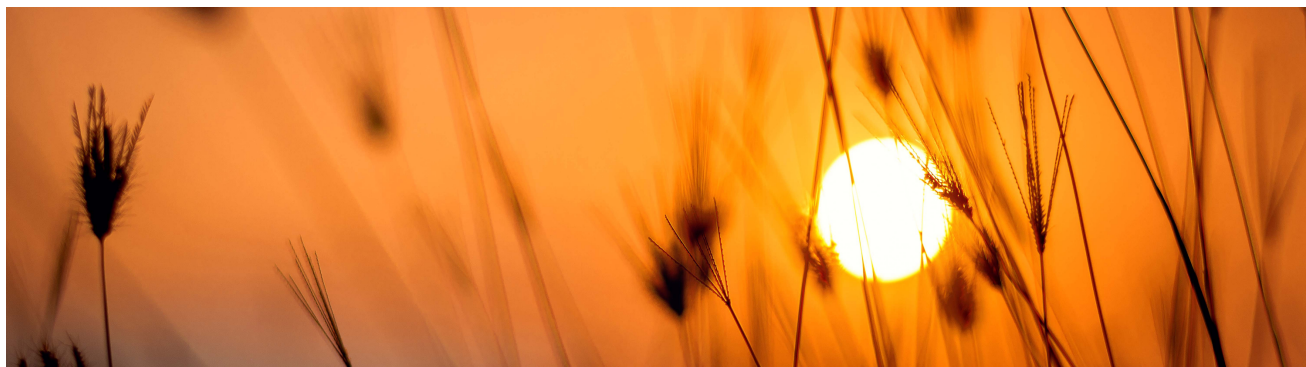
Father, reveal Your Son to us, Your Glory! Help us to sense the weight of this Glory as we turn our attention to this Child that You sent into the world for all people. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.



**AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD
WILL BE REVEALED,
AND ALL PEOPLE WILL SEE IT TOGETHER.
FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HAS SPOKEN"**

ISAIAH 40:5

The Advocate



HELENA NAGEL

Day 8

The word “advocate” is defined as one who pleads a case on someone else’s behalf. A friend of mine recently went through a long and difficult battle in court over the custody of her son.

Thankfully, she had an attorney who was able to advocate for her by explaining the facts of the matter to the judge, demonstrating how the applicable law weighs in her favor, and answering the judge’s follow-up questions. As a result, my friend was awarded full custody.

Similarly, Jesus is our Advocate, the One Who presents our case to the Father. Our sin placed a barrier between us and our just God, and we needed an advocate to plead our case before God. So, Jesus left Heaven, took on flesh, lived a perfect and sinless life, died on the cross to pay the price for our sins despite being sinless Himself, and rose again, all so we could be reconciled to our just God. What great love! Due to Jesus and His advocacy for us, we can spend eternity with our loving God.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for Jesus, Who left Heaven so we can have eternity with You. Through the busyness of this season, help us to keep our eyes fixed on the greatest Christmas gift we’ll ever receive—Jesus.

**“MY DEAR CHILDREN,
I WRITE THIS TO YOU
SO THAT YOU WILL NOT SIN.
BUT IF ANYBODY DOES SIN, WE
HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE
FATHER—JESUS CHRIST, THE
RIGHTEOUS ONE”**

1 JOHN 2:1

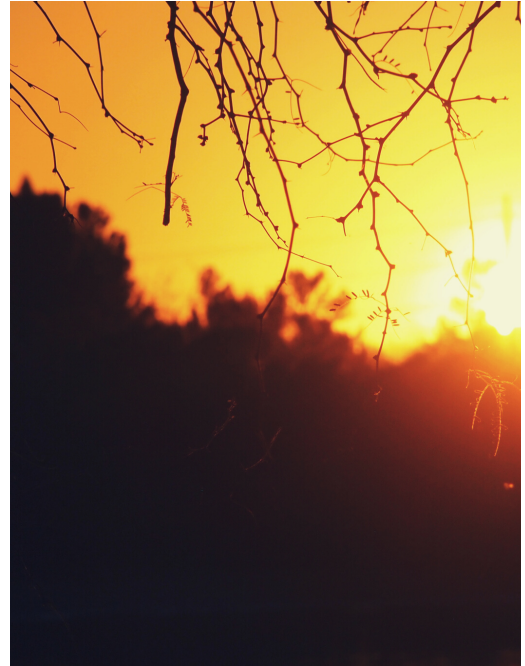
The Mediator

Day 9

PASTOR COREY JOHNSON

A few weeks ago, I received what I thought was junk mail, so I placed it in the junk pile. Later, my wife opened the letter and to our surprise, it contained a check from our insurance company! This envelope had no special markings to hint at the nature of its contents, but nonetheless, it contained something valuable I nearly discarded. Jesus too seemed ordinary, but packaged within the envelope of His human flesh is the divine nature which qualifies Him to be our mediator.

