



{ Making Room }

2025 ADVENT DEVOTIONALS



{ *Making Room* }

to

Trust and Expect

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Isaiah 2:1-5

Rev. Dr. Jason G. Edwards

Senior Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo.

This is the season to make room to trust that God's light is
guiding us, and to expect God's peace breaking in even now,
with a promise to one day fill the whole earth.

Advent begins with a mountain. Isaiah asks us to lift our eyes above the valleys of fear and conflict. Nations move together toward that height, flowing like rivers that have changed their course. In that place, swords are reshaped into plowshares and spears are bent into pruning hooks. The noise of battle quiets, and the rhythm of hammer and anvil creates a new song of peace.

Isaiah spoke these words into a world filled with anxiety, yet he dared to picture a future where God's light would draw people together. Our own land is thick with the unease of violence, mistrust and weariness. Isaiah dares to speak into that reality, declaring that God's light still shines.

The vision is so certain it presses on the present, urging us to walk in that light even now. Each small act of kindness, each prayer for mercy, each decision to listen rather than to wound becomes a step up the mountain path. Madeleine L'Engle once wrote of God "crowding into" human life, and the carol sings, "Let every heart prepare him room." These voices echo Isaiah's call to walk in the light of the Lord, making room for God's guiding Spirit, expecting God's peace already breaking in and trusting God's promise that peace will one day cover the earth.

"O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Reflect

Where do you notice glimpses of God's peace already present in your community?

What step could you take this week to walk in the light Isaiah describes?

Monday, December 1, 2025

Psalm 124

Rev. Ellen Di Giosia

Coordinator, CBF Texas

We can, as our ancestors in faith did, look back at the moments when we felt the thrill of God's rescue and the peace of God's presence.

Today's reading recalls the glory days of ancient Israel. The psalmist sings of a moment of relief amid war. The Israelites have escaped! They aren't boasting of their triumph—they're giving thanks to the Lord for keeping them from being devoured by their enemies.

By the time of Jesus' birth, however, the Israelites were well acquainted with defeat. Hundreds of years had passed since they had been powerful. They could look back at soldiers killed, battles lost and rulers deposed. They were not a victorious people. Though rebellions rose, they were never able to regain the independence they once had.

As they gathered to worship, did they sing this psalm? This hymn might have seemed naïve, too optimistic for how their kingdom had turned out. We might feel the same way about our own hymns. As chaos reigns, can we croak out "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"? When we struggle to hope, can we sing "It Is Well with My Soul"? Looking at the fractures within our communities, can we raise our voices to "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love"?

We can, as our ancestors in faith did, look back at the moments when we felt the thrill of God's rescue and the peace of God's presence. This is how we learn to trust God more. The remembrance of God's divine participation in our lives and in our communities enables us to look forward in hope and promise.

Reflect

Can you recall a time in your life when you experienced the joy of God's rescue?

How does it help you to find hope today?

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Genesis 9:1–17

Rev. Cintia Aguilar

Immigration Ministry Manager, Waco, Texas

Advent calls us to adopt Noah's posture: to trust God and step into the new beginning God is shaping for us.

Loss, uncertainty, fear and even pain may have been the feelings of Noah and his family after the flood. Everything familiar had been swept away, and only those within the ark remained. It was time to begin again—but how? The only way forward then, and now, is by trusting God as our guide and living with the expectation that God's plan will unfold and He will reveal Himself along the way.

God has beautiful ways of showing us His presence. With Noah, God made a covenant, sealing it with the rainbow—a sign of promise that the earth would never again be destroyed in such a way. The rainbow was both confirmation and invitation: confirmation that they were safe, and invitation to keep going, to trust that God would provide all they needed. It was not the moment to stop, though their hearts may have longed for rest, but the time to step forward in faith.

We, too, face moments when it feels easier to stop or give up. Yet Advent calls us to adopt Noah's posture: to trust God and step into the new beginning God is shaping for us. This season invites us to make room in our hearts for trust in God's promises, even when life feels uncertain, and to live in expectation of His faithfulness.

God's covenant still stands. His faithfulness is not distant or abstract, but personal, revealed in Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us.

Reflect

God gave Noah a rainbow as sign of His covenant. What is God giving you as a sign of God's promise during this season?

Where in your life is God inviting you to trust God's promise more deeply?

