

Prepare Him Room



Daily Advent Readings

Christ Methodist Church of Auburn

A GLOBAL METHODIST CONGREGATION

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Daily Advent Readings

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DECEMBER 1

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

John 6:38

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me.”

What a wonderful scripture to start the Advent season. So often we think of the Christmas Season as a time of excess; excess in food, festivities, gift shopping and giving, and decorating our homes. But as we begin Advent, we are called to remember that this is, more than anything, a time of waiting and a time of remembering the unforgettable and unfathomable gift of God’s Son as our personal Lord and Savior.

This scripture reminded me that the Lord sent His son in the form of a precious baby. It was an arrival of humility, not of pomp and pageantry. There was no excess of anything in that lowly manger except the extravagant love of our heavenly Father and Joseph’s and Mary’s awe-filled love and wonder as they welcomed the Savior of the world.

This scripture reminded me of a beautiful old hymn, “Have Thine Own Way.” Though it’s not a Christmas carol, its text reminds us of many things as we begin this Advent journey.

*1 Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way;
Thou art the Potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me
After Thy will,
While I am waiting,
Yielded and still.*



2 *Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way;
Search me and try me,
Master, today.
Whiter than snow, Lord,
Wash me just now,
As in Thy presence
Humbly I bow.*

Even the text reminds us of the importance of waiting during this Advent season and how that precious baby in the manger had the amazing destiny of washing away the sins of all humankind. Advent can also be a time of drawing closer to our precious Savior as we humbly bow in His presence, allowing Him to renew us, change us, mold us, and cleanse us whiter than Christmas snow.



Gracious Heavenly Father,

As we begin this journey to the manger of the Savior of the world, we pray that You would mold us and make us after YOUR will. Help us to remember that Your Son reminded us to humbly come to You and seek Your will for our lives and enter into a deeper and closer relationship with You. May we discover that blessed Christmas peace that only You can give as we allow You to mold us into a new creation. Amen.

Gary Klarenbeek



DECEMBER 2

Savior of Us All

1 John 4:14

“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

Indeed, John had certainly seen some things. He had experienced miracles ranging from healing the blind to raising the dead. He watched as his Savior was tortured and crucified. He witnessed the resurrection and ascension. It wasn't enough to just see wonders. John, like the other remaining disciples, spent the duration of his life testifying about their experiences with Jesus. Tradition tells us that they split into groups to strategically ensure that the Good News of the Savior would spread in all directions of the known world. Jesus had not only come for them; He came for us all.

As a young person, I spent time in Africa with a mission organization. I regret that during those months I was often more focused on the “work” to be done, and not on sharing what I had seen Jesus do for me personally and the truth about salvation. I should have spent more time testifying that He is the Savior of the world – no matter how remote, how dark, or how difficult.

Today, I am not in the life place to spend months traveling far and wide to share the Gospel. However, the world is right outside of my window. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we spent time this season really meditating on what we have personally seen Jesus do in our lives and the lives of those around us? As we reflect on how Jesus came to save us and how He continues to show His love, we will be more prepared to testify to the world about all that He has done.



Father,

Thank you for loving each and every single person so much that you sent Jesus to be our Savior. Help me to truly see how You are working in my life, and to testify each day about Your Son. Amen.

Caroline Raville

DECEMBER 3

For All the People

Luke 2:9-11

“And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened. 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.””

Why did God choose shepherds for the angels to speak to? Could it be that God wanted to emphasize that the coming of this Baby, Jesus Christ, was for all people, including the poor and lowly? I believe with all of my heart that this is why He chose lowly shepherds to deliver this message to!

Our text tells us they were “terribly frightened,” but we notice later in verse 15 that they went straight to Bethlehem to “see this thing that has happened.” Would we respond the same way and seek the voice of God when He speaks to us? I love the way that in verse 11 this Baby is referred to as Savior, Christ, and Lord!

What more could we want, need, or ask for during this Advent season but the assurance that this Child was born for ALL mankind, and He deserves our love, respect, and praise!



Dear Lord,

Help us to feel Your presence in the days ahead and to realize the gift of this Child to all people. This is the greatest birth of all times, and we give You all praise, honor and glory and pray in Your precious name. Amen.

Craig Leonard



DECEMBER 4

Conformers or Transformers

Romans 12:2

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

How do you like seeing Christmas decorations up in stores before Halloween? Maybe I’m old-fashioned, but I prefer each holiday to have its fair share of time. Not conforming to this world is a difficult job when it’s thrust in your face.