In this text, Paul highlights what makes Jesus the perfect mediator—He is not only fully God but also fully man. This is important because a mediator is one who intervenes between two parties in order to make or restore peace. However, for the mediator to be effective, he must fully know both parties in a concrete way and not merely by abstraction. Jesus experienced the full range of joy and pain that humanity encounters which uniquely qualifies Him to be our mediator between God. Today, while others may be discarding their faith, let us with joyous hearts lay hold of our Savior, the man Christ Jesus who fully knows us yet fully loves us.



PRAYER

Jesus, intercede on our behalf and bring us together with You and Your creation. Thank You for understanding us as only the God-Man can. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

**“FOR THERE IS ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MANKIND,
THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, WHO GAVE HIMSELF AS A RANSOM FOR ALL PEOPLE.
THIS HAS NOW BEEN WITNESSED TO AT THE PROPER TIME”**

The Alpha and Omega

PETER LADENHEIM

Day 10

We live in a world where objective truth has all but disappeared. Things once believed to be true and steadfast no longer are. The very definition of what is “true” no longer seems to hold weight or matter. How is it that we can have stability in the midst of this chaotic change?

Well, that is why I find these words of God, spoken by an angel to John, so profound. God declares that He, and He alone, is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the One who is, was, and is to come. You see, God is unchanging. He, and He alone, is steadfast and eternal. He created all that is and He will be beyond its existence.

It reminds me of an illustration where there is a long length of rope that seems to go on forever. A tiny portion at the beginning of the rope is painted red which represents our life on Earth. Though it may seem long to us, it is a blip in the timeline of eternity. The trials of this life are so fleeting in the midst of eternity. Knowing that God is the Alpha and Omega, let us put our hope and trust in Him and Him alone, as only He is steadfast and true.

PRAYER

Jesus, You are the first and the last. You created all things. You uphold all things. You will enfold all things when You return. Help us to place all our hope in Your almighty, eternal nature. Amen.



**“I AM THE ALPHA
AND THE OMEGA,”
SAYS THE LORD GOD,
“WHO IS, AND WHO WAS,
AND WHO IS TO COME,
THE ALMIGHTY”**

REVELATION 1:8

The Righteous Judge

PASTOR MIKE SCIARA

Day 11

Here, the Apostle Paul looks back over his 30 years of labor as an apostle of Jesus Christ like an athlete who has successfully finished his race and describes the reward waiting for all of those who have persevered and lived faithfully with their Lord. While salvation is received by grace through faith in Christ alone, Christians can look forward to receiving heavenly rewards because of our faithfulness to Christ. Paul fully entrusts himself and the outcome of his labor to Jesus, Who is referred to as the “righteous judge.” Jesus, being full of integrity, virtue, rightness, and right-standing with the Father, is the only one qualified to bestow such eternal rewards.

Jesus, being both God and man, is the perfect judge of humankind and His judgment will be fair and perfectly just. Like Paul, let us live our lives with peaceful confidence knowing that our “righteous Judge” will meet us at the finish line, with the coveted crown of righteousness in hand.



PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for faithfully finishing the race marked out for You when You died in my place. Enable me by the power of the Holy Spirit to live faithfully with You all the days of my life. Fill my heart with Your peace, knowing confidently that You will uphold me even when I grow tired and weary. In Your Name, I pray. Amen.

**“NOW THERE IS IN STORE FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE,
WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY—AND NOT ONLY TO ME,
BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LONGED FOR HIS APPEARING”**

2 TIMOTHY 4:8

The Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

PASTOR JIM OWENS

Day 12

A picture of a flashy sports car, an athletic medal, or a dream house might be posted on the refrigerator of a young professional, athlete, or couple. The picture is a reminder of what they are striving for because it is easy to lose hope, get discouraged, tired, or distracted from our goal.