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Isaiah 54:1-10

Rev. Dave McNeely

Connect Church Initiative Manager, CBF Tennessee

{ But where Israel could only sense emptiness, God saw a future fertile with possibility. Where the Israelites felt overwhelmed with darkness, God was ushering an unexpected light into their field of vision. }

Just to the west of the Andes Mountains, along the Pacific coast of Chile, lies what is perhaps the oldest desert in the world. The Atacama Desert also claims the unique distinction as one of the darkest places on earth. Between its lack of rain and lack of light, you'd be excused for thinking that the Atacama is one of the most barren and empty spaces on the planet. Surprisingly, you couldn't be more wrong.

While the unique conditions of the Atacama resist many of the typical forms of life found throughout South America, they create an environment where the most remarkable and resilient flora and fauna thrive. And the darkness? As it turns out, it's only in a place like this that you can witness the full, brilliant light of the evening stars.

During the time of the prophet Isaiah, the people of Israel may have felt like little more than a desolate and dark desert themselves. Into their emptiness, Isaiah evoked another metaphor they knew all too well: the barrenness of a woman.

But where Israel could only sense emptiness, God saw a future fertile with possibility. Where the Israelites felt overwhelmed with darkness, God was ushering an unexpected light into their field of vision.

When we are experiencing times of intense emptiness and darkness, when fear and shame and disgrace shroud our line of sight, we could be forgiven for thinking that our futures are desolate wastelands. Surprisingly, we couldn't be more wrong.

Reflect

When have you experienced emptiness in your life?

In moments when you have felt empty and hopeless, how has God offered reminders of compassion and hope to you?

Thursday, December 4, 2025

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Rev. Dr. Tiffany Bennett-Cornelous

Pastor of Worship, Arts & Media, Macedonia New Life Church, Raleigh, N.C.

Advent is not hurry and worry—it is a reminder to slow down,
pray and wait for the true King of righteousness.

How many times do you hear, “slow down and wait”? Too often, our interpretation is “hurry up and wait.” Advent instead calls us to pause with purpose, to slow down and wait in hope for the coming King. Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 paints a picture of this King—righteous, just, fair and attentive to the poor. This is the King for whom we wait!

Yet, we look at our world and see leaders with perceived power who show little regard for the poor and needy. Still, we pray to God—all-powerful and actualized—for these leaders, holding on to the hope and expectation of the One. We anticipate the reign of a righteous King who brings abundant peace and justice.

King David’s messianic prayer in Psalm 72, originally for Solomon, asks for a reign demonstrated by wisdom, abundance, prosperity and the dismantling of those who exploit and abuse. We see not only a longing for just leadership in our time but also a prophetic vision fulfilled in Christ—the true King who brings lasting peace and righteousness.

Psalm 72 reminds us to pray for our leaders. Our differences make us human, but our willingness to pray that leaders act with wisdom and justice makes us God’s warriors... and so we wait. The God we serve is the One on whom we depend. We wait, and we rejoice in the coming of Christ, the just and righteous One.

This Advent, may we slow down, pray deeply and wait in hope.

Reflect

How do you see Christ’s justice and righteousness shaping your actions toward the poor, the vulnerable and the overlooked?

How can Advent waiting deepen hope rather than drain patience as you pray for today’s leaders, even when you struggle with their choices?

Friday, December 5, 2025

Isaiah 30:19-26

Rev. Ruth Perkins Lee

Executive Coordinator, CBF Georgia

AK Lee

Lay Leader, Smoke Rise Baptist Church,
Tucker, Ga.

God does not leave us alone, but guides us, gently and faithfully,
one step at a time.

In times of crisis, in the unknown, our responses tend toward fight, flight, freeze or fawn. I freeze. Mental and emotional paralysis consume me in those first moments, making it hard to breathe, to gain perspective, to find a way forward. All I can offer are sighs too deep for words.

And God hears them. The inaudible gasping for breath, for understanding, for release from the weight of fear in the unknown. God listens, even when words fail, when my spirit can only groan.

In those moments, God hears my cry and arrives as a teacher. Over my shoulder, I hear a gentle guidance, showing me the next steps. The way forward becomes clearer, one foot at a time.

Then the reminder: I am not alone. There is a world much bigger than I. Food for people and animals alike. Seeds planted, rain falling, grain growing rich. Oxen and donkeys fed by other hands. A life cycle that doesn't stop, carrying on in God's rhythm of creation.

My eyes lift to the sky, beyond the earth, as the night light glows brighter, the sun shining as never before, reminding me of the vastness of God.