But not conforming to this world is far bigger than limiting holidays to their own time. As I think about Christ Methodist Church of Auburn and how it’s grown over the last year and a half, I can’t help but think about not conforming to this world. Suffice it to say that not conforming can be challenging, but, oh, what a blessing our church is!

Renewing our minds might be harder to understand. I can’t renew my mind like I renew my subscription to *Southern Living* magazine. But I was recently reminded of how we should renew our minds. Some of the women in our church just finished *The Armor of God* Bible study by Priscilla Shirer. One of the last pieces of armor is the helmet of salvation. In the study, Priscilla explains each piece of armor and why Paul used it to describe how we should protect ourselves from and fight the evil one who is of this world. This is a very deep subject but simply put, we need to focus on Jesus and the Bible and not on things of this world. We need to study the Bible, stay in connection with righteous Christians, and pray. God has given us His power to fight Satan, and we initiate that power through prayer.



One area in which I struggle to not conform to the world is TV shows. We have so many choices today with all the streaming services. Many times, when I turn a show on, I get values that conflict with mine thrust in my face. I might think it's ok to watch this one show, and it won't affect my mind, but before I know it, that foul language has seeped into my vocabulary. Thankfully, there are viewing options that are faith-based and conservative so I can watch wholesome, entertaining TV shows.

God knows what's best for us even when we don't. Because of our failures He sent His Son into our world to save us. So, let's focus on the gift of the baby Jesus and being conformed to Him through the renewing of our minds.



Father God,

We love You and thank You for sending Your precious Son to this earth to save us. Help us to focus on You this Advent season, to conform only to You, to renew our minds in Your word, and to pray without ceasing. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Betsy Windle



DECEMBER 5

All These Preparations

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

“However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” -the things God has prepared for those who love Him- these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit.”

Most people love Christmas and all the sights, sounds, and smells that go along with the season. Some people start preparing months before it happens. Some people wait until the last minute.

When I read 1 Cor 2:9-10, my preparations for December seem so minuscule, even ridiculous, when I try and comprehend all the preparations God has prepared for me.

Last January, I prayed for God to overwhelm me like He did for those people who woke up and went to pray for “21 days of prayer and fasting” at 6:00 a.m. in 30-degree weather... I was driving on my way to a very early pickle ball game, when I saw just how many people were moved to get up so early on a cold, cold morning to pray. Every parking space in that huge parking lot was filled to capacity with trucks and cars -even on the curbsides. My heart was quickly awakened to my own personal agenda.

Within 10 minutes, God began showing me that He heard my prayer to be overwhelmed by His love. As I was on the pickle ball courts (in the freezing cold) a Korean friend came up to me and asked me would I be willing and available to read the Bible in English to her and several of her Korean friends. I have been meeting and reading with these ladies weekly since



that cold, cold January day. *I am overwhelmed* by what God prepared for me that day as I drove by a full “praying” parking lot. So many other answers to that specific prayer have happened in my life, too, this last year, one being the *overwhelming love* I have witnessed within Christ Methodist Church as we are growing.

I invite you to pray for God to *overwhelm you* and see the many ways He has prepared for you!



God of all our days,

We pray for your love to overwhelm us as we prepare for this Christmas season and to know you more dearly in each day we are given. Amen.

Julie Downes



DECEMBER 6

God's Inheritance

Ephesians 1:11-12

“In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him Who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.”

When someone talks about an inheritance, we typically think of something special we receive after a loved one has passed away. God has a different idea when it comes to inheritance. We all belong to God as His inheritance. God wants all of us. He wants us to feel assured of His love. We were all chosen and purposed to be God's treasured possessions as His inheritance. God is a jealous God in that He wants us all for Himself. He wants us all to be His sons and daughters.

1 Peter 2:9 tells us that we are truly God's treasured possessions. When I think about being God's treasured possession, I am filled with such encouragement and amazement. Unlike an earthly inheritance, we don't have to wait until we get to heaven to receive God's inheritance. We are already part of God's inheritance as His treasured possessions, and we get to enjoy His goodness and blessings every day.

God describes his inheritance as people who hope in Christ. When our hope is set on Jesus, God will transform us to resemble Him, and that should be our goal every day. When we continue to set our hope in Jesus, we get to enjoy our heavenly inheritance now by becoming more Christ-like. Our goal as God's chosen people and inheritance is to praise God in all that we do.



During this Christmas season, may we all set our hope on Jesus every day, remember our place as a treasured possession of God's inheritance, and praise God for his goodness.



Dear Lord,

Thank you for choosing us all to be Your treasured possession as part of Your inheritance. Thank You that we can experience Your goodness every day as we set our hope on You. This Advent season, I pray that we can slow down and remember our inheritance and that we never forget that by placing our hope in You, we get to experience You in a way that is anything greater than we could imagine. Thank you for wanting each of us to be Your treasured possession and Your inheritance. We love you, Lord! Amen.