The same can be true of following Jesus. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of sin, and the distractions of life can weigh us down, deterring us from following our set course. The passage describes a “cloud of witnesses”, faithful ones who surround us, who are cheering us on to finish the race, and be full of faith in God. Jesus is the one who we should desire to know, emulate, and follow. In the same way He suffered the cross for the “joy set before him”, we too can take up our crosses each day for the hope and joy promised to us for all eternity. Jesus is the picture of what we should be striving toward. What do you need to put on your refrigerator to keep your eyes “fixed” on Jesus?

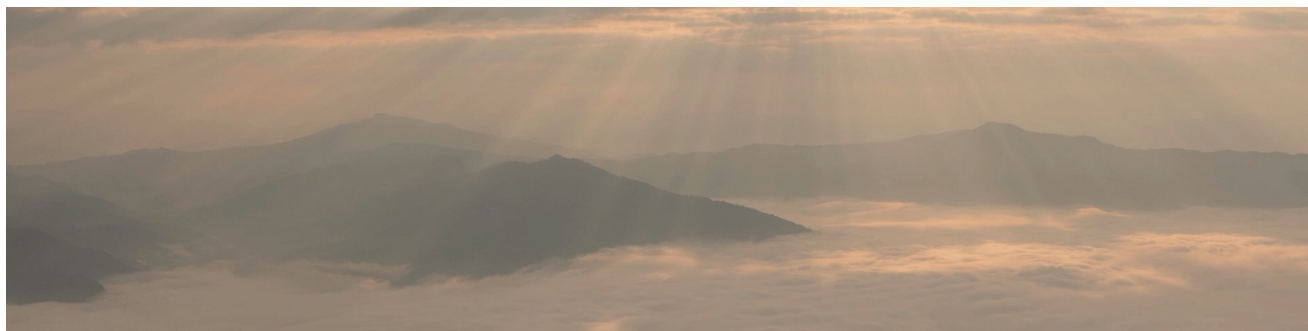
PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I pray that You would give me the strength today to listen to Your word and to seek the path set before me. Let me not be weighed down or distracted by promises of this world or the sinful wanderings of my heart. Let me keep my eyes focused on You in this next hour, on Who You are, the path before me, and the joy you have in store for me in eternity.



**THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SUCH
A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US THROW OFF EVERYTHING
THAT HINDERS AND THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES.
AND LET US RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR US,
FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF FAITH.
FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM HE ENDURED THE CROSS, SCORNING ITS SHAME,
AND SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.**

The Great I Am



SEAN HEYWARD

Day 13

I AM. The same self-revealing description of God was given to Moses in Exodus as Moses was being commissioned to liberate the Israelites. In that story, God told Moses that the One who blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was coming to deliver the Israelites from slavery. Moreover, Jesus intentionally used this name because He was revealing that He was that same God who came to deliver us from our bondage and captivity. Jesus heard humanity's cry for a Savior and arrived in human flesh. He arrived to bear our sin, our shame, and our penalty so that we can enjoy what is rightfully His: peace with God and freedom from the kingdom of darkness. What a scandal!

As we remember the Lord who took on flesh, let us rejoice because not only is He near, but He is the God who delivers.

PRAYER

Jesus, remind us of Your lovingkindness. Bring to the fore of our minds the fact that You have set us free because of Your mercy.

You are the God who delivers, so with rejoicing and gladness, we thank You for delivering us from the captivity of sin and the weight of shame. We give You all the glory and the honor that is due to You, the Son of God. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

**“VERY TRULY I TELL YOU,”
JESUS ANSWERED,
“BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS BORN,
I AM!”**

JOHN 8:58

The Great High Priest

KAYLA WONG

Day 14

Over the last year of my life, I've experienced God's favor in so many ways. One blessing that stands out, in particular, is marriage. I never thought I would have a God-fearing (and insanely handsome) husband at such a young age! But—it didn't start there.

At the beginning of our relationship, Ling and I didn't agree on a lot of things. Being an introvert, it took everything in me to tell him about my conviction on marriage. We almost broke up. I have always been shy and timid, so in the hardest moments of that conversation, I depended on the Lord for strength. God proved Himself faithful and confirmed to both of us individually that we should move toward marriage. He gave us grace and mercy and centered us in Spirit-led conversation. All we had to do was draw near to His throne of grace. He met us in our weakest moments and made us strong.

