

2022

Advent DEVOTIONAL



DUNWOODY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Break the Chains

By Rev. Garrett Wallace

“Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God. ‘Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?’ Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.”

ISAIAH 58:1-9a

As we begin this season of anticipating the birth of Christ, we start here in Isaiah 58. God’s words are a little prickly. This time of year is magical and full of good cheer, but God is calling out his people for their improper worship. It seems they’ve called great attention to their own piety while oppressing the least of these.

In this season of special worship services, maybe the best way we can worship God is by fighting for justice and equality and trying to ensure that we aren’t celebrating our own piety and ignoring the needs of our neighbor. God cares about all of us...even those who wouldn’t dare darken the doors of our church. The coming Christ came to serve and invite the least, the last and the lost back to the table.

As followers of the coming Christ, let us follow this example and break the chains that are separating us from one another.

Prayer

Almighty God, Lead us to our neighbors in need. Give us ears of wisdom, hearts of compassion, and minds of justice. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Serving others is worshiping God.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Your Name, God's Purpose

By Glenda Joiner

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

ISAIAH 7:23

God changes people's names. He changed Cephas to Peter when he placed his faith in Christ. In Greek, Cephas means "pebble." But Peter means "boulder." I guess if Jesus had said, "And I tell you that you are Cephas, and on this pebble I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" it wouldn't have had the strength of meaning as when Jesus said, "You are Peter, on this Rock I will build my church."

Jesus' name in Hebrew is Yeshua. Jesus' name is connected to yasha (Hebrew) for salvation. This connects Him to His identity as savior. The prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 7:14) says the child born of the Virgin will be named Immanuel. Hebrew for "God is with us." (Matt. 1:23) It is a significant aspect of His identity.

Do you suppose when people saw the innocent vulnerable baby Jesus they saw the savior of the world? Simeon was a good man who the Holy Spirit had shown that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. While in the Temple, Simeon held baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying, "With mine own eyes I've seen your salvation."

Throughout the Bible, God changes people's names. Most familiar are Abram and Sarai whose names changed to Abraham and Sarah, and Saul to Paul. With each name change comes a new meaning, a new purpose. One day I expect God will give us a new heavenly name and a new purpose.

Prayer

Precious Lord, Change our names and change us to be vulnerable to your love. Amen.

Today's Thought

Is it important that a name reflects who you are or is it more valuable that your actions define you as a disciple of Christ?

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Shine Your Light

By Megan Cann

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

JOHN 1:5

During this time of year, we prepare for the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. Martin Luther shared that “... Christ alone...is the mirror through which we see God and know his will.” Christ mirrors God’s light, love and intention and through Christ’s teaching, we have the opportunity to put forth that same image.

Our daughter got very sick this year. She endured prolonged stays at the Egleston and Scottish Rite campuses of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and underwent numerous surgeries during this challenging time. Darkness did not overcome her as the light of love put forth by this congregation surrounded her.

While things did not always go as we hoped and prayed they would, it was impossible not to see God’s hand working around her. For example, on the day of a pivotal test, our sweet friend Bonnie whom we had met years prior at the DUMC Preschool happened to be working in preop, ensuring the best possible care for her. During a big surgery, my precious Disciple class skipped the lesson they had prepared to pray for my child. John organized a prayer vigil at church. Sean shared a quote that has stayed with me that said, “Sometimes God answers us with a comma instead of a period.” Friends took care of our child at home, brought food, sent balloons, made cards, called and texted – all expressing their love and concern.

Jessica, Merrie and Fara went out of their way to sneak in little visits that made a big difference. Sweet Whitney happened to pull up in front of the hospital as she was cleared to eat after 10 days with nothing by mouth. Whitney texted me that she did not know what else to do, so she drove to the hospital to pray for her. I asked Whitney to pray on the way to Rita’s because she really wanted an Italian ice, and I did not want to leave her! Thoughtful Mindy was literally a rock checking on her countless times and organizing a prayer session at my gym! She received compassionate, expert care from the fabulous staff at CHOA; notably altruistic nurses Emily and Courtney who not only took terrific care of her but also sat on her bed to shop with her, discuss favorite products and flip through Instagram when COVID restrictions precluded friends from coming to see her.

This list could go on and on. Friends and family mirrored Christ’s love, bolstering our peace, hope and joy during this arduous time.

There is plenty of darkness in this world, but it cannot overcome the light of Christ’s love. We are more than thankful for all of those who chose to shine their light on our family this year and who reminded us that Christ’s love cannot be overcome.

Prayer

God, Please let your presence be felt by all of those enduring dark times, and please help us to shine the light of Your love in all ways possible during this season and throughout the year. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Let your little light shine.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Well Kept

By Margaret Gallagher

“Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.”

PSALMS 119:36

In a commercial culture that promotes the purchases and parties, how do you keep Christmas?

In Dickens' beloved tale, a self-centered tightwad foresees the egregious outcome of his behaviors and changes his ways, starting at Christmas. Yes, he made purchases and attended a holiday party. But there's a difference between buying gifts for those who will gift you in return and paying for the meal of someone who can't afford their own meal, let alone repaying your gift. There's a difference between "making an appearance" at multiple parties and "showing up" for the ones who love you.