Susan Canaan



DECEMBER 7

Promises, Promises

Joshua 21:45

“And not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed: all came to pass.”

In 1968, composer, Burt Bacharach, and lyricist, Hal David, wrote a song entitled “Promises, Promises.” It was recorded by the singer Dionne Warwick and quickly became a Billboard hit. That same year it became the title song for a new Broadway musical written by Neil Simon. The play, “Promises, Promises,” focused on two young New Yorkers who worked for the same company and who both became disillusioned with life because of broken promises. The words of the chorus reflect the pain and indignation the central characters experienced, “Oh, promises, their kind of promises can just destroy a life. Oh, promises, those kinds of promises take all the joy from life.” Many counselors and therapists agree that broken promises can induce stages of grief resembling those experienced after losing a loved one and can result in depression, and even suicide. The consequences of broken promises – whether made by a parent, sibling, friend, employer, or spouse -can be devastating and lasting. Many are left to wonder, “Who can I ever trust to keep a promise?”

The wonderful news for us as believers is that we serve a God who always keeps His promises! He did it for the Israelites, and He will do it for us! In this season of Advent, it is fitting for us to reflect on the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of over 300 prophesies (or promises) made in the Old Testament! And it is especially appropriate that we consider some of the beautiful promises made to us by our Savior: John 6:35, “I am the bread of life;



he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world.” Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you.” Matthew 28:20, “... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” John 14:3, “I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” And finally, the most marvelous promise of all, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life.” It is imperative that we, as believers, be people who keep our word, and that we share with others that there is One who never fails to keep His promises.



Dear Lord,

Thank You for keeping Your promises to us. Please enable us to be people who consistently tell the truth and keep our word. Give us the opportunity and the confidence to tell others about You, the One who never fails to keep His promises. In the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord, we pray these things. Amen.

Rhonda Scott



DECEMBER 8

The Creator and the Created

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Our son Kennedy had a 4th grade project to create an Indian habitat in the form of a diorama. I knew we needed a shoe box with either a peep hole or part of the side missing to get a peek at this homestead. Not John. He purchased a very large piece of plyboard and about \$300 of art supplies from Hobby Lobby. He had poor Kennedy in our breakfast nook for hours on end creating this masterpiece. I complimented them on the great progress they had made but advised they would need to put a move on to complete it by the due date. I asked how they were going to get it out through the door facing. (John had turned it vertically to get inside.) The look on his face was priceless...Kennedy said, “Ah, Dad, the board is too big, and all the Indians will fall off.” What a fun memory! So glad I videoed it! When we create, we are limited in our resources and finite understanding. God created out of purpose. Let’s look at the definition of create.

To create something is to bring something into existence out of nothing; to cause it to come into being as something unique that would not naturally evolve or that is not made by ordinary process. God created this world and us out of His perfect will. He did not create to fulfill a need or deficiency. He did not have to consider His resources and to say otherwise presupposes that the want or need is leading the being. God created out of fullness and sufficiency to display His glory, power, and wisdom. His plan included having His grace reach its peak through His Son, Christ Jesus. His creation is a gift that leads to celebration.



During this season we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Perfection came down and lived among us to teach, love, and lead us to His Father. You were created in God's image to do good works. Because you were a forethought, created with reason and purpose, you have a plan unique to your gifts, placement in time, and circle of people. You are fearfully and wonderfully made for good on this earth.

Consider yourself inside and out to be a blessing created by the God of the universe for service in your season, this very season we live in today. Know that you are a vital part of the body of Christ and pursue this charge with courage, faith, and trust. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, rejoice in your unique role and being created in His image for good.



Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the honor of being created in Your image, serving You on earth, and one day coming home to You in Heaven, through your Son, Jesus Christ. We offer you a thousand Hallelujahs and a thousand more. May Your Son, Jesus Christ's, name be magnified throughout the world today and all of our tomorrows. We pray all these things in Your holy name. Amen.

Laura Braswell



DECEMBER 9

God With Us

Matthew 1:23

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Our Savior, Jesus, Emmanuel - His holy name literally translates into a constant reminder that He is with us. How powerful! And yet, sometimes, I forget this eternal fact. The “and yet” is what brings me up short. Yes, He is always with me, but am I always with Him? Am I putting Him first? Am I living a life that shines His light? Am I WITH HIM or am I “forgetting” my role in this undeniable bond? It is so easy to see His blessings and acknowledge the victory that He is with us, but am I doing my part in return? Am I really living like I am with HIM?