Jesus came into this world and experienced our every weakness, and He empathetically offers us new mercies every day. All we have to do is go to Him.

PRAYER

God, help us find strength, grace, and mercy in Your Son during our times of weakness. Thank You for Your compassion. In His Name, we pray.
Amen.



**“THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE
A GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO
HAS ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN,
JESUS THE SON OF GOD,
LET US HOLD FIRMLY
TO THE FAITH WE PROFESS.**

**FOR WE DO NOT HAVE
A HIGH PRIEST WHO IS UNABLE
TO EMPATHIZE WITH OUR
WEAKNESSES, BUT WE HAVE
ONE WHO HAS BEEN TEMPTED
IN EVERY WAY, JUST AS WE ARE
—YET HE DID NOT SIN.**

**LET US THEN APPROACH
GOD'S THRONE OF GRACE
WITH CONFIDENCE,
SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE
MERCY AND FIND GRACE
TO HELP US
IN OUR TIME OF NEED”**

HEBREWS 4:14-16

The Man of Sorrows

MICHEL TOMLINSON

Day 15

“Man of Sorrows”? Wow, who wants to be friends with that guy?!

I have learned that just because one is familiar with sorrows does not necessarily make one a gloomy person to be avoided. On the contrary, knowing someone has experienced similar (or worse) life circumstances than I humanizes them in my eyes and, if they are functioning well, leads me to adopt their example. Only after the death of my grandfather could I feel a true kinship with others who had experienced loss. Knowing Jesus is acquainted with sorrow enables me to view Him not as some other-worldly, unfathomable, alien being but as human.

However, Jesus cannot solely be defined by His suffering; He experienced joy, embraced life, and loved His friends and family. What makes a difference in people I've observed is their understanding that suffering is not a punishment or without purpose, and that God is aware of them and their struggle. They may temporarily feel “WHY ME?!” but ultimately remember the example of Jesus who trusted in His Father's purposes.

PRAYER

Lord, help us to trust in Your plan when we face times of sorrow and inexplicable suffering. Thank You for the example of Jesus who lived life abundantly and, in spite of knowing He would ultimately bear the entire weight of humanity's sin, persisted in trusting You. Amen.



**“HE IS DESPISED AND REJECTED
BY MEN, A MAN OF SORROWS
AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF.
AND WE HID, AS IT WERE, OUR
FACES FROM HIM; HE WAS
DESPISED, AND WE DID NOT
ESTEEM HIM”**

ISAIAH 53:3

The Messiah

JEN SCHRAGE

Day 16

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus is met at the well by a Samaritan woman who has come to draw water. According to the law at that time, rabbis were instructed to never talk to a woman in public—not even their own wives or sisters. But Jesus sets aside this barrier and confronts her on a very personal level, revealing knowledge of things about her that she kept hidden.

He makes known to her that He is in fact the Messiah and comforts her with the truth of the Gospel. This showed the disciples that Jesus was there for all people, not just the Jews. When the woman returns to town, she shares about what has just happened and brings others to meet Jesus.

Let us be like the woman at the well and share the good news of our Messiah!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, our soul's deepest thirst is for You. Overwhelm us with Your Spirit that dwells within us, providing a never-ending fountain of spontaneous and continual living water. Help us to drink of You daily and share this joy with others. Amen.



**THEN JESUS DECLARED,
“I, THE ONE SPEAKING TO YOU
—I AM HE.”**

**JUST THEN HIS DISCIPLES
RETURNED AND WERE
SURPRISED TO FIND HIM
TALKING WITH A WOMAN.**

**BUT NO ONE ASKED,
“WHAT DO YOU WANT?”
OR “WHY ARE YOU TALKING
WITH HER?”**

**THEN, LEAVING HER WATER JAR,
THE WOMAN WENT BACK
TO THE TOWN AND SAID
TO THE PEOPLE,
“COME, SEE A MAN WHO TOLD
ME EVERYTHING I EVER DID.
COULD THIS BE THE MESSIAH?”**

JOHN 4:26-28

The King of Kings

JOSHUA MARTINEZ

Day 17

King of kings, one of Jesus' names that commands full power and authority over everything and everyone. Kings of this earth are accustomed to others bowing before them in reverence, but Jesus is the Supreme King to Whom all will bow, even the kings of this earth. His first coming was relatively peaceful, but His second coming will be characterized by the judgment of a conquering King.