The September sermon series talked about our church family's Core Values. We're called to Show Up and Share Love. This was what Scrooge did after his revelation. Understanding he'd been given a second chance, he rejoiced and lavished that joy on others. And, (in the original story) not just on the holiday, but from that day forward.

As we acknowledge Jesus' redemption for us, may we do the same.

Prayer

Lord, Don't let the worldly clamor drown out Your call. May You keep the revelation of your forgiveness before me, that my joy may overflow to others. Help me to keep Showing Up and Sharing Love from this day forward. Amen.

Today's Thought

"...and it was always said of him (Scrooge), that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, all of us." -Charles Dickens

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1

Christmas Love to Share

By Stacy Wallace

*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

God made us in His image, He knitted us in the womb.
For each and every one of us, in His heart He made room.

In the beginning He created the heavens, then he made the earth.
He separated the light and the darkness,
and from the waters, the land He did birth.

He made plants, fish, and birds to live in the seas and on the land.
He also created the animals, for you and I, all of this was planned.

At last God made us,
In His image, He made me and you.

He knew we would need each other,
with the mountains and valleys we would travel through.

Over the years we have strayed from Him, and lived our lives on our own.
We have strayed to other pathways and chosen to walk alone.

God has used so many ways to remind us of His love.
He also revealed His presence with us in the heavens up above.

He sent a flood, prophets, and kings, to remind us the right path for us to choose.
Instead we wandered in the desert, but not a meal would we lose.

Each time our Lord made a way for us,
we followed our own path and forgot in Him to trust.

We failed to follow the laws, and never loved like Him.
His light in the world, was growing very dim.

So God sent His very own Son,
To show us His love and grace.
He was born a precious baby,
This is a love we can all embrace.

Jesus came to live among us, and love us face to face.
He loved the poor, rich, sick, sinner, and lost, and every single race.

He taught and served others, each and every day,
He taught us how to love others in so many important ways.

Fancy houses, cars, and clothes were not important to Him.
The things the world had to offer would only cause our love to dim.

Oh the many hurts, He faced while He walked here on earth.
Revealing how much He loves us, and to Him what we are worth.

This Christmas, may you remember to experience His presence and love.
After all, each and every one of us, are His beloved.

Go work and serve in the world, and spread His love around.
In giving our lives to others, His presence and love are found.

Prayer

Loving God, Thank you for your presence and love. Help us to share those gifts with all around us during Advent and every day. Amen.

Today's Thought

The best gift is God's love.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

Walking with Jesus

By Val Hart

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness.”

JOHN 8:12

In the dim candlelight, surrounded by the scent of evergreen boughs and melting candle wax, the congregation reverently read in unison Luke 2:1-20. I glanced to my left at my 80-year-old blind grandmother who, no longer able to read, flawlessly spoke the sacred words along with the congregation. I will never forget the strong impression of respect and admiration I felt the first time I saw this. I often think of my precious Grandmom saying those words which she had read hundreds of times.

Every year I enjoyed Grandmom reciting the same words, and this event became a yearly family tradition until we moved to another town and another church with different traditions. Over the years we attended various Christmas Eve services – joyful, noisy, excited children’s programs or elegant, formal, dramatic adult cantatas – but none has stayed in my memory as vividly as the first time I saw Grandmom speak those words. It is so real to me it feels as if it was just the other day.

My grandparents were humble, poor people, not as poor as Tiny Tim, but still poor by modern standards. I doubt that very many educated, prosperous people today could perfectly recite the entire 20 verses we read that night. Grandmom loved Jesus intimately. One time when I expressed concern over her navigating the streets of Philadelphia without vision, she told me, “Honey, Jesus walks beside me every step of the way.” And He did until her very last day on earth.

Prayer

Precious Saviour, Thank you for loving us. You know us intimately – every unspoken desire, every hidden sin, all our trials and all our joys, too. Thank you for never leaving us even if we disappoint you; thank you for walking every step of our life’s pathway. We want to have a closer relationship with you. Thank you for the wonder of your birth, your ministry, your crucifixion and your resurrection. Amen.

Today’s Thought

My Advent desire for all of us this season is enjoy a similar intimacy with Jesus. He walks every step of our way, too. What a comfort!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

Peace and Happiness

By Lanny Gilbert

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’”

LUKE 2:10-11

When I was young, I watched an animated version of “A Christmas Carol” on TV. About the only thing I remember vividly from the show is a scene in a pub where everyone is holding their pint, smiling at their neighbor and singing “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen.” I had never heard that song before, as it wasn’t in the Stamps-Baxter hymnal we used at our church. It became my favorite Christmas carol. The song did show up years later when we got copies of the United Methodist Hymnal when I was a teenager.

Verse 1 (from Carols for Choirs, a choral must-have book for Christmas songs)

“God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan’s power
When we were gone astray:

O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.”

I think the reasons the song resonated with me were that I’m a bit of an Anglophile and it sounded very British to my young ears. Also, it was a song where I could never really figure out the meaning of the title. If you know me, you know I love a good puzzle!

A bit of searching on the Internet found my answer. “God Rest You Merry” means, historically, “may God grant you peace and happiness”. If you substitute that phrase for the first line of the first verse (you’ll have to move the syllables around a bit) it makes perfect sense. Don’t be dismayed. Jesus was born to save us from Satan’s power when we had, in our stubborn way, wandered off. What could bring more comfort and joy than knowing Jesus as Savior. Also knowing that not only was he born but also he died to save US ALL!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Thank you for coming to earth, for being born in a humble stable and for giving us comfort and joy, even in the midst of all the darkness in our world. Amen.