This is a reflection point that has been on my heart for a while now, and how fitting, how like God, that this is the verse that was assigned to me. As part of Christ Methodist since the very beginning, I can look back and clearly see how God was with us, helping tend His church, raising up and engaging volunteers, and WOW! the fruit that was produced! We joined the GMC, the church was named, a pastor was hired, things were clicking into place, and the burden of the unknown lessened. What a blessing! And yet...with fulfillment came comfort, and I found myself relaxing in faith, letting the busyness of life take priority rather than honoring my commitment to God and this church. I stand convicted! There are still so many needs within our church family, areas where we can all play a role.



Over this Advent season, I challenge myself and us all to look within, to truly be *with God*, to listen to His voice and acknowledge those gentle nudges showing us where to lean in and say YES to living life *for Him*. He gave us his son, Emmanuel, who gave His life for us. May we all give back as well – offering a living testimony that God is not only with us, but we are also with Him.



Dear Lord,

Thank You for the gift of Your Son. Thank You for being with us always. Lord, I pray that You stir within us a desire to always be with You, to live our lives for You, and to not let the complacency of life overtake the light within. You are such a good and loving Father; help us to honor You in all that we do. In Your precious name. Amen.

Kate Ham



DECEMBER 10

All Things Are Possible

Matthew 19:26

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

When I was given this Bible verse for this devotional, I could not believe it was the passage chosen for me. It is so similar to Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength,” which has always been my favorite Bible verse. Particularly as I reflect on the hardest times in my life, I am amazed by our God who provides impossible strength in the seasons of our deepest need.

When I divorced, I had two sons aged seven and ten. I prayed each day that I would continue to be strong and a good mother to them. I thanked God for my sons and prayed they would be upheld by His promises to us. Like a camel going through the eye of a needle (the image which prompted Jesus’ words above), we persevered through difficult times, remaining faithful to Him who had been faithful to us.

During the years my husband, Sam, was sick, I depended on Jesus for physical strength to care for him, as well as for the mental and emotional strength to “keep going,” no matter what the days brought. During those three years, I often wondered how unbelievers could survive such sorrow. But I knew I had God as my Savior, Healer, Provider, and Protector - everything. Since Sam passed away, I’ve been given impossible strength to “carry on” as a “mighty widow,” knowing that with Him all things are possible.



As I write this devotion, I am in a Bible study focusing on the armor of God. I see that the armor of God on us and the Holy Spirit in us are means that God uses to make the impossible possible, giving us strength to face anything and everything. In this special time of year, may we believe again in a power that can equip us to bear the challenges of a broken world. Through the power of a resurrected Christ and His Holy Spirit, all things are possible.



Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your love, grace, mercy, and faithfulness, which have sustained so many of us during difficult times in our lives. With You, dear God, all things are possible through our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gives us strength. Amen.

Marsha McCord



DECEMBER 11

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Jeremiah 32:17

“Ah, Lord God, it is You who have made the heavens and earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.”

This verse reveals the prophet Jeremiah in a moment of profound prayer and reflection. Jerusalem is under siege by the Babylonians, and God has instructed Jeremiah to buy a field, symbolizing hope and future restoration. This verse captures Jeremiah’s recognition of God’s omnipotence and faithfulness, even in dire circumstances.

During my reflection time over this verse, the words of Thomas Chisholm’s popular hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness” came to my mind. Moments later I queued Carrie Underwood and CeCe Winan’s vocal duet rendition on my cell phone, took a deep breath and listened to these words, set to Rev. Chisholm’s friend, William Runyan’s musical score:

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father.

There is no shadow of turning with thee.

Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not.

As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,

Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.



*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
Blessings all mine, and ten thousand beside!*

Refrain:

*Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Several church members have commented that these words parallel the journey of Christ Methodist Church of Auburn. As our beloved church continues to focus on God's greatness, faithfulness, and provisions, our bold witness will be strengthened. May the precious children who open the Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts we send realize the power, redeeming grace, and mercy of our mighty God who came into the world as a baby at Christmas.



Dear Heavenly Father,

We trust in Your greatness and bring our concerns and needs. We know You will answer and provide for us. Nothing is too hard for You. Break down barriers and open up doors for us to spread the gospel. We pray for strength, peace, courage, wisdom, and protection in all areas of our lives as we seek to accomplish Your purposes in our lives.

Liz Kenemer



DECEMBER 12

God's Plan

1 Chronicles 29:11

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all.”

Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-11

Have you ever heard the phrase: “If you can’t trace His Hand, trust His Plan?” That is exactly what we are called upon to do during the season of Advent – Trust.