His second coming won't be inconspicuous; it will boldly declare His Lordship, hailing Him as the supreme King of all. This is our King! This is our God! He shares that victory with His children. We eagerly wait for that day, the day evil is defeated forever, and peace reigns.

What child is this? He is the King of kings and Lord of lords!



PRAYER

King of kings, we bow before You. We acknowledge Your sovereignty and Your authority over all creation. In this season, we thank You for stripping Yourself of all your kingly glory and majesty to become like one of us, live among us, and ultimately die for us on the cross. Help us reflect You—our King, in everything we do and say. May we, through our actions, attract others to Your kingdom this season, so that they may experience everlasting life with You. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

**“ON HIS ROBE
AND ON HIS THIGH
HE HAS A NAME WRITTEN,
KING OF KINGS
AND LORD OF LORD”**

REVELATION 19:16

The Reconciler

JENNIFER YEE

Day 18

God has always lived in unbroken relationship—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even before God spoke the world into existence, He planned a creation filled with relationships—relationships between creatures, and between creatures and their Creator. He knew that the very people He created would destroy those relationships, so He conceived the concept of reconciliation.

God didn't have to do that. He is complete within Himself. But because He is a God of grace and mercy, He chose to create a pathway for reconciliation through His Son, Jesus. Jesus' sacrifice repairs humanity's broken relationship with God and with one another, restoring the relationship that was enjoyed in the Garden of Eden.

But reconciliation is a two-way street. It requires active participation on both ends. Just as we choose to sin, we must also choose to accept God's gift of salvation and repent. As believers with a restored relationship with God, we have been made ministers of reconciliation. God has committed this message to us, equipping us to share it with the fractured world around us.

PRAYER

Lord, we praise You as the Creator of every good thing, including reconciliation. Thank You for choosing to love us and reconcile us through Your Son, Jesus. We pray that you will equip us to boldly share your message of reconciliation with those around us. Amen.



**“THAT GOD WAS
RECONCILING THE WORLD
TO HIMSELF IN CHRIST,
NOT COUNTING
PEOPLE'S SINS AGAINST THEM.
AND HE HAS COMMITTED
TO US THE MESSAGE OF
RECONCILIATION**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19

The Redeemer

JAMIE NICHOLAS

Day 19

What child is this? A Redeemer.

Jesus, our Redeemer, was sent to us from heaven. He humbly came as a lowly baby to a broken and bound people separated from God due to their sin. Our precious Jesus redeemed us—bought us back—by exchanging His life for our dead condition. Only His infinitely pure and sinless blood could pay all our debts in full, redeeming our shortcomings and failures. His sacrifice enables us to have an unbroken relationship with God. When we ask for forgiveness, we are set free and given hope; we have peace and joy.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I can offer nothing of value to pay for my sins. I can only ask for Your forgiveness and receive Your grace, the grace of Your redeeming Blood. You have set me free at such a great cost. Thank You for purchasing me out of the slavery of sin. I rejoice!



**“FOR YOU KNOW
THAT IT WAS NOT WITH
PERISHABLE THINGS
SUCH AS SILVER OR GOLD
THAT YOU WERE REDEEMED
FROM THE EMPTY WAY OF LIFE
HANDED DOWN TO YOU FROM
YOUR ANCESTORS,

BUT WITH THE
PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST,
A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH
OR DEFECT”**

1 PETER 1:18-19

The Arm of the Lord

HELEN TAY

Day 20

You can hear God's people crying out to Him with desperation in their time of need. They understand just how powerless they are in their circumstances, and they know that the arm of the Lord has the power to deliver them out of their captivity and suffering. They have seen Him do it in the past and are calling on Him to do it again.

This Hebraic idiom, “arm of the Lord” points to power and strength. A powerless Israel needed a powerful God to save them. Jesus embodies God's arm—His saving power and strength—and is the ultimate answer to God's people's cries for help.