Today’s Thought

This Christmas don’t be dismayed by what you see in the world. Remember that even though the struggle is real, so is Jesus.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

Leaving Regret Behind

By Rev. Calissa Dauterman

“He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.”

ISAIAH 11:3b-5

I don't always make the best decisions. I try my best, but every now and then I'll just completely mess up. I'll do something thoughtless or rude; I'll choose the wrong priorities; I'll act too quickly or just do something foolish.

Looking back over the past year, I am sure there are plenty of examples of my poor decision-making – things I regret (or ought to). But, one gift of the Christmas season is reminder that God promises to be with us, again and again, forever guiding us in ways of righteousness and justice. Christ's incarnation gives us an example of how to be vulnerable and open, while still striving to be faithful and work for good in the world. John Wesley called this “going on to perfection.”

This Advent, may we leave behind any regret that we may feel for the ways in which we have failed to live up to the example of Christ. Instead, as we hear afresh these words of promise from Isaiah, may we be reminded that God loved us enough to dwell with us and continues to guide us along life's path.

Prayer

Gracious God, You promise to guide us with grace, helping us to embrace justice and righteousness. Teach us to follow the example of Christ, that we might live without regret. Amen.

Today's Thought

Even when we make mistakes, Jesus' example shows us how to live in a way that makes the world better.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

Jesus Is Coming!

By Helen Rice

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’”

LUKE 2:10-11

When I was a child the Advent season was a time of preparing our home to honor the coming of Jesus into the world. Mom cleaned and decorated every room, and she raked the yard one last time saying, “Jesus is coming.”

Now as an adult I still cherish this magical season in many of the same ways, keeping our family traditions alive. This year I welcome Advent as a season of drawing ever closer to God my Creator, Jesus, my Redeemer, Healer, and Friend. I ask the Holy Spirit to indwell and overflow me today and for the rest of my life.

I want the season to find me more attentive, more purposeful, more present, and more aware of the gifts of the Spirit that Jesus wanted me to have. I want to worship Him more dearly and hear Him more clearly. I want to sweep the cobwebs of useless thoughts away like dead leaves, preparing for Christ to come to me anew.

I want to worship with my whole heart to repeat the Apostles Creed while concentrating on the truth of each scripture. I want the words of the songs I sing to go straight to God’s ears from my heart with fervor and joy. I want to “show up” with dedication, anticipation and expectancy. I want to do my part to make the season more relevant to me and to my God. Advent brings me a sense of urgency this year.

Prayer

Father, Thank you for your perfect plan, sending Jesus to the world while the shepherds bowed down and the angels sang. You continue to demonstrate your matchless love day after day. Help me to be still and know you are God in every circumstance of this weary world. You are always and ever present. Help me to be more intentional, more constant every day for the rest of my days. I love you. Helen.

Today’s Thought

How can you “show up” for God today? And, how can you make it a habit every day?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

What do I Need This Christmas?

By Sean Taylor

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

It is that time of year. The time when I get that question from my loved ones, “What would you like to receive this Christmas?” I think they already know my answer. “Well, thank you for asking, but I don’t really need anything.” What comes after this is funny and predictable because of its repetitive nature.

Friends and family spend hours trying to think of something that I would love, that something special that I would open up, fully expecting to be something that I’ve gotten every year, only to find the most shocking, wonderful, surprising gift I’ve ever received. After stressing over it for days, inevitably they end up getting me about the only thing I need: new clothes for work, which of course I love because I truly do need to freshen up the wardrobe around December each year.

What is it that I really need this Christmas? I was reading the words of Max Lucado where he talks about what we really need. God knows what we really need, and God provides us what we really need. In Lucado’s words...

“If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need would have been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Savior.”

What do I need this Christmas? The same holds true every year: I already have everything I need because God has given me the greatest gift of all. God gave me everlasting life through his son, Jesus Christ.

Prayer

God, Let me take time to be still this season to realize the awesome power of your gift for me, the gift of everlasting life. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Thanks be to God for his gift that is too wonderful for words.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

Who Is Your Marley?

By Tambryn Freund

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

In *A Christmas Carol*, we meet the curious ghost of Jacob Marley. In life he was greedy and money grabbing, and he was Scrooge's only friend. Interestingly, in death, that friendship carries over and maybe even grows. You see, in death, Marley learns that Scrooge's choices will make his afterlife even more tragic than Marley's, and he pleads for a way to save him! So begins the visitation of the ghosts to Scrooge.

In our lives, God had tried many ways to teach us how to live and love, and at Christmas, he delivers one new visitation. He sends Jesus to teach us how to really live, and this is the season we evaluate if we're following all of his lessons. So the question I ask you is, who is your Marley?

Throughout our big beautiful congregation I often catch glimpses of unique friendships. I see two women who are always worshipping together, a kid who's found a "church grandma" to smile and connect with, men who meet regularly for coffee and connection, and moms who spend a few extra minutes catching up just for the joy of it after carpool. This is a church filled with loving people and chances to find your Marley.