A baby? Born in a stable? The Savior? The Messiah?

Whose plan was that?

God’s plan! The perfect plan!

In our devotional reading (1 Chronicles 28:1-11), we see King David acknowledging and accepting God’s plan to have Solomon, David’s son, build the temple for Israel – not David. In 1 Chronicles 28:3, we read God saying to David, “...you shall not build a house for my name, for you are a warrior and have shed blood.” David was called upon to trust God’s plan. And what was David’s response? He *trusted* God’s plan. Our scripture verse (1 Chronicles 29:11) finds David praising God as “...head above all.”

So, what are we called to do during this Advent season? Like David, we are to *trust* His plan – His perfect plan - and praise the Lord!

Hallelujah!





Dear Lord,

We love You and we trust Your plan. We thank You that Your plans are higher and greater than our plans. We thank You that Your “perfect plan” was to send Your Son, a baby, born in a stable, to be the Savior – the Messiah. Fill our hearts with praise so we, like King David, can say, “...all that is in the heavens and on earth is yours...” Amen.

Bob and Martha Dumas



DECEMBER 13

Promise Keeper

Luke 1:13

“But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah for your prayer has been heard and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you shall name him John.’”

In the narrative of the birth of John the Baptist, we are told an angel appears to Zechariah while he was in the temple burning incense to the Lord. Zechariah was startled and struck with fear. But the angel told him not to be afraid because his prayer had been heard. The angel declares to Zechariah that his wife would bear him a Son who would be great in the eyes of the Lord. And how does Zechariah react to this amazing answer to his prayer? He doubts and questions, “How can this be? For I am old, and Elizabeth is beyond childbearing years.” Not a great example for a priest who has served the Lord for years. Yet, we see that it all comes about just as the angel had told him.

Are we like Zechariah with our prayers? Are we asking yet feeling like they are not being heard? I believe Zechariah’s prayer for a child was answered in God’s time and through God’s plan for a Savior for the world. It had been promised and foretold many times in Scripture. Maybe Zechariah had given up on his prayer for a child, but God had not.

We can learn so much from this story by remembering that God is a promise keeper, and His plans are always perfect.

So, when you think your prayers seem to go unanswered, remember Zechariah and the answer to his prayer. Don’t be afraid and don’t give up but trust that God has an answer that is a part of His special plan for you.



Loving Father,

Help us to trust and remember that our prayers are in Your hands and the answers are Your blessings for our lives. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Howard Segars

DECEMBER 14

Humble Shepherd

Luke 2:20

“The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Shepherds were the first to witness the coming of the Messiah. They were chosen to look upon the face of Christ before the kings. Shepherds who might be unwelcome in more refined society were selected first. Humble shepherds. Those humble shepherds believed. Those humble shepherds were amazed. Those humble shepherds sought Christ. Those humble shepherds spread the Good News. Those humble shepherds praised God. They were the perfect choice to reflect the humility of Christ our Shepherd. Humble from a manger to the cross.

This verse brings to mind the humble shepherds the Lord placed in my life - my mother-in-law, Catherine; my brother-in-law, Robbie; my grandmother, Leila; my grandfather, Charlie; and my precious mother, Dean. These humble shepherds were all unabashedly amazed for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.



Dear Lord,

Make us humble like a shepherd so we can be amazed by Your glory, shout Your Good News, and praise Your holy name. Amen.

Patti Robinson



DECEMBER 15

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Lamentations 3:22-23

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.”

Thomas Obadiah Chisolm from Franklin, Kentucky, had fragile health which often confined him to bed. Between bouts of illness, he would have to push himself to put in extra hours at various jobs in order to make ends meet. After coming to Christ at age 27, Thomas found great comfort in the Scriptures, and in the fact that God was faithful to be his strength in time of illness and weakness and to provide his needs. His hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” is based on Lamentations 3:22-23.

Great is Thy faithfulness! /Great is Thy faithfulness! /Morning by morning new mercies I see. /All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; /Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

The parallel to the ruin caused by the recent hurricane in the hymnwriter’s home region is striking. So many must feel hopeless and abandoned. Other people are bereft by personal storms that are no less terrifying and profound. Nevertheless, God’s love will not allow any of us to be destroyed. God’s compassion shines through in thousands of acts of generosity and the helping hands of strangers and neighbors.

Christmas manifests God’s faithfulness with our Redeemer’s birth. “Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth /Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.” Because of God’s compassion, all pain is relieved; all sin is redeemed; and all darkness is made light. Joy to the world!



Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the birth of Your Son who guarantees our salvation with “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, /Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!” O come, O come, Emanuel. Amen.