On the days of despair, when darkness feels overwhelming and the way is unknown, God does not leave us alone, but guides us, gently and faithfully, one step at a time, giving us words, sustenance and light to see a way forward.

Reflect

In this season of holy expectation, the unknown can be overwhelming. Where have you found God when you did not know the next steps?

Where have your eyes landed when you have needed the reminder that you are not alone?

Saturday, December 6, 2025

John 1:19–28

Rev. Scott Dickison

Pastor, Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.

None of us just appears. We are all, always, somewhere
in the middle.

Some years ago, our family started the tradition of each of our three boys taking a one-on-one trip with me to Chicago for their 10th birthday. As I was growing up, we would often take trips to Illinois, where my father was from, and spend a few days in the city, visiting museums and parks and, most importantly, taking in a Chicago Cubs game. I rarely saw my father happier than when he was with us at the “friendly confines” of Wrigley Field.

When my father died just before our oldest son was born, these memories of pilgrimage became even more dear. If his grandsons could not know my father in person, I could at least make sure they knew what he loved, so they could see that they come from something and, more to the point, someone.

When messengers from the temple come to ask John who he is, he doesn’t give them a name. He tells them that he stands on the shoulders of the prophets, and he is preparing the way for Christ.

In other words, he understands that he is part of a lineage.

None of us just appears. We are all, always, somewhere in the middle. So much depends on remembering that many came before, without whom we would not be. And even more depends on embracing that what we do will shape the world for those who follow. The question, then, is what love will we let pass through us in the time we are given?

Reflect

From whom do you come?

For whom are you living?

{ Making Room }

to

Follow and Flourish

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Romans 15:7-13

Rev. Dr. Josh Hunt

Associate Coordinator, CBF South Carolina

Making room for others is how we make room for Christ.

In the quiet longing of Advent, Paul's words remind us that faith is about widening our welcome. This season invites us to make room—room for hope, peace, joy and love to take root in our lives. The apostle implores, “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you” (v. 7). Such welcome is not surface-level courtesy; it is a holy invitation to create space where others may belong.

In the final chapter of his book *The Courage to Be*, theologian Paul Tillich wrote that faith is the courage to accept acceptance. Faith begins when we dare to believe that we are already welcomed and loved by God—not because of what we achieve, but because of who God is. From this deep assurance flows the ability to extend genuine welcome to others, even those we might be tempted to overlook or exclude.

Paul weaves together promises from the Hebrew Bible to remind us that our hope is never meant to be hoarded. The Root of Jesse rises, not for one nation alone, but so that all may hope (v. 12). The Spirit gathers Jews and Gentiles, insiders and outsiders, into one family of faith, a community characterized not by boundaries but by embrace.

“Making room to follow and flourish” is the Advent work of preparing space—for Christ, for others and for the Spirit's renewing presence. Making room for others is how we make room for Christ. In every act of welcome, Christ draws near.

Reflect

Where in my life do I most need the courage to accept God's acceptance of me?

Whom might God be calling me to welcome more fully this Advent—so that both they and I might flourish in Christ's love?

Monday, December 8, 2025

1 Thessalonians 4:1–12

Rev. Lynn Brinkley

Pan African Koinonia Field Ministry Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Advent peace grows from love—a love that seeks justice and creates space for all to flourish.

Paul urges the Thessalonian believers to live in a way that pleases God, writing, “For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9, NRSV). Their love is evident, but Paul pushes them further: “We urge you, beloved, to do so more and more” (v. 10).

Advent is a season of holy disruption—a time to prepare for Christ’s coming not only by waiting, but by actively embodying God’s justice and peace. Paul’s call to “do so more and more” reminds us that love cannot be stagnant. In a world fractured by greed, violence and indifference, love must expand, challenging systems that harm and creating space for all to flourish.

Paul also speaks of leading “a quiet life” (v. 11). This quietness is not passive withdrawal, but a refusal to be caught up in the noise of exploitation and injustice. It is the steady, faithful work of building communities where dignity and equity thrive.

As we make room this Advent, we are called to follow Christ into the margins, where God’s reign breaks in with healing and hope. The coming of Christ is a summons to resist what diminishes life and to nurture what makes life whole—for ourselves, our neighbors and the world God so loves.

Reflect

Where is God calling you to expand your love “more and more” in ways that confront injustice?

How might you practice a “quiet life” that resists the noise of exploitation and builds true peace?

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Romans 15:14–21

Rev. Ellen Sechrest

Director of Mission Engagement, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

May we slow down and search for the Christ-child, making kindness and joy a priority so that we may flourish with great joy.