Do you have a Marley? If not, there are a lot of ways to find him/her. Reach out to the staff today to help find a small(ish) group for study, serving or fellowship where you might find your Marley. Why? Because whether in this world or the next, you need someone who's watching out for you and helping you to lighten your chains.

Prayer

Dear God, In this season of celebration, help us to find and connect with someone who might be our Marley. Help us to see in those around us someone with whom we can grow and share both our talents and our troubles. Amen.

Today's Thought

Like Scrooge, we have a chance for redemption.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

A Devotional Prayer of Blessings and Promises

By Joy Culbreath

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven.”

EPHESIANS 1:2-3

Please reach for your Bible Promise Book and think about these passages as you reflect on this Advent season.

Abba Father, Your promises are abundant. They give me strength. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

I can count on You! Thank You for the help You provide to me each day. (Psalm 91:14)

You are indeed my Strength and Provider. I have called on You many times, and You have never failed me. When I am weak, I feel Your strength. When I am afraid, I feel Your power. (Psalm 73:26)

When faced with seemingly unsolvable circumstances, You make a way. When I am in need, You provide. When I doubt, You prove yourself tenfold. And in the face of new obstacles, You remind me of Your unfailing love and faithfulness. Yes, great is Thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:23, Hebrews 10:23)

So today, I claim these blessings that you have promised so generously by and in Your Word to me and to those I love. In this world of uncertainty, may I step into the certainty of Your blessings and promises today and each day. (John 16:33)

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer

Father, Hear our prayer. God bless us, every one. Amen.

Today's Thought

Think About It. “When I speak Your Word in prayer, I am blessed by You so that I may live to reflect Your love and blessings to others.”

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

Redemption

By Joe Seegars

“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

ROMANS 15:7

One of the themes I enjoy the most in *A Christmas Carol* is redemption. Ebenezer Scrooge makes so many bad choices in his life – he chooses career over love and grows apart from his girlfriend Belle, he fails to learn from his gregarious boss Mr. Fezziwig how to balance work and life, and he becomes such a terrible boss himself that even Bob Cratchit’s family doesn’t like him. Yet, he still has a chance to make amends.

In *It’s A Wonderful Life*, George Bailey got a chance to see the positive impact he had on his world and how he would be missed. Scrooge gets to see the opposite – that he has done nothing to make his world a better place and would not be missed at all. Yet, he still has a chance to make amends.

Scrooge is about 55 in the story (I think of him as much older). At that stage of life, he could have resigned himself to his partner Jacob Marley’s fate or decided it was too late to change. But, after his ordeal, (spoiler alert) he changes instantly on Christmas morning, sending the biggest goose to the Cratchit’s, making a large donation to a charity he refused earlier, and on and on. And everyone welcomes him with open arms.

I think this is a wonderful message that resonates during Christmas. Jesus came to Earth to save us from ourselves. Regardless of bad decisions made in the past, friends no longer contacted, spotty church attendance, it is never too late to change course. Just like the Cratchits and Scrooge’s nephew Fred welcomed him into their homes, Jesus and our church family are ready – eager – to do the same. Merry Christmas!

Prayer

Lord, May the closing lines of *A Christmas Carol* be true of us – “And it was always said of (them), that (they) knew how to keep Christmas well, if any (one) alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!” Amen.

Today’s Thought

Don’t miss your chance to make amends.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

Worthy of Worship

By Gale Owens

“While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

LUKE 2:6-7

*“In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone
Snow had fallen, Snow on snow, on snow”*

As I prepare for Christmas, the words of “In the Bleak Midwinter” come to mind. The words evoke the beautiful image of Mary and Joseph, alone in the night, surrounded by the animals in the stable. I can just feel the quiet, crisp, cold air.

My oldest daughter was due a few weeks before Christmas. The date came and went, with no baby. I went to my doctor on December 27 and was sent directly to the hospital. I was about to be a mom!

The only thing was that I was by myself. I checked myself into the hospital, filled out papers and was prepared for delivery with no one to hold my hand. Throughout the process, everyone kept asking, “Are you here alone?”

*“Angels and Arc Angels,
May have traveled there
Cherubim and Seraphim,
Thronged the air
But only his Mother,
In her maiden bliss
Worshiped the beloved, With a kiss”*

My family arrived just in time for the delivery of my dear Sarah. As the nurses attended to my screaming new baby, I said, “What’s the matter, sweetie?” Not only did Sarah stop crying but she strained to find me. At that moment, it was just a mom and a baby. I worshiped my daughter with a kiss.

Prayer

Gracious, God, As we await the arrival of your beloved Son, we pray we stop and witness the special moments worthy of worship. Amen.

Today’s Thought

When Mary kissed her newborn son, she was kissing the face of God.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

Reawakening Christmas Joy

By Rev. Kathy Brockman

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (v.10)”

ISAIAH 35:1-10

Christmas Joy! Do you have it yet? Or, are you over it? There is so much to do to prepare for Christmas that it hardly seems like we can get it all done in time. Two weeks from today is Christmas Day. Maybe you find yourself at this point in the holiday season saying “Bah! Humbug.” If that’s the case, perhaps you never have found the joy this year, or you had it and lost it. Is there joy to be found? You bet there is but sometimes it isn’t easy to feel joyful in the midst of everyday life and the hectic whirlwind of the holidays.