Beth Long

DECEMBER 16

Be Doers, Not Just Hearers

James 1:25

“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets, but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.”

Most scholars feel that James, the writer of this passage, was the half-brother of Jesus. This was written after his brother, our Savior, had been crucified and resurrected – perhaps between 45-50 A.D.

James was writing, not to Christian Gentiles, but to Jewish followers of Jesus and instructing them in how they must act as followers of Jesus. The particular passage for today conveys a real truth which we often overlook. That truth must be received in a Christian’s heart and expressed in one’s life.

Just prior to this passage, in verse 22, James wrote “Be doers of the word and not hearers only.” We can be certain that, with great pride, James could recall his brother’s sermon which we know as the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus listed several activities which Christians must do and be blessed. And in today’s passage, James is reminding the Jewish followers of Jesus that knowing the beatitudes and “doing” the beatitudes are two very different things. If we only listen to that sermon and do not feed the poor, for instance, it avails nothing. Later in his same letter, James boldly states, “Faith without works is dead” (vs. 2:17), emphasizing that claiming faith, but not acting upon it, is a useless (dead) exercise in “listening” instead of acting.



Dear Lord,

Impress upon us that the way to become an effective Christian is to recognize that the spoken and written message of Christianity is full of “action verbs” which should be acted upon. Amen.

Barbara and Pete Miller

DECEMBER 17

God's Enduring Faithfulness

2 Thessalonians 3:3

“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.”

Stumbling blocks. We all have faced them, haven't we? The relationship that disappointed and withered, the setback in our career, the wrong decision made in haste. I can attest to all of these! The one thing all of these circumstances has in common is that God remains faithful to us through them. If we return His faithfulness with our own, not only will we “come out the other side,” but God can use these opportunities for our spiritual growth and act on His promise to prosper us and give us hope and a future.

My high school choral club sang Robert Frost's, “The Road Not Taken,” which is the only reason I can remember any of the poem. It reminds me that even when we choose the wrong fork in the road, God provides byways to bring us back to our intended path. How amazing it is to see His hand at work when adversities in the past become blessings in the present!

As our verse closes, Paul obviously has the Lord's Prayer on his mind when he tells us God will guard us from the evil one. God does not completely shield us from the temptations of evil. Just as our muscles need to be used and stressed to become stronger, so our faith becomes stronger when tested. We humans can never match the limitless faithfulness of our loving Father, which the Psalms tell us reaches to the clouds, endures forever, is for all generations, and is our shield. But if we plan our “road taken” to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we continue to grow in faith and use that faith to guard us from the stings and arrows of the evil one!



Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your faithful, unending love. I ask you to guide my decisions today so that I choose the path that follows in Jesus' footsteps. Please be my shield against evil along this journey and forgive me when I stumble. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Michelle Reed

DECEMBER 18

My Constant Companion

Hebrews 13:8

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Being a mother of three and a grandmother of eight has brought many changes in my life, but through it all Jesus has been with me. What comfort it brings to me knowing He will be the same and will be by my side every step I take. I can hardly think about or understand how anyone can walk the path of life alone without Jesus. The more I’ve matured and grown closer to Him, the more I want to know Him. Jesus is our constant, unchanging measuring rod.

I have watched my children and grandchildren grow in Christ, and it is the greatest gift I can have knowing that they are walking with the Lord.

We are obsessed with measuring change and keeping up with how much they have grown. We celebrate each new step because with each change comes maturity and growth. That is why it is so wonderful to think on the fact that Jesus is unchanging. Unchanging in His character, unchanging in His promises, and unchanging in His faithfulness. With that being said, we can fix our eyes on Him to be transformed into His image.

We are always being changed, but the most important change that can be made in our lives is to reflect Jesus clearly. My prayer is to change so that I will reflect His glory more to all of those around me.



Gracious Heavenly Father,

We are so thankful for Your never-ending love for us and for the security of knowing You have always been and will always be the same. Amen.

Pat Giddens



DECEMBER 19

The Little Clan

Micah 5:2

“But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who is one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days.”

Who doesn't love Christmas? The season is full of so much joy and hope. Everywhere you turn you hear Christmas songs and see the beautiful decorations. It's the one time of year we all go “all in” to decorate and have the perfect celebrations with family and friends.

This verse from Micah reminds us of the true miracle we are celebrating. Micah was written somewhere around the 7th century BC predicting the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. I started writing this devotion focused on the miracle in the statistical probability that the Old Testament prophecies could have successfully predicted Christ's birth. But after much thought and prayer over this verse, what began to really jump out at me is the reference to Bethlehem as one of the “little” clans of Judah. Bethlehem was small and insignificant in Micah's time. I looked up the size of Bethlehem today, and its population is about 30,000 – so it is still very small. God did not choose beautiful buildings or prominent locations to share His message to us. He chose a simple manger in a small insignificant city.

