



O COME LET US

ADORE HIM



**2020 ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL**

SHELTER ROCK CHURCH

FORWARD

We are coming to the end of 2020, a year we will never forget. On a scale we have not seen in our lifetimes, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the whole world to experience tremendous grief and loss, uncertainty and anxiety, instability, conflict, chaos and fear.

Christmas may feel like an unwelcome guest this year, but I would argue this is precisely the climate that gives us insight into the world in which Jesus was born more than 2,000 years ago.

Most scholars believe that Jesus was born around 4 B.C., which was a particularly turbulent time in Palestine. There was political turmoil, as the ruthless King Herod violently terrorized and oppressed the people of God. There was economic uncertainty; more than 90% of all people lived close to subsistence level or below it. There was social injustice and unrest, as riots, rebellions, and uprisings were common. There was religious conflict and division, as four groups sought and fought to lead the people of God: The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots.

Consider the world into which Christ was born! It is into this world—our world—our dark world, full of chaos, uncertainty, instability, and fear that the angels still proclaim:

**“I bring you good news
that will cause great joy
for all people”**

(Luke 2:10).

We could all use some good news, couldn't we? Well, Merry Christmas! The Christ is born! Into the darkness of our world, a light shines!

As you read and reflect on this Advent devotional prepared by our staff and elders, we pray you will experience for yourself the good news that continues to bring great joy. “For to us, a child is born, to us a Son is given.”

Regardless of what kind of year it has been.

Come, let us adore Him!

-Henry Fuhrman

Senior Pastor

DECEMBER 1

*“Come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”*

Psalm 95:6

Reflection

Adore. The word means “to call to, to worship, pay divine honors to, bow down before.” In our passage, the psalmist erupts with exultant praise when he invites God’s people to adore their Creator. Centuries later, the Creator confounds His creation by showing up in the form of one of them—a humble, unassuming, created thing—hardly seeming worthy of worship. The One Who holds the whole world in His hands and everything in its place is now held in the arms of one of His creations. Yet, the gravity of this infant’s arrival pulls us into orbit around His divine presence and compels our knees to buckle under the weight of God’s glorious love. As we encircle the Center of the cosmos, resting in a manger, our hearts call out to Him; our wills bow down before Him; our mouths pay honor to His majesty as they fall open in awe. We adore Him!

Prayer

Jesus, draw us ever nearer to You this season. Attract us with Your glorious love and humility. Bend our hearts and minds and mold us into the shape of Your self-giving love. Help us to reflect Your piercing light in a world shrouded in darkness as we adore You and give You the honor that is due You. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

-Nathan Gasaway

Teaching Pastor, Manhasset Campus

DECEMBER 2

“Praise the Lord...who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Psalms 103:2-5

Reflection

Here, David earnestly praises the Lord for all that He has done and will continue to do for His children. Jesus accomplished this in His first advent. Our heavenly Father, who created the heavens and the earth, sent His son Jesus Christ to die for all of humankind, changing everything. God loves His people so much that He provides benefits that give them victory in the here and now.

For those that trust in God, they will:

- experience His forgiveness of sin now and forever
- experience both physical and spiritual healing
- be redeemed from eternal separation from Him
- experience His provision and favor.

Let us offer our gratitude and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ! As our lives are being transformed each day by His loving faithfulness, let us rejoice that we can depend on the Lord to work out all things in our lives while enabling us to obey Him and fulfill His eternal plan.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You did not treat us as our sins deserve; rather, You saved us from eternal death and destruction, forgiving our sins, healing our diseases, and providing for our everyday needs. Help us to do Your will—to keep Your covenant and obey Your precepts. You are worthy of receiving our praise, and honor, and glory. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

-George Hsieh

Elder

DECEMBER 3

"They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'"

Mark 4:41

Reflection

One evening, while at sea, Jesus' disciples had a near-death experience as they were suddenly engulfed by a violent storm. In their panic and despair, they awoke Jesus who got up and spoke to the storm which immediately subsided. The disciples stood terrified at what they had just witnessed and pondered the question, "Who is this?"