When my children were young, I thought that I had to do all the things to make Christmas perfect for our family and guests on Christmas morning. There had to be this gift beautifully wrapped, that dish prepared and ready for breakfast, gifts for the neighbors, gifts for friends, gifts for family that had to be mailed, hostess gifts for the parties, etc. All those demands were making me cranky and a bit hard to be around.

My husband finally reminded me that I didn’t need to do all the things. There were things on my list that could be done less than perfectly or taken off the list altogether. After I first told him that was impossible, I thought about it and decided maybe he was right. I was able to give myself permission to do less “stuff” and to be more present in the moment. So if you’re someone who needs that permission, you’ve got it.

If we can remember that we celebrate this holiday because of the birth of our Savior and make that our focus, joy would be so much easier to come by. That doesn’t mean that we forget that there is an empty place around the table or a loved one who is dealing with a illness, or any number of unpleasant life experiences. It means that there can be joy in the midst of it all even if it’s just a moment or two. Many times focusing on others and doing for others is just the way to get our minds off our own sorrows and/or put things into perspective.

Prayer

Father God, Help us to focus this Advent season on the true meaning of the birth of our Savior. Amen.

Today’s Thought

May you find some Christmas joy this year remembering that night so long ago when the greatest gift the world has ever received was born. And may the memories of your own Christmases Past bring joy and light to your soul.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12

On Being Blessed and a Blessing

By Rev. Keith Lawder

“Then he looked up at his disciples and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.’”

LUKE 6:20-21

As I write this I am feeling truly blessed. Each morning I try to recall blessings in a prayer journal. It is a good reminder and a good discipline. These days I feel a bit guilty about being so blessed. Sure, we all want the best for our family and friends. But as I watch the morning news I see in full color the chaos, the meanness and the hatred in our world. I could just stop watching the news, but that wouldn't change much.

Then I reflect on Tiny Tim's declaration, "God bless us, every one!" In one simple line, Dickens throws me out of my comfort zone. Tiny Tim was poor and in poor health. Yet, he not only perceives the blessings in his life, but also somehow becomes a blessing to the miserly Scrooge. And yet isn't that how it is? The one who is blessed but doesn't feel blessed (Scrooge) somehow finds his way to becoming a blessing to others (Tiny Tim and many others). The ones who have little are grateful for the blessings they do have.

So, what does this have to do with us this Christmas? I believe that, regardless of our circumstances, God wants us to recognize our blessings AND to be a blessing to others. Scrooge has a conversion experience. "Keeping Christmas" is Dickens' metaphor for Scrooge keeping Christ in his heart.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You have given us so many blessings, yet we often fail to see them. Help us this day and everyday to see your love for us and to share that love with others. Amen.

Today's Thought

Take a moment today (and maybe everyday) to be grateful for your blessings. AND take a moment to ponder how you can be a blessing to others!

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

God's Ultimate Blessing

By Angela Arnold Go

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

JOHN 3:16-17

The past couple of years have been difficult for many of us, but 2022 was particularly hard for me. Over three weeks, I lost my brother-in-law and my father-in-law, one after a long battle with cancer and the other after an unexpected severe illness.

In addition to mourning them, I need to be there for my sister, nephews, mother-in-law and husband, who are all hurting. Of course, Christmas will be very different for us this year.

However, I'm extremely grateful that God is present with us and has blessed us. He blessed us with His love and carried us through these dark days. He blessed us with the very lives of those we have lost.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 reminds me of God's many blessings: *But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*

But John 3:16-18 reminds me of God's ultimate blessing, the gift of His son so that we would have eternal life even after death.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank you for the many blessings in our lives, especially the ultimate blessing, the gift of your son whose birth we celebrate this season. Amen.

Today's Thought

How do you receive God's ultimate blessing?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

Hope Springs, It's Eternal

By Randy Pilkenton

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

JOHN 1:5

Charles Dickens, author of *A Christmas Carol*, wrote about life in the early 1800s in London. This story and others he wrote vividly describe the greed, depression and poverty that existed in that era.

How little things change for us humans here on earth.

When God sent his Son to live among us, that world was full of greed, depression and poverty.

In the time of Abraham and throughout the centuries of his descendants until the birth of Jesus there was greed, depression and poverty.

After Jesus was crucified, died and arose into Heaven, there continued to be greed, depression and poverty.

Today, we read stories and hear news about greed, depression and poverty. While the world is significantly and thankfully better now than it has been in human history, these issues persist and bedevil us, making us poorer in spirit even if we are far richer than ever on a material level.

What also is unchanged, and has been forever, is God's offer to bless us as his children. This offer has been with us since the Beginning and will be Forever. It is ours to accept and doesn't have to be earned. Tiny Tim in Dickens' story seemed to know this. God's blessing is always available and is for "every one" – you, me, even Scrooge. And, God's blessing, when accepted in our hearts, provides us with hope. Not just at Christmas, but every day if we sincerely invite it into our heart.

Prayer

Dear Father God, We can easily be overwhelmed by our troubles and the challenges in the world today. Help us to lift up our eyes, mind and heart to accept Your blessing today, so that we can have hope. And with this hope, peace. Amen.