In 1 Corinthians 1:31 we read, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Doesn't that just touch your soul? Each Sunday at Christ Methodist, I see the face of God in each of you! In each conversation, I experience the warmth, love, and genuine desire to know God and share His message with



the world. We are in a place that looks nothing like a sanctuary. We have nothing to boast about...except for the One who we are called to boast in! And that is exactly how God started it - in a barn.



Dear Lord,

We thank You for this reminder from Micah that You chose us not because of our position or our significance, but out of grace and mercy in Your love for us. Guide our thoughts in these next days as we celebrate Christ's birth and we remember where it all started. Amen.

Lynn Waldrip



DECEMBER 20

Life Is A Journey

Psalm 25:4

“Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.”

The entire chapter of Psalm 25 is a prayer in which David is asking the Lord for help at all times - to rescue him from danger, to relieve him of his worries, to save him from his enemies and to forgive his sins. He is pouring out his heart and pleading for God to show him His ways and to teach him His paths. I love that David is not leaning on his own wisdom for direction in life. He is asking the Lord for guidance. It's so hard sometimes in life as we tend to think we can handle things on our own. We try to control things even when we have a Lord and Savior waiting for us to ask Him to show us His ways and guide our paths.

Many years ago, when I retired from Auburn, I did not know what I was going to do with my life. I prayed and asked God to show me a way, to give me some direction. A few weeks later, the chairman of the Board at Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham called me and asked me if I would come and talk to them and give them advice on a campaign for a new middle school building. They hired me on the spot and that launched my career into the Christian School market raising funds to further Christian education. Since that meeting, our company has done 96 campaigns for Christian schools. God certainly led me in the direction I needed to go, and it has been a remarkable and gratifying career.



In this verse, Psalm 25:4, the words “ways and paths” makes you feel as if it’s a journey or a direction in life. By seeking God’s ways and His paths, we are expressing a desire for His guidance as we long for a meaningful and purposeful life. Life is a journey, not a single step. As we face each new day, let’s open our hearts to be ready to receive God’s guidance.



Heavenly Father,

We thank You for Your guidance and Your love. As we start this new day, we ask You to show us Your ways and teach us Your paths. Help us to listen to Your voice and to trust Your plan for our lives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Jerry and Nancy Smith



DECEMBER 21

God with Us

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.”

One of my favorite Christmas albums is by Amy Grant. As I sit here at my computer and listen to “Immanuel” I thank God for such a reminder of Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming of God’s Son. Not only would He come as a little baby, but He would be called Immanuel.

So, what’s in a name? Love can be in a name. My beloved mother’s name was Sara, and we all loved her so. Because of her loving influence and her love of the Lord, we still love the name and who it represents. My daughter named her daughter, Sara.

Sometimes that can work both ways. If we don’t like someone, we can wind up not liking their name.

Our church leaders spent long hours deciding what our new name would be until they came up with the best of all names, Christ Methodist Church of Auburn. After the split we endured, closely following Christ and His Word was the only way we as Christians could go.

Names are important to us and none more so than the name of Immanuel, God with us, the Christ. It inspires; it loves; it transforms us as we follow Him until that day that Christ will come again.



Father God,

Help us each day to focus on you and your word, prayerfully, and then to follow wherever you lead us until you lead us home. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sara Annette McGhee



DECEMBER 22

Children of God

1 John 3:2

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

It has been a great blessing to spend most of my life with young children. I love watching their sharp, inquisitive minds learn and grow. As they try to make sense of the world around them, their questions always begin with “Why?”

Why do ladybugs fly away? Why is the sun hiding behind the clouds? Why can't owls swim?

We try to answer these questions with all our knowledge. And we realize that we don't have all the answers. We cannot explain or even understand this marvelous yet complicated world.

The Good News is that we are all children. We are God's children. He does not expect us to know everything. He wants us to have faith in Him that He will provide the answers. Faith is trusting God. This trust is strengthened through daily prayer and companionship. Just like the child trusts the parent who is constantly present and meeting their daily needs, constant prayers and presence with God will build the trust and faith that God will provide for our needs. His love is overflowing and overwhelming. We are His children and trusting Him will eternally light our way.



Father,

It is easy to forget that this earthly life is only the beginning of our time with you. As Lord and Savior, help us grow in this marvelous light of Your perfect love and care. We don't need every answer. The answer is the faith we build through our daily prayers. Amen.