After reading this passage written by Paul, one might wonder how it is applicable during the Advent season. While doing some reading about the passage, one source says it is about love and unity in the church and not judging others, but that we are to try to accept and love people as they are by sharing the love of Christ to all. We are to be proclaimers of good news by word and deed.

Pondering that information made me think about Mary and how people perceived her when she was Joseph's betrothed and then how they perceived her once it was announced she was pregnant with the Christ-child. Many people didn't know her before the news of her pregnancy, so opinions were quickly formed and judgment set in the hearts of many.

When have we done the same thing yet tried celebrating with the same people we judge during the holidays? Holidays can be tough on us emotionally—while trying to find the 'right' gift for someone, going to every party to which we are invited, overspending, not having enough money for presents, loneliness, too much cooking/baking, feeling guilty about missing a program at church, etc. We often judge ourselves as harshly as we do others.

This Advent, may we slow down and search for the Christ-child, making kindness and joy a priority so that we may flourish with great joy.

Reflect

Where might you be forming quick judgments about others or yourself, and how could you practice Christ-shaped welcome instead?

What would "slowing down to search for the Christ-child" look like in one concrete moment of your day (errand, mealtime, commute)?

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Matthew 12:33–37

Chris O'Rear

Pastoral Counselor, Nashville, Tenn.

We cannot claim to love others while simultaneously calling them names, demeaning them or failing to recognize the spark of the divine in them.

In today's passage, Jesus is responding to the Pharisees' accusation that he casts out demons by Satan's power. He employs the metaphor of a tree and its fruit to emphasize that the words we use reveal the true nature of the heart. The Pharisees, though outwardly righteous, expose their intent by attributing the work of God through Jesus to evil. Jesus calls them a "brood of vipers," underscoring their deceitfulness. Though they cannot deny the miracle—because a man once blind and mute can now speak of what he sees—they attempt to discredit Jesus for their own gain.

Jesus warns that we will be held accountable for every careless word we speak, reminding us that our words reflect our true character. Merely trying to say kind things treats only symptoms, not the underlying issues within us. While choosing silence and practicing attentive listening can help us avoid careless speech, we are all vulnerable to speaking thoughtlessly, especially when tired or provoked. When we do slip, genuine repentance and heartfelt apologies can restore relationships. Thankfully, Jesus assures us that forgiveness is always available.

However, the true nature of our core beliefs cannot be hidden forever. The façade of kindness is betrayed by condescension. Feigning care is betrayed by willful ignorance or blame. Empty attempts at reconciliation are exposed by a failure to take responsibility for our own part in a conflict. We cannot claim to love others while simultaneously calling them names, demeaning them, or failing to recognize the spark of the divine in them. Our words will betray our heart.

Reflect

Have I said something out of anger or hurt to another person for which I need to apologize?

How can I receive loving feedback from friends with humility, see myself clearly and seek congruence between my heart and the things I say about others?

Thursday, December 11, 2025

Ruth 1:16–18

Faith Bynoe

Coordinator, CBF of the Northeast

Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love.

The Christian journey is a radical calling to participate in God's work, asking everyone to be prophetic. This prophetic voice isn't about foretelling but about forth-telling God's truth in the present. This voice demands we be:

- discerning of God's Word, distinguishing God's will from the world's noise;
- courageous in our action, speaking and living that truth even when unpopular;
- faithful to follow through, even when it doesn't make sense.

Ruth exemplifies this when she declares to Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go... Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16 CEB). She courageously embraces God's discerning word, leans into a prophetic direction out of sheer trust, and leaves her security. This may be as perplexing a moment for the reader as it is for Ruth—being prophetic is challenging. She did not know what was next, but her devotion to God and Naomi fueled her tenacious bravery, ultimately leading to their liberation and all living into what God promised.

As Morihei Ueshiba noted, "Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love." Ruth's unflinching devotion and love for God created a bravery that propelled her forward. We are all called to step out on faith, to live God's truth, requiring the same discerning, courageous and faithful spirit that Ruth possessed.

Reflect

How comfortable are you with your prophetic voice?

What do you need to lean into to be discerning, courageous and faithful?

Friday, December 12, 2025

2 Peter 3:11–18

Rev. Dr. Joby Tricquet

Pastor, Fairfax Baptist Church, Fairfax, Va.

Waiting on God's timing does not come easy. It requires a
conscious decision to wait well.