The answer to this simple question is just as important to us today as it was to the disciples. Who would have guessed that a baby in a manger would control nature? The reality is that Jesus is the King of all, meaning He has authority over everything in His Kingdom. As a good King, He provides for and protects those who belong to His Kingdom. Just like these disciples, we often panic and despair when things get hectic and seem disorderly. But in these moments, we are reminded that we can boldly call on the King in faith. We can petition the King with confidence knowing that He will respond. And when He rescues and delivers, unlike the disciples who stood terrified, we fall at His feet and worship Him. King Jesus is worthy of our love and adoration. So, come let us exalt His Name together for He is the King of kings.

Prayer

Lord, in seasons of turmoil and disorder, quiet our hearts and remind us to call on You in our time of need. Amen.

-Corey Johnson

Teaching Pastor, Westbury

DECEMBER 4

*“Why were you searching for me?”
he asked. “Didn’t you know I had
to be in my Father’s house?”*

Luke 2:49

Reflection

Jesus questioned why His parents would frantically search for Him. Although Joseph and Mary knew that Jesus was God's son, they were still learning about His unique mission. Jesus wanted them to know from that point on He would always be about His Father's business: He would follow through on God's mission for Him to die for the sins of the world.

Do you know we have a mission on earth, too? Like Jesus, are we about our Father's business? We are to love God, love others, and make disciples. This Christmas season, let's establish a new way of living, thinking, and responding. Despite the pain, chaos, or life's daunting questions, let's turn to Jesus and worship Him. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus, our Savior, so that—like Joseph and Mary—people will learn that we live differently. Regardless of what each day brings, may our words, emotions, and thoughts be filtered through the knowledge that Jesus is with us. Jesus can handle all that we face, and that will free us up to love God, love others, and make disciples.

Prayer

Jesus, You are the one we need today and always. But at this moment, would you give us peace and rest? We turn from anxiety and turn to You. Help us give You all that consumes us so that we might focus on You. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

-Gregg Farah

Campus Pastor, Westbury

DECEMBER 5

*“For he is the one spoken of through
the prophet Isaiah, who said: A voice
of one crying out in the wilderness:*

*Prepare the way for the Lord;
make His paths straight!”*

Matthew 3:3

Reflection

Have you ever wondered what God's calling is for your life—a type of mission that is specific to you, a God-ordained mission devised before the creation of the world that is custom-made for you to fulfill? Even before he was born, John the Baptist's calling and purpose were clear; he would prepare the way for the arrival of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. John was a man who did not lose focus; nothing would derail him. He lived for Jesus—for Jesus only. His proclamations exuded a sense of deep urgency: We are to repent and be reconciled with the Lord! In this Advent season, let us prepare for our Lord and the mission for which He has called us. Let us straighten the paths He has placed us on and focus our gaze and adoration on Him alone. He is more than the reason for the season; He is the reason for our living.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us to see Your will and purpose for our lives. Let us learn to be like John the Baptist, who lived his life—not for himself—but for You. We want to obey You and fulfill Your will for us. In Your holy and precious Name we pray. Amen.

-Jenny Jeng

Director of Leadership Development

DECEMBER 6

“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.

*John answered them all,
‘I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’”*

Luke 3:15-16

Reflection

The holidays generate a sense of anticipation and expectancy, hope about something good. But people often place their hopes in the wrong things. To this day, people continue to put their hopes in leaders, teachers, pastors, politicians, and presidents. But John the Baptist makes it clear that this is misplaced hope. Only Jesus can save and no created thing is worthy of worship, however great that thing might be. Let us eagerly expect the wonder of salvation this season and place our hopes in the only One Who can bring it: Jesus!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, we believe that You came to earth—God in human flesh—and lived a sinless life, dying on the cross for our sins. We believe that You were resurrected from the dead, and You are coming again. We put our hope in You. Help us trust and obey You so that we can experience the fullness of Your blessings in our lives. Amen.