Today's Thought

Tiny Tim always had hope despite his troubles and the nature of the world in which he lived. May "God bless us, every one" in a similar way.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

Being Available to Blessings

By Sherry Waugh

“With God all things are possible.”

MATTHEW 19:26

I have seen God touching our lives, and I know He gives us opportunities to bless others. I've found my opportunities often to be unexpected and costing nothing more than a step out in faith.

Many years ago when we were members of another Methodist Church, I was giving a last minute ride to a UMW meeting to a young woman I had not formerly known. As we casually talked in the car, she told me that on a previous morning, her husband had had trouble waking her up. When she finally awoke, she had a bloody tongue.

They had gone to an Urgent Care facility and been told it was “probably nothing.” It sounded to me as if she might have had a seizure. As I had previously worked as a Speech Therapist in a facility with children who had seizures, I had seen many.

That night after conferring with my doctor husband, Lyndon, I called her with his recommendation for a Neurologist to check her out. As it turned out, the doctor found that she had a brain tumor the size of a peach. It was subsequently removed and thankfully was benign.

God blessed her for sure, and I felt he had used us to help do it. May we all be available when God gives us the opportunity to facilitate a blessing.

Prayer

Father, Thank you for our blessings. Open our eyes to opportunities to share your love. Amen.

Today's Thought

Sometimes just a kind word or smile can be a blessing.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

God's Blessings in Unexpected Places

By Teresa Dietz

"I will praise the name of God with song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving."

PSALMS 69:30

I'm sure each of us has our own story to relate about how we weathered the pandemic. Being in lockdown and living in fear of catching the dreadful disease circulating throughout the world was certainly not pleasant or much fun. But weather it we did. Scientists came up with a vaccine in record speed which gave us hope that things were going to improve and allow us to go back to living normally. Unfortunately, it wasn't the miracle we were hoping for, and it seemed the unpleasantness would never end.

What I missed the most, aside from my volunteer duties, was being able to come to church and sing in the choir. So when Mark came up with virtual singing and asked who among us was willing to participate, many of us were all in. Singing your part by yourself while being recorded was daunting. But when we saw the finished product, it was worth it.

Then when a choir member came up with a singers' mask design, which allowed us to gather as a group, albeit spread out from each other, and rehearse for a short time and record anthems for the virtual services each week, it was the best. Things progressed from there until the choir was able to get back together in the choir room, first with masks, and then without. We were even able to present our patriotic concert to an appreciative audience in June.

We as a church were blessed with a new director of music right as the pandemic started, one who had a vision of how we could continue to bring music to the congregation and also had the energy and ability to make that vision come true. The music department and the church were blessed in a way we never expected and for that we are thankful.

All this to say that when we get frustrated that things aren't falling into place as we think they should, we should try to remember the good that came out of our recent experience. Families were eating meals together for a change, children and parents were spending time outside getting exercise and coming up with ways to do things differently and still stay safe. It's living proof that out of the worst of circumstances, something good can come if we are open to it.

Prayer

Father, Help me to not be so quick to develop a negative attitude when things don't go my way, to have the patience to wait for things to work out and to learn to look for the good that can come out of my situation. Amen.

Today's Thought

Today I will remember to thank God for all my blessings, no matter how great or small.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

How Can You Receive God's Blessings?

By Elvin Aycok

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."*

EPHESIANS 1:3

Advent season is the time of the year to pause and reflect on our blessings. Of course, one of the greatest blessings you could ever receive is being in the presence of God.

We frequently use the word blessed in our daily conversations. "Have a blessed day" or "May God bless you." What do these phrases mean to you?

Jesus used the Greek word Makarios in the Sermon on the Mount, which means "happy or blissful," and Paul used the Greek word eulogy, which means "to speak well of." Both are incredibly positive phrases.

What are the spiritual blessings Paul spoke of in Ephesians 1? Paul explains spiritual blessing in the same chapter. The first spiritual blessing is found in verse 4. It says, "God has chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." Then, the second blessing is found in verse 5 as "our adoption as His children." And in verse 7, we have "redemption through His blood."

Here's one way you can receive God's blessings. First, find a quiet place to pause, relax, take a deep breath, quiet the mind and let the presence of God flow through you—feel His Presence. Then, let your thoughts flow with God's thoughts—be still and know that I am God. Listen for the still, small voice as you feel God's Presence. And experience peace, love and joy in the Presence of God.

Prayer

Loving God, Help me to feel your presence. Open my heart to your word. Let me experience your love and many blessings in a new way this Advent season. Amen.

Today's Thought

You cannot bless another without being blessed. Therefore, the greater a blessing you are to others, the greater the blessing you will receive. Read more at www.AskGodForHelp.net

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Happy Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights

By Sid Linton

"I am the light of the world..."

JOHN 8:12

Do you think Mary and Joseph celebrated Hanukkah?

Your Jewish neighbors will. Starting at sunset this evening and for the next eight nights, they will celebrate the Festival of Lights. So, wish them a Happy Hanukkah.

Hanukkah floats around our calendar but always falls about this time every year.

You remember that it's observed by lighting the candles on the nine branches of the menorah commemorating the miracle way back in 164 BC that the one-day supply of oil which had not been defiled by the Seleucid oppressors lasted eight days until some newly pressed pure oil for the altar lamp was available.