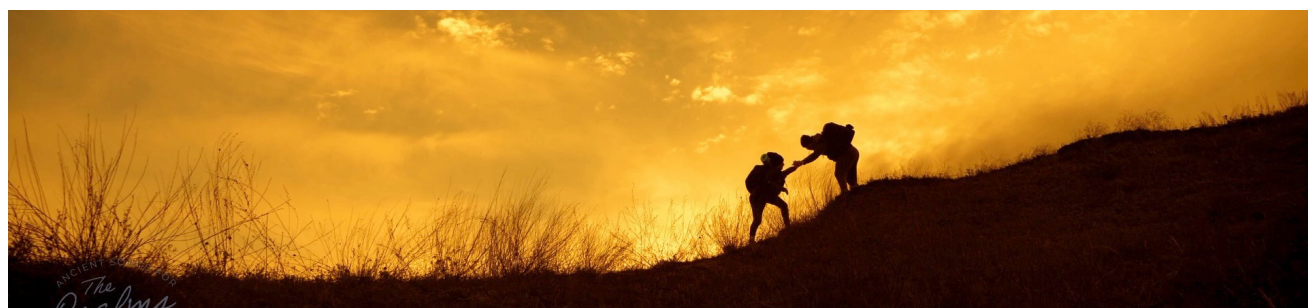
But the image of Jesus as the Arm of the Lord goes beyond just power that clears a path, or destroys the enemy, or makes ways where there are no ways. This same Arm of the Lord also intimately embraces and comforts us. In the arms of God—in Jesus—we experience true rest and peace.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, help me to receive this truth today. Thank You that You are the Arm of the Lord; that You have the power and authority to save me eternally, and that in my every day, every moment, You are so close to me—holding me in Your arms of love. Thank You for being the One Who saves and embraces me.

**“AWAKE, AWAKE! CLOTHE
YOURSELF WITH STRENGTH,
O ARM OF THE LORD: AWAKE,
AS IN DAYS GONE BY, AS IN
GENERATIONS OF OLD”**

ISAIAH 51:9



The Horn of Salvation

TRACEY EDOUARD

Day 21

Did you know, metaphorically, a horn in the Bible is a symbol of strength? This is because certain animals, like the rhinoceros or unicorn, use their horns as tools of strength. At a time when the strength of Israel seemed to be utterly gone, the Lord had a plan all along to showcase His strength to redeem His people. He chose to do this through none other than a baby! This baby would grow up in wisdom and stature and ultimately become our mighty Redeemer, Who showcased His strength by dying on a cross for the sins of the world. What child is this? Jesus, the Horn of salvation. He not only rules and governs, but protects, defends, and preserves His people by His power.

Are you in need of strength today? At a time when our world is weary and the future looks bleak, turn to Jesus in prayer. May the revelation of Jesus as the horn of our salvation be your strength today!



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we pray that as we cast our cares upon You, that You showcase the horn of Your strength in our lives. Give us the grace to surrender the weight of the world we knowingly or unknowingly carry on our own. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

**“HE HAS RAISED UP A HORN OF SALVATION
FOR US IN THE HOUSE OF HIS SERVANT DAVID.”**

LUKE 1:69

The Prince of Peace

CHRISTOPHER RIVERA

Day 22

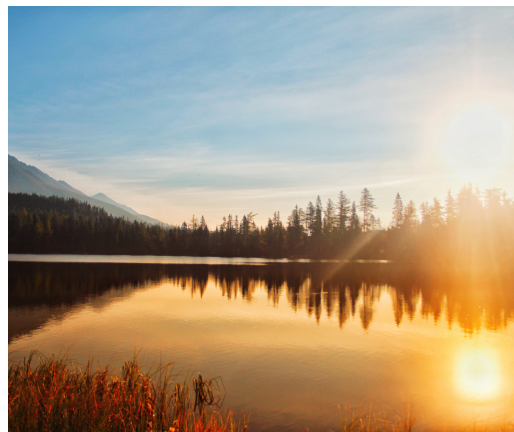
It is accurate to say that “finding peace” is hard these days, especially if we turn on the news or pick up a newspaper. I can’t recall a time as tense as the one we live in today; it is too “easy” to find something to feel worried or anxious about.

But what if Peace finds us? Jesus, the Prince of Shalom, seeks us out and offers us peace—peace that brings wholeness and wellbeing. No matter the stressors that surround us, we can rest assured that God gives us peace in the Name of Jesus.