-Jerry O'Sullivan

Campus Pastor, Syosset

DECEMBER 7

“Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 1:7

Reflection

Each Christmas, we eagerly anticipate the joy that comes from giving and receiving gifts. The way in which we receive a gift says a lot about how we value and respect the giver. My son may come and proudly gift me a rock that he has found while playing outside. Now, the rock is not what makes the gift special. The gift is special because it is from my son. You and I, as followers of Jesus, have been given special and spiritual gifts. These gifts from God are of so much greater value than anything we could obtain physically. We have received these gifts, and our primary responsibility is to use our gifts in faithful obedience to God as well as in service to those in our lives. The way in which we use or receive our gifts from God says a lot about how we love and respect Him. May we be found putting our gifts into use as a way to showcase the magnificence of the Giver.

Prayer

Our Father, thank You for the gifts You have given to us. We thank You for the best gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask You to use these abilities and strengths to showcase Your goodness and truth to the world around us as we eagerly await Your Son's return. Amen.

-Leslie Stols

Family Ministry Pastor

DECEMBER 8

*“People will faint from terror,
apprehensive of what is coming on the
world, for the heavenly bodies will be
shaken. At that time they will see the
Son of Man coming in a cloud with
power and great glory”
Luke 21:26-27*

Reflection

You won't see these verses on Christmas cards. Normally we see a baby sleeping in a barn under a bright star reminding us that God became one of us, humbled Himself into a six-pound baby, and began His journey to be the world's best teacher and our only Savior. That was His first Advent. Wish you had been there? What words describe God becoming one of us? What would you have said that night? Today, say those words aloud.

No Christmas cards when Jesus returns! His second arrival will shake the earth. Jesus describes the chaos, fear and panic gripping the world (much more severe than 2020) before He returns "in a cloud with power and great glory." No one will be standing. "Every knee will bow ... and every tongue will acknowledge Jesus Christ (that tiny Christmas-card baby) is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This will be the highest point in history. By God's grace, we will be there.

Prayer

Lord God, fill our minds with Your story. Help us understand what You did for us (and the whole world). Fill our hearts with Your rich and endless love. Open our mouths in this Advent season to declare our love and adoration for You: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

-Jack Crabtree

Teaching Pastor, Syosset

DECEMBER 9

*“I will not leave you as orphans;
I am coming to you.”
John 14:18*

Reflection

Life has a way of giving birth to orphans—sometimes it is through the loss of parents or feeling abandoned to a difficult circumstance, forgotten and neglected. The hardness of life can make one feel like an orphan.

Recently, I had this revelation. With the passing of my father in August, and both parents now deceased, I was a bona fide orphan. I shed a waterfall of tears over this thought. But the reality is my earthly status does not in any way entitle me to the status of orphan in spiritual terms. The Father who has adopted me into His eternal family, through Jesus, gave me this promise that He would not abandon me to work out life's problems single-handedly. Through His Holy Spirit, Jesus comforts us in our sadness, and we are assured we are never comfortless, even in our deepest grief and despair. His presence is a promise.

You are not a bereaved, fatherless child walking life's road strewn with grave disappointment and pain. The Comforter is a whisper away and longs to lift you into His arms, hold you close to Him and tenderly speak as a father does, that everything will be alright because He is with you, and always will be.

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, we pray in this season and always that we would feel Your loving embrace and realize that You adore us, delight in us, and will never forsake us because we are Your beloved children.

-Preetha Mathews

Communications Director

DECEMBER 10

“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

Isaiah 65:17-19

Reflection

In the midst of a tremendously difficult year, it is so refreshing to read this promise and remember who holds our future. To be reminded that this life is temporary energizes us to use it well and gives us peace knowing that the “weeping and crying” of this present life will eventually cease. We will one day forget all our troubles. Christ has already won the victory and will return again! God delights in us! Our hope and our salvation rest in Him alone. Let us rejoice in Christ as we live in and await His new creation.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for the hope and future we have in You. Remind us of how temporary this life is. Motivate us to use our lives well and to advance Your gospel with everyone we meet. And on days where we feel like there is no hope and all is failing, help us to remember that You’ve already won the victory and that our hope and future are in You. In Your Name, we pray. Amen.