It was an important celebration. Mary and Joseph were good Jews so surely they wanted to celebrate Hanukkah, but probably couldn't do it on their own. It'd be hard to pack a menorah on a donkey.

Luke doesn't mention it, but it's fun to think that maybe the inn keeper or the cave owner or someone invited Mary, Joseph and the new-born Light of the World to celebrate the Festival of Lights with them. Talk about a cool guest list!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We pray to be reminded to invite the Light of the World not only into our celebrations but into everything we do and share the Light with everyone around us. Amen.

Today's Thought

Happy Hanukkah! Wishing you and your family peace and light this holiday season.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19

Investing in Our Relationships with God and Each Other

By Rev. H. David Melton

“Now the birth of Jesus took place this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (v. 18-21)

MATTHEW 1:18-25

When people travel to the Holy Land and to the city of Nazareth (Israel), they tend to focus their attention on the Church of the Annunciation. That site commemorates the archangel Gabriel announcing to Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and she will give birth to the Son of God. It is a beautiful church that stands over the cave that tradition holds to be the home of Mary and Joseph. And here Mary said her consent, stating, “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Mary was faithful to the call from God on her life.

Across from the Church of the Annunciation is the Church of St. Joseph. A smaller church, less visited, but yet just as important to our faith history. It is built over the traditional site of the workshop of Joseph, where he would have worked with wood and stone. Today’s scripture passage reminds us of the significance of Joseph in the birth narrative of Jesus. Yes, Mary responded to God’s call, but so did Joseph. The Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream through an angel, and he had his doubts. But Joseph believed the angel, and he believed a miracle was taking place before his eyes. Joseph, too, was faithful to the call from God on his life.

The Christmas story contains a glimpse into the way that God guides those who listen for God’s call. When God was about to turn the lives of Mary and Joseph upside down, God revealed the plans to them at different times and in different ways. Mary received advance notice from the angel Gabriel of her role. But Joseph seems to have received his word at a later time. Such is the mystery of God’s guidance. But no matter when God’s word came to them, Mary and Joseph both faithfully obeyed, together.

Prayer

Dear loving God, Please walk before us and lead us, behind us to encourage us, and beside us to comfort us as we obediently follow you. Amen.

Today’s Thought

We cannot predict all of what God wants us to do, nor how God will direct our lives, but we can be confident that God will guide us. And, like Mary and Joseph, we must be ready to follow God’s leading.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Worship While We Wait

By John Silvak

*“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.”*

PSALMS 96:1-2

Most of us have things we are waiting for and, often we wait impatiently. What is the source of my physical ailments? What will the results of my lab test say? When will the stock market recover? Will I get the promotion? Is my job at risk of downsizing? Will my parents be safe from falls or illness? Will my kids visit or call soon?

The wait is often difficult. A great way to soften the wait is to mix in worship throughout our day and week.

There are many ways to worship...attending church services, listening to Christian music, walking in nature, quiet time in a chair with a Bible and journal.

I am thankful for Spotify on my Garmin watch. I have been playing contemporary Christian music and getting energized, especially when exercising. In Psalms, King David wrote many verses about singing praises to the Lord as a form of worship, including today's scripture.

I now find myself with songs running through my head as I go throughout the day. I hear words of praise, hope, faith and encouragement. It's a great solution to "Worshiping While I Wait."

Prayer

Lord, Help us find our favorite method of worship and devote ourselves to it while we wait. We look forward to the peace and joy it will bring in the middle of our angst. Amen.

Today's Thought

As you wait for Christ's birth, you can worship by focusing on the words of the Christmas songs that proclaim his birth and God's love for us and the world.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

Calling all Passengers

By Anne W. West

“Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.”

LUKE 2:4-7

In stave (chapter) 1 of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge and his nephew, Fred, are debating Christmas.

“A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!” cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge’s nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

“Bah!” said Scrooge, “Humbug!”

Fred, who has little material wealth, thinks he is rich. Before it’s all over, Scrooge, who has abundant wealth, realizes he is poor. The debate continues about how each keeps Christmas, with Scrooge admitting he really doesn’t keep it at all. Fred explains the “good” Christmas has done him

“There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,” returned the nephew. “Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

Fred’s philosophy is what we need as we approach Christ’s birth, celebrate Christmas and move into the new year. In fact, we need it every day.

Prayer

Loving God, Give us Fred’s courage to proclaim the true meaning of Christmas. Amen.

Today’s Thought

Sharing the journey of being “fellow-passengers to the grave” with a deeper trust that kindness, forgiveness and acts of charity are greater than all we possess does provide the greatest wealth of all.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

Happy Birthday, Jesus!

By Linda Miller

“When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.”

PHILEMON 1:4-6

At Christmas, I remember the traditions that my brother and I enjoyed as children. These traditions, created by our parents, have been passed along to his children who are passing them along to their children.

We share the joy of Christmas Eve services, reading the “The Night Before Christmas” and the Christmas Story from the Bible. On Christmas Day we pause to gather and light the birthday candle on the cake and sing “Happy Birthday, Jesus.”

We remember those who taught us about the precious gift of Jesus. We are thankful that we learned that one of the best gifts we have is the opportunity to spend time with family celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank you for the gift of family traditions and the greatest gift of all, your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today’s Thought

How are you helping to pass your faith to the next generation?