Anne Lipscomb

DECEMBER 23

God Created the Heavens and the Earth

Psalms 19:1

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.”

This picture of the moon was taken on October 16th of this year and it portrays what is called a Hunter’s Moon which is the largest view of the moon from where we live.

God is good. God’s creation design had to be perfect for us to have a home here on earth. The moon helps stabilize our planet’s rotation which makes our climates steadier, and the moon causes the ocean tides. The rotation of the earth causes our planet to have stability that prevents extreme temperatures and encourages life.

Our earth’s strong and stable magnetic field protects us from harmful cosmic rays and damaging solar flares. The radioactive center of the earth has been churning away in such a manner that we also have underground magnetic fields that protect us.

The earth’s ozone layer works to contain the oxygen in our atmosphere and shields us and all other living organisms from lethal radiation. Even though Venus and Mars are relatively close to us, our distance from other galaxies and solar systems prevents dangers that could occur if we were closer to the larger gravitational components of the Milky Way galaxy.

Our sun is a rare, yellow dwarf star that is both small and stable while larger and smaller suns produce unstable events as they mature. Scientists who study our solar system feel that we are living on a planet that is sturdy enough to last an extremely long time. They also see us as being blessed



by having the unusual placement of the planet Jupiter in our solar system because it attracts asteroids and comets to its planet that would otherwise be a danger to us.

David begins this psalm by asserting that all of creation displays the glory of God. The entire heavenly panorama—the sun, stars and planets—is telling the story of His glory. The vast expanse of creation is the work of His skillful hands.



Father,

I praise You that You are glorious and that you are the sovereign Creator of the universe. Your whole creation is wonderfully made and is a beautiful reminder that You love us. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Bill Felkey



DECEMBER 24

The Light Has Come

John 1:1-5, 9-14

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

On this holy night, John’s gospel invites us to ponder the vast mystery of Christmas from an eternal perspective: the Word, who was with God and who is God, has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. We gather to celebrate the arrival of Jesus, the Light of the World. This moment isn’t just a tradition, but a profound reminder that God did not leave us in darkness. From the beginning, God’s Word brought life and order into existence, and on that first Christmas, His Word took on flesh, coming to dwell among us as Emmanuel—God with us. Unlike the more familiar nativity stories of shepherds, angels, and a manger, John’s account pulls back the curtain on the grandeur of Christmas by revealing that the child born in Bethlehem is the very Creator, the Word through whom everything came into being.

Imagine the wonder of it - Jesus, the eternal Word, did not remain distant from our struggles and sins but entered into our brokenness, bringing God’s light to dispel our deepest darkness. “The light shines in the darkness,” John writes, “and the darkness has not overcome it.” In a world marked by shadows of despair, conflict, and loss, the light of Christ shines



steadfastly, offering hope that endures beyond our circumstances. The light of Christ shines not only in the stable in Bethlehem, but in every corner of our world and in the depths of our hearts. This light shines in our joy and our struggles, in our peace and our sorrow, giving us hope and guiding us to the Father.

The Christmas story is more than history; it's a reality unfolding today. The miracle of Christmas happens every time we receive Jesus into our lives, letting His light transform our hearts and lives. This transformation draws us out of ourselves and into service to others, reflecting the love of Christ. As we meditate on this holy night, let us embrace the wonder of God's gift and share it by loving others with the same generous, sacrificial love He showed us.

As we gather on this Christmas Eve, we're invited to receive this Light into our lives anew. Jesus comes to bring us life—abundant, eternal, and freely offered to all who believe in His name. When we welcome Him, the light of Christ transforms us, igniting within us a love that reaches outward, warming and illuminating others. We become, in a sense, bearers of His light, called to reflect His love in a world that longs for it. Christmas is more than a season or a story; it's an invitation to allow the Word, who became flesh, to dwell within us and shine through us.



Dear God,

On this Christmas Eve, we thank You for the precious gift of Jesus, the light who shines in our darkness. Thank You for coming to be with us, to dwell among us, and to fill our lives with Your presence. We pray that Your light will shine brightly within us and that we may carry it to others who need to know Your love. Guide our hearts to receive You fully, with joy and gratitude. May Your light bring peace, hope, and love to our world tonight. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Tony McCullough



Notes

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Christ Methodist Church of Auburn

A GLOBAL METHODIST CONGREGATION

christmethodistauburn.org

Sunday Worship 9:30 am • Sunday School 10:45 am

worship location: Lee-Scott Academy
1601 Academy Drive • Auburn, AL 36830

office: Greystone Office & Ministry Center
434 E. Magnolia Avenue • Auburn, AL 36830