-Peter Ladenheim

Student Ministries Director

DECEMBER 11

*“He must become greater;
I must become less.”
John 3:30*

Reflection

It's possible to aim to serve God with a view to enriching yourself, without realizing. (Serving God will make me happier, nicer, more popular, more appealing, more loveable and respectable). How interesting to hear John the Baptist say, "I must become less." He says this in response to some of his well-meaning disciples, who are concerned that their beloved teacher is falling behind in what they take to be a baptism contest. A certain rabbi on the other side of the Jordan seems to be baptizing more people than John.

“He must become greater; I must become less” is not self-abasement or self-loathing on John’s part. Look at the words John utters right before: “The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.” John sees himself as Christ’s friend and attendant. A great privilege! (The bride, of course, is the Church, that is, us believers). It would be complete idiocy for the best man to think himself the star of the wedding ceremony. Naturally, John is happy for Jesus and delighted that the time has come for Jesus to shine.

Prayer

O Bridegroom hidden among us, come! You are beautiful, and in Your presence is joy forever. Creation adores You, and in the light of Your glory our vanity is washed out. We, Your bride, rejoice in You!

-Jeff Benz

Chair of the Elders

DECEMBER 12

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

Isaiah 2:4

Reflection

“No justice, no peace” is the cry of the protesters throughout our country and the world. Justice and peace are the desire of all who have suffered oppression, discrimination, and violence. Isaiah provides hope in one powerful sentence. Disputes and wrongs will all be settled fairly. There will be justice delivered by a Righteous Judge. After this justice has been served, the people can then turn the weapons of war into tools for use in the garden.

In a world where it seems that there is no justice for those who lack power or means, there is hope that justice will ultimately prevail. Although there is continual news of war between nations and strife between citizens causing loss of life, property, and freedom, we are given hope that a Savior will come. This Savior who will bring justice and peace is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we long for justice and peace in our homes, our communities, and our world. We pray for those who are oppressed, enslaved, discriminated against, and suffer violence at the hands of others. We put our hope in You Lord Jesus to bring justice and peace to our world.

-Jim Owens

Campus Pastor, Manhasset

DECEMBER 13

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’”

Matthew 2:1-2

“After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen in the east! It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure. 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 2:9-11

Reflection

When the wise men saw Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him. They had traversed a great distance to find their king and present their gifts of adoration with great joy. Finding and adoring Him was their singular focus. Today, holiday traditions and expectations consume our attention. Yet, God's Spirit graciously points us to Jesus. And we don't have to travel thousands of miles to find His presence. We only need to turn our gaze to the child born to be King, worship Him, and present our gifts.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to recognize when You are trying to speak to us. Help us to earnestly seek out ways that we can draw closer and encounter You. And before we even offer You any service or ask that You listen to what we are needing from You, help us lift our hearts in adoration, listening to what You desire from us.

-David Mera

Worship Leader, Westbury

DECEMBER 14

“They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Isaiah 11:9

Reflection

Peace on earth! The phrase abounds during the holiday season. And if we think about it, we all would like it to happen, but it seems like an impossible goal. Let's be honest: peace in *my* life, my house, even peace of mind, feels like it would be asking too much sometimes. Jesus is the Prince of Peace! When He comes, He promises to bring peace. According to Isaiah, a time is coming when no one will be able to harm or destroy. The knowledge of the Lord will flood that place and peace will reign. Peace broke into the world when Jesus came to earth the first time; it is available to us now—He can bring peace to the chaos inside us today—and when He returns, peace will cover the cosmos like a blanket. As we wrap gifts for the ones we love, let us not forget to wrap ourselves in the love and peace that only Jesus brings.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to experience the unique peace that You bring. Thank You for coming into our world to bring peace. Thank You for the promise of Your return. Thank You for Your presence that is with us at all times, Your presence that brings peace and drives chaos out of our lives. Help us to trust You more and rest in Your peace daily. Amen.