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

Mary, Mother of Jesus

By Sharon Gilbert

“The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’”

LUKE 1:27b-28

I couldn’t even imagine being approached by an angel, or more incredibly, being told by an angel that I will be having a baby. Even more unbelievable, the baby to be born is the Son of God. But as we step back and look at the situation, God chose Mary! Mary fit all the check boxes to be chosen: Lineage of David, Virgin and perhaps her humble upbringing.

At present, I am studying *The Chosen: Blessed are the Chosen*, session 2. The study has an amazing video segment which uses some creative license but also is quite true to Scripture. We know from reading the Gospels that Mary, Jesus’ mother, is very active in His life. In one scene, she arrives at the camp of Jesus and His students (as they are called in the series). She sits around the fire with the disciples and followers while Jesus is healing people outside the camp.

She is asked, “What was it like to be Jesus’ mother and to live with Him knowing he was the son of God?” At first, she didn’t want to talk about it. But then she went on and said she that didn’t really know what it was going to be like. After the baby was born, Joseph handed Jesus to her. He was crying and Mary realizes that He needed her. Jesus came to save the world yet at this time He needed her to take care of His needs. She admits she was very confused about that but ready to take on the challenge.

When Jesus returns to the camp after healing all who came, He’s completely worn out, physically and mentally. Saying good night to the students (without even eating), Jesus heads to his tent. His mother gets up and goes to Jesus. She washes His feet, washes His face, helps him take off his tunic, puts Him to bed and covers Him up. She still is taking care of Him because, again, He needs her.

Is this why God chose Mary? She was so faithful to God and always giving her support to Jesus by showing up. The great news is that we are chosen too. God chose us! We are included to be heirs to Christ’s throne. In Acts 13:47 Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, “For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

We are chosen, too, and God needs us. This baby came to change everything, and we are part of this change. God needs us to step up, show up and get to work spreading salvation to the ends of the earth.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank you for this time of the year where we can reflect and remember the greatest gift from you, Your son. Help us to step up, show up and be part of the plan intended for each of us. And “God Bless Us, Every One” as we take on this journey. Amen.

Today’s Thought

God needs you!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

'Twas the Time Before Christmas

By Sally Murphy

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

'Twas the month before Christmas, and all through the town,
People were hustling and bustling and running around
Searching for the perfect gifts for loved ones and kin
Each store in the mall begging shoppers to come in
Frenetic schedules to coordinate the best office vent
Hoping to make the staff and boss super content
Spending money, running ragged; time is running out
All you want to do is close yourself in a room and shout

Now it is two weeks until Christmas, still much to be done
More shopping, wrapping, and baking in a hot oven
The house must be decorated to dazzle the crowd
But oh how you wish you could let go of the shroud
That hangs over your head as the holiday draws near
You worry and fret that your head will never clear

One week to go until the magical day appears
Why don't you feel more joy as the holiday nears?
Christmas should be a time of joy and celebration
Instead you feel fraught with exhaustion and indignation
Seems silly to go through so much work and trouble
To prepare for a day that will end like the burst of a bubble

Two days to go...it's practically here.
Where is the spirit, the holiday cheer?
More dishes to bake, more presents to wrap
Yet you feel like you have fallen into a deep trap

Tomorrow is the day. Christmas is here.
Time to rethink the purpose of this time of year.
Parties are fun, and gifts are great.
Families will gather to meet at the gate.
But remember why we honor Christmas this season
The birth of Christ Jesus is the real reason.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Give us clarity this Advent season and help us focus on the true meaning of Christmas. Amen.

Today's Thought

Rethink the purpose of this time of year.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Bells

By Dr. Phil Schroeder

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

LUKE 2:8-14

It had been a difficult couple of years for Henry who could have easily become quite the Scrooge for all he had been through. His wife of 18 years, Frances, to whom he was devoted, died in an accidental fire. Then two years later his oldest son, Charles joined the Army without his father's blessing. He found out about it in a letter where his son wrote, "I have tried hard to resist the temptation of going without your leave, but I cannot any longer" and he continued "I feel it to be my first duty to do what I can for my country and I would willingly lay down my life for it if it would be of any good."

His son was severely wounded in battle but recovered. Into that pain and struggle Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the poem below for Christmas Day 1863 quoting Luke 2:14 about peace on earth and goodwill.

I have always loved these words and think of them as I walk out of the church alone early on Christmas morning after a full day of Christmas Eve worship and praise. I often stop my singing at the joy of Christmas, leaving the church with a smile on my face and remembering the looks of hope-filled anticipation on the faces of children.

Yet, Longfellow wrote about hope in the midst of pain. I remember preaching about Ukrainian Easter as we hoped the war there would soon be over. But fighting continues in our world for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace. We need the gift of the Christ Child being born in us even more today.

May the Prince of Peace be born anew in you this Christmas Day as we trust that the wrong shall fail and the right prevail with peace on earth, good will to all people!

Prayer

Come into my heart Lord, Jesus. There is room in my heart for you. Hallelujah! Amen.

***Christmas Bells* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Continued on back.

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
 A voice, a chime,
 A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
 And with the sound
 The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
 And made forlorn
 The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;
 “For hate is strong,
 And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
 The Wrong shall fail,
 The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”



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