Today, we find ourselves halfway through this season of waiting. As I reflect upon our text, I am reminded of a few things about what it is to wait for God to do the next thing. Whatever its scope, whether in our little worlds or in God's grand Kingdom plan, our wait always calls us to look forward. No one waits for the past to hurry up and get here. God is indeed moving us toward Kingdom purpose. Waiting is also never in a vacuum. We wait in a context. Our Scripture today reminds us that context can seem frightening. Peter's words of a melting world may seem fitting as we glance out our windows and watch our world beat her plowshares into spears.

Yet, the scriptures call us to active anticipation—to live into our hope, our confidence that God remains true to God's word. "While you are waiting," verse 14 tells us, a peace can be ours that rests us in the truth that God remains in control in any circumstance. Our season of wait may be measured breath to breath, day to day, by the decade or, as our text bears out, by millennia. These are not seasons of dormancy, but seasons of growth and holy refinement producing, not an ornament, but a vessel fit for service. Use this season of reflection to let patience grow. Remain steadfast, for that which is new and righteous lies just beyond the wait.

Reflect

How am I using the time God has entrusted to me for my present season of life?

Am I remaining obedient to the one who has called me, even when fruit seems
so distant?

Saturday, December 13, 2025

Psalm 146:5-10

Rev. Stacy Nowell

Pastor, First Baptist Church, Huntersville, N.C.

Just think if the apostolic church had pinned its hope on the
Roman Empire.
Malcolm Muggeridge

I suspect we trust God far less than we think. Despite our professions of faith, in times of trouble, human leaders and their “solutions” seem so much more immediate and effectual than God’s plans, which appear so distant and long in coming. We know things will come right in the end, but in the meantime, we could use something a bit more decisive.

Against this temptation, however, Psalm 146 cautions that the promise of human deliverance is less reliable than it might seem. “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help,” the psalmist writes in verses 3-4. “When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.” In other words, human solutions are always only one breath away from dissolution.

Instead, the psalmist declares, “Happy are those ... whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever.” Perhaps God’s plans are realized with the long view in mind, but they are the only ones with the staying power to be counted on, come what may.

Surely something like this tension was felt when angels visited the likes of Mary, Joseph and a handful of shepherds, announcing “peace on earth,” salvation from sin and a kingdom that would never end. The promises were bold and big, but the only tangible “evidence” was a baby born into poverty whose earthly prospects looked dim. I suspect the temptation to rely on other, more immediate sources of deliverance was strong.

In our own day, when we too face troubles which demand solutions, let us remember the psalmist’s admonition. Human leaders and plans may have their place, but that place should never be ultimate. Only in God can we trust; therefore, in God alone may we trust.

Reflect

When have you placed hope in a leader or cause that ultimately failed to meet your expectations?

What might this reveal to you about whether your trust is wisely invested now?

{ Making Room }

to

Remember and Rejoice

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Luke 1:46b–55

Leigh Anne Armstrong

Chaplain and writer, Auburn, Ala.

What if God's gift, providing what the poor, the lowly, the hungry need, is good enough news that it's worth shouting about, for every one of us?

When I lived in middle Georgia as a young adult, there was a popular jingle on local television that went, "MACON! Something worth shouting about!" Dear reader, when my caboose kid grew up and moved to Macon, I learned the truth: No lie detected.

In today's Scripture, Mary's song of praise—and a prophetic word—carries with it the same "shout about" energy. Shout about God's favor for the poor, God's lifting of the lowly, God's satisfying of the hungry. Shout about God's mercy, the engine of all this good love for the little and the least.

Who of us, then, wouldn't join the young Mary in the jingle? "JESUS! Something worth shouting about!"? Well, I imagine that back in Mary's day, the proud, the powerful and the rich might have been less than enthusiastic. If I close my eyes, I don't have too much trouble picturing who might be the proud, powerful and rich today, and I might look a lot more like them than I do the poor, lowly and hungry. Huh. Now I feel a little less like shouting.

But, what if? What if God's gift, providing what the poor, the lowly, the hungry need, is good enough news that it's worth shouting about, for every one of us? What if God's mercy, generation to generation, is the promise of enough, the end of striving, the embrace of love?

...something worth shouting about, indeed!

"...my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." – Luke 1:47a

Reflect

What does it feel like to rejoice when mercy "wins" and all kinds of oppression are eased?

How might remembering God's mercy for all prime our lives for rejoicing?