-Craig Muller

Elder

DECEMBER 15

*“How beautiful upon the mountains are
the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good
news of happiness, who publishes
salvation, who says to Zion,
Your God reigns.”*

Isaiah 52:7

Reflection

Zion is known as a high point, as Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains. Messengers could be seen coming over the mountains bearing news. Angels bore good news as they announced that Salvation would be wrapped in swaddling clothes; this baby's beautiful feet would proclaim God's shalom. We can rejoice that Jesus spent His time on Earth proclaiming the hope of a coming Kingdom; likewise, we should proclaim this good news. In Romans 10, Paul asks "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" We can fall in love with Jesus because He first loved us. We experience deeper love and respect for Him when we realize that He calls on us to be His hands and feet, proclaiming the good news, the Gospel of Jesus. I cannot think of a better way to spend the rest of our time on this earth than shouting from the mountain top that Jesus Reigns!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, let us fall at Your beautiful feet and adore You. Thank you for the peace You proclaim and the salvation that You bring. You reign over all the earth. Help us proclaim that good news! In Your Name, we pray.

-Joe Varghese
Elder

DECEMBER 16

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

John 8:12

Reflection

Who do you follow? If I asked you this question in the context of a devotional, the easy answer might be, "Jesus. I follow Jesus." But is it true? Who are you following on social media? What websites come up immediately because you visit them so often? Who belongs in your close circle of friends? The people and things we follow are indicators of what we adore. If I was to phrase the question as, "Who do you adore?"—would the answer still be the same? This year has been long and different, and maybe you feel like you have been stumbling around in the dark. Is it possible that your adoration is misplaced? This Scripture reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world. Light cannot be overcome by the darkness. Light wins every time! Are you stressed, confused, or fearful? Cling to Jesus. Follow and adore Him.

Prayer

Father, I pray that with all that we are, we would follow You. I pray that our adoration would be in You. Father, I thank You that we don't have to walk in darkness because Jesus, the light of the world, goes before us! I pray that we would cling to You, and You would direct our paths. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

-Mike Schuman

Elder

DECEMBER 17

*“For He has rescued us from the
dominion of darkness and brought us
into the kingdom of the Son He loves,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins.”*

Colossians 1:13-14

Reflection

When I feel ashamed, I want to run away and hide. Darkness provides a good place to hide and makes me feel safe for a time, but it is not sustainable. I was not created to live in the darkness. It makes me sad and lonely. I desperately want my mistakes (sins) to be over and done with (forgiven). I want someone to tell me that shame isn't what defines me. I need to be bought back (redeemed) from condemnation and to accept my punishment ... but I'd rather someone else did it. This is why, when I truly understood the enormity of the Gospel, I couldn't resist the pull of a relationship with Jesus who said that He had paid the punishment for me. I needed God to pick me up, dust me off, and patiently teach me to love my neighbor as myself, so I never need to feel ashamed again.

Prayer

Jesus, You slipped into our messy human world to release us from darkness and bring us into Your light. I know You love me as Your creation—but I want more than that—I want to stand before You unashamed and accepted as Your beloved child. Thank You for making that possible!

-Michel Tomlinson

Administrative Assistant

DECEMBER 18

“They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.”

Mark 6:42-44

Reflection

How many of us look at seemingly impossible tasks and think, "There's just no way!?" In today's passage, we see Jesus perform the impossible: feed well over five thousand people until they were full using just five loaves of bread and two fish. When Jesus told His disciples to feed the multitude, they looked to their own resources and abilities and concluded that it would be impossible. Similarly, when we find ourselves in difficult situations, we often look at our own abilities and reach the same conclusion as the disciples—it's impossible. Thankfully, our God is in the business of doing the impossible—He parted the sea; He broke down walls; He closed the mouths of lions; and most importantly, He opened the door to eternal life with Him! Things that are impossible for humans are no match for God!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for performing the impossible for us. During this final week before Christmas, help us to focus on You and the impossible miracles You have performed, and will continue to perform, in our lives; help us to remember Your faithfulness and trust in You, even when things seem impossible. In Your holy and precious Name, we pray. Amen.

-Helena Nagel

Director of Operations

DECEMBER 19

“While He was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before Him and said, ‘My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.’”