In this Advent season, let us set aside all of our worries, troubles, and anxiety and surrender it to the Lord, laying all these concerns at the feet of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

**“FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN,
TO US A SON IS GIVEN,
AND THE GOVERNMENT
WILL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS.
AND HE WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF PEACE”**

ISAIAH 9:6



PRAYER

Father, I thank You for saving me. I am grateful that You have made a way for me through Your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, thank You for your gift of peace, for being our Peace. I surrender all my worries today with the knowledge that You have defeated sin on the cross and that my future is secured through You. May Your Spirit remind me of this truth every time the world tries to sway me away from Your peace. In Your Name, I pray. Amen.

The Bright Morning Star



DAVID MERA

Day 23

Though not a star, early astronomers referred to Venus as “the morning star” because it typically appeared in the western sky around just before the sunrise while there was no light and it was still dark. Darkness is defined as the total or near-total absence of light, a gloomy or depressed state, or the lack of knowledge or enlightenment. God’s word tells us that Jesus is the “Bright Morning Star” and the descendant of Jacob (Num. 24:17). Whether we are feeling trapped, down and depressed, or lost with no answers and far from God—this Scripture reminds us that there is hope and a light that can put an end to our dark situation. Just as Venus appears just before sunrise, let us not give up hope but look to Jesus in our dark moments and believe that the Son-sun will also rise and shine in our lives.

**“I JESUS HAVE SENT
MINE ANGEL TO TESTIFY
UNTO YOU THESE THINGS
IN THE CHURCHES.
I AM THE ROOT AND THE
OFFSPRING OF DAVID,
AND THE BRIGHT
AND MORNING STAR”**

REVELATION 22:16

PRAYER

Jesus, help us not give up hope and allow dark situations, emotions, or people to rob the light that You want to shine in and through our lives. Let Your light break through the darkness of doubt, depression, unbelief, and fear. Give us the faith to believe that You can and will do this. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

Jesus

PASTOR STEVE TOMLINSON

Day 24

What child is this? His name is Jesus! This was a very familiar name in Jewish culture. The name we have heard all our lives as “Jesus” is actually the Greek version of the Hebrew name “Joshua”, which means “Yahweh Saves.” The name is so appropriate, for as our verse says, “He will save His people from their sins.”

As I ponder the Name, I realize it goes deep into my heart and experience. As a child, my first prayer began with “Dear Jesus.” As I have grown older, that Name has become so tender and precious to me and I can understand why. I did a search in Scripture and looked at key words associated with Jesus, words like healed, taught, friend, and hope. It is no wonder that when I am praying for a sick friend I always pray in Jesus’ Name; when I realize how little I know, I ask Jesus to teach me; when I am lonely, I discover afresh that Jesus is my friend; and when I am afraid, just saying the Name Jesus brings me hope. But of all the words associated with Jesus, the one I am most grateful for this Christmas is “died.” You see, Jesus was born to die. When Jesus died for the sins of this world, I realize He died for my sins!

PRAYER

This is my Christmas prayer,
“Dear Jesus, I love You. You are my everything, the greatest gift I have ever received. You saved me through your death from all of my sins.
Thank you! Amen.”



**“SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON,
AND YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS,
BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS”**

MATTHEW 1:21

Immanuel

PASTOR HENRY FUHRMAN

Day 25

Christmas is the time we celebrate God coming to be with us, no longer sending others—like prophets, priests, kings, and angels—to give us His Word or to reveal His will. Christmas is God Himself no longer sending—but coming.

It has been said that, if we could condense all the truths of Christmas into only three words, these would be the words: “God with us.” Consider these words:

God. With. Us.

Not apart from us.

Not against us.

Not angry with us.

Not apathetic towards us.

But God—can you believe it?—God-with-us!

If you asked the average person why Jesus came to earth, you would hear different answers. Some may speak of peace on earth or goodwill towards men. Others may say that He came to provide a good, moral example. But why did Jesus come? The answer is simple: Jesus came for you and me! He came to be with us and to make it possible for us to always and forever be with Him.

Merry Christmas! Immanuel has come. The Savior is born! God has come to be with us!

PRAYER

Father, this Christmas Day we thank You for the greatest gift: Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray that by Your Spirit’s power we would lead lives worthy of His matchless Name. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.



**“THE VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE
AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON,
AND THEY
WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL,”
WHICH MEANS
“GOD WITH US”**

MATTHEW 1:23

WHAT
Child
IS THIS?



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE



FRIDAY | DEC. 24
3PM | 4:30PM | 6PM
ALL CAMPUSES

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