Monday, December 15, 2025

Isaiah 29:18

Rev. Justin Ross Hillard

Senior Pastor, Faith Movers Christian Church, New Orleans, La.

Jesus, the Light of the World, has come and is continually revealed
whenever God's people embody justice, mercy, and truth.

"There are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried."—
Archbishop Óscar Romero (1917–1980), archbishop of San Salvador

Isaiah proclaims that "on that day the deaf shall hear... and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see" (Isaiah 29:18, NRSV). The prophet envisions a holy reversal where those once silenced will shout for joy, and those long pressed down will rise in dignity.

Romero, who gave his life as Archbishop of San Salvador during a time of poverty and violence, reminds us that tears are not wasted. They become the lens through which God's new world is seen. Isaiah's promise that those in gloom will see light echoes Romero's conviction: God's justice is revealed most clearly through the cries of the suffering and the longing of the oppressed.

This is the hope of Advent. We do not wait in vain, for Jesus, the Light of the World, has come and is continually revealed whenever God's people embody justice, mercy and truth. His presence is not confined to Bethlehem's manger or to a distant future trumpet. Christ comes again when compassion turns barren places fruitful, when weary voices are strengthened and when joy rises from the margins.

Advent is not passive waiting. It is faithful participation in God's reversal. Through our witness, Jesus is made known, and the darkness is overcome by his light.

Reflect

How do the tears of your own story—or your community's story—help you see Jesus more clearly in the work of justice?

Where is Christ being continually revealed through acts of compassion and courage around you this Advent?

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

Jude 1:22–23

Rev. Shane McNary

Coordinator of Ministry, CBF Great Rivers Fellowship

Advent joy is not sentimental. It is forged in difficulty.

Jude writes to a world unsettled by false voices and divisive leaders. This short letter carries urgency because truth and faith are at risk. His concern is not only for personal struggles of belief, but also for a community in danger of fracturing under immense pressure.

We recognize this moment. Our own community is marked by political turmoil, confusion about truth, and leaders who inflame division. Many are left doubting not only what they believe, but also whether they belong. Advent does not ignore difficult realities. Instead, it reminds us that mercy, not judgment, is the first response to doubt.

Advent joy is not sentimental. It is forged in difficulty. Making room this season means opening space for those carrying heavy burdens—the disillusioned, the exhausted, the fearful, the doubters. If we scurry past their pain to preserve our own peace, our joy stays fragile. But when we welcome the weary, rooted in Christ who came for the vulnerable, our joy deepens.

Jude speaks urgently because some must be snatched “out of the fire.” People are swept away by lies, fear and rage. Mercy is not passive; it dares to step into division, speak peace, and embody trust. Advent rejoicing is not withdrawal but testimony of joy in God’s mercy revealed in Christ, steady and sure even when nations rage.

Reflect

Where do you sense “fire” in your context—fear, rage, misinformation—and how can you respond without becoming fuel for it?

How might you practice “active mercy” this week—stepping with peace, truth and hope toward someone caught in fear or falsehood?

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Zechariah 8:1-17

Rev. Glen Foster

Coordinator, CBF West

Speak truth and make peace. Words we speak and how we live
create either peace or chaos.

Recently, a memory I had long ago forgotten was spurred by a photo. A pastor friend and I had co-preached at a baccalaureate for the local high school. At the end of our sermon, Gary sang “The Impossible Dream.” Surprisingly, the other day I remembered most of the song. What is your impossible dream? For yourself? For the world?

Zechariah dreams of peace. A day is coming when the elderly will be admired for their wisdom. Children will play in the streets without fear. Crops will produce. Truth will be spoken. The nation will be a blessing to the world. This was an impossible dream for the people of Zechariah’s day; yet this dream of peace created hope.

Our dream of peace seems elusive. Wars. School shootings. Political polarization. Cancer. Family discord. Hunger. Homelessness. Immigration. Injustice. Racism. Misogyny. Is peace an impossible dream? Or is there hope?

Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the Lord of hosts?

The prospect of peace in our time also seems like an impossible dream. Zechariah, however, encourages us to speak truth and make peace, a reminder that our words and actions have consequences. Words we speak and how we live create either peace or chaos.

John Lennon sang words that have echoed for decades, “Imagine all the people livin’ life in peace.” Zechariah imagines the same. Will the hope of peace fuel our imagination this Advent season?

Reflect

Does peace seem like an impossible dream in your life?

How will the hope of peace fuel your imagination this Advent season?

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Galatians 3:26–28

Rev. Annette Hill