Matthew 9:18

Reflection

What kind of trust is this? A man's daughter has died; he has no options. But he trusts that Jesus' touch can revive her. Holiday festivities often overshadow the pain experienced by those who are sick in their bodies. But Jesus doesn't go on vacation during the holidays. In our passage, He gets up, and on the way to this leader's house, He heals a woman that has largely been ignored in the hustle and bustle of the crowd. Jesus sees us and is not distracted by circumstances; He sees the afflicted. In fact, He was afflicted so that we might be healed. "By His wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). His touch still heals us. And He can impart life.

Prayer

Jesus, we need Your healing—spiritual, emotional, and physical. Lord, give us bold faith to believe that You can do the impossible. What others may think is impossible, we desire to believe that it is possible. Lord, in this season of Advent, will You show us Your greatness, Your glory, and Your goodness? We ask for Your healing touch, as we kneel before You. Amen.

-Jamie Nicholas
Office Manager

DECEMBER 20

“And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

Luke 2:10-11

Reflection

What an announcement: Jesus brings great joy! Jesus is the great joy for all people. Psalm 16:11 says, “in Your presence there is fullness of joy.” The home I grew up in had a sign that read: “Happiness may depend on happenings, but joy depends on Jesus.” Joy, abundant joy, depends on the presence of Jesus. At this time of the year, with all its many happenings, we should encourage ourselves to focus on Jesus and what He has done for us—He saved us!—and joy will spring from this revelation. Rest in that joy; meditate on it. We have been redeemed for all eternity! We are loved! Such good news for all people!

Prayer

Jesus, let us love You and be filled with overwhelming joy for who You are and what You have done for us. Thank you, precious Savior, Friend and God, for laying aside Your majesty, giving up everything for us. May we adore You this day and may our hearts be filled with joy at the thought of the good news You have brought into our world and lives. Amen.

-Darlene Benz

Director of Finance

DECEMBER 21

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Reflection

Jesus is the Overcomer. He succeeds, overpowering and defeating all dark forces. It's not hard to believe that Jesus is an overcomer. But, because we are in Jesus, that is who we are too! Jesus has already won the ultimate victory. In His first coming, Jesus won the war. He defeated death when He died and rose, giving us complete freedom, access to God, and eternal life. But we still face and fight temporary battles on earth—sickness, disappointment, tragedies and tribulations of all kinds. But we are not alone. Jesus fights with us. In the present, He offers us shalom: peace, wholeness, nothing broken or lacking. At His second Advent, this shalom will be fully realized and all remaining battles will cease. In the meantime, we experience His victory and peace, knowing that there is nothing in this life that He can't handle.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, help us to know You as the Overcomer and Shalom-bringer in our lives. We worship and praise You for what You accomplished during Your first coming and celebrate You for what You will complete at Your second coming. Give us courage, faith, and endurance as we face present challenges and eagerly await the end of all battles at Your next Advent.

-Stephanie Osorio

Worship Director

DECEMBER 22

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and
burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Matthew 11:28

Reflection

Jesus calls “all who are weary and burdened” to come to Him. He promises to give us rest. But do we really understand what He is offering? COVID-19 brought a new normal; add holiday stress to that and life’s burdens begin to weigh us down. Do we just suffer reflexively under this immense weight, or do we intentionally cast our anxieties and weariness on the One who can bear them? Rest means more than relaxation, recovery, or refreshment. For musicians, it describes an interval of silence for a specified duration. Jesus promises to give us this interval of peace. In vv. 29-30, He describes His yoke as light and easy. We must exchange our heavy and hard burdens for His light and easy yoke so that our souls can find rest. Jesus’ first Advent brought the promise of rest—at least for specified intervals. His second Advent will bring everlasting rest. Right now, Jesus offers to carry our burdens. What in our lives is wearing us down and exhausting us? What is holding us back from giving them to Him? What is preventing us from taking His light and easy yoke?

Prayer

Jesus, during this season we pray that You help us trust in You and surrender our burdens and lives to You. We bring all our weariness and anxieties to You and exchange them for Your yoke so that we can walk alongside You and share in Your life.

-Steve Osorio

Technical Director

DECEMBER 23

“But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness, for the training of the body has a limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. In fact, we labor and strive for this, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of everyone, especially of those who believe.”

1 Timothy 4:7-10

Reflection

The holiday season is filled with lots of myths, some of them quite fun. In high school, one of my friends was extremely superstitious. He reasoned with me that he did things a certain way to avoid bad luck from the universe. At first, I thought it was funny, but then it hit me: I've been superstitious towards the Lord! "If I do this, then God will do that." I realized that God is not like that. He is not a coin toss; rather, He is a Keeper of His promises. His promise of everlasting life is not a gamble or myth; it is our hope in the One True Living God!

Prayer

Lord, we ask You to cleanse our hearts of all things not of You, even myths that try to compete with You. Develop godliness in us. Drown out the distractions and give us the wisdom to trust in Your promises, including Your unearned gift of salvation. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

-Kayla Wong

Worship Leader, Manhasset

DECEMBER 24

*“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory
and the exact expression of His nature,
sustaining all things by His powerful
word. After making purification for sins,
He sat down at the right hand
of the Majesty on high.”*

Hebrews 1:3

Reflection

Tomorrow is Christmas Day! But Christmas Eve has always taken on great significance in the life of the church and in many of our families. We anticipate something wonderful; we strain with expectation. The author of Hebrews describes Jesus as God, Sustainer, and Purifier—an awe-inspiring image. If you are Mary and Joseph, looking for lodging in the overcrowded town of Bethlehem, knowing that the birth could come at any moment, how do you anticipate that tomorrow you may meet God? Although they lacked a full understanding of the awesome nature of what was to happen, they did know, most importantly, that Jesus would be a Savior—their Savior!

Like children anticipating Christmas morning, let us stand eagerly in adoration, beholding the wonder that the author of Hebrews has painted for us. Do you want to know what God is like? Look to Jesus—He is the exact radiance of God's glory. Do you wonder how you can make it through this difficult life? Jesus sustains all things through His powerful Word! Do you feel overwhelmed by your sin? Jesus has provided your purification! Jesus is our Savior.

Prayer

Father, this Christmas Eve, may we see the radiance of Your Son, and may our countenances reflect His beauty to our friends and family this Christmas.

-Steve Tomlinson

Senior Pastor

DECEMBER 25

*“I am the Root and the Offspring
of David, the Bright Morning Star.”
Revelation 22:16*

Reflection

Among my favorite childhood movies is *The Sandlot*, a baseball classic in which neighborhood kids are obsessed with baseball and Babe Ruth. There are countless scenes where the boys marvel at the greatness of The Babe, recounting his many nicknames: The King of Crash. The Sultan of Swat. The Colossus of Clout. And of course, The Great Bambino. For these boys, Ruth was a figure larger than life and his greatness could not be contained by a single phrase.

When we come to see how the Bible speaks of Jesus, we encounter a similar phenomenon. Dozens of descriptors are offered, including “The Root and Offspring of David, the Bright Morning Star.” But what do these mean?

As the “Root of David,” Jesus is asserting His Divine nature. Since David sprang from Him, He is the Creator, the Author of Life. But He is also the “Offspring of David.” As David’s Root, Jesus is the Source. As David’s Offspring, Jesus is the Son—the rightful heir to the Kingdom God promised. But there is more.

Jesus is also the “Bright Morning Star.” What is the morning star? Well—it is the herald of the dawn. It’s the bright light that signals a new day has come.

Merry Christmas! A new day has come! The Root became the Offspring, and the baby in the manger is God’s Light for our world.

Prayer

Father, this Christmas Day we thank You for the greatest gift: Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. His incomparable greatness leaves us searching for words. Yet we pray that by Your Spirit’s power we would lead lives worthy of His name. Amen.

-Henry Fuhrman

Senior Pastor

SHELTER ROCK CHURCH

Christmas Eve Services

Join us for our annual Christmas Eve Service on Thursday, December 24. These services are family-friendly and will feature traditional candle lighting with a new twist - optional glow stick lighting for children and adults alike.

Safety precautions, such as wearing masks, will be observed during these services.

Manhasset Campus
626 Plandome Road

Syosset Campus
178 Cold Spring Road

Westbury Campus
11 Powells Lane

Online Campus
ShelterRockChurch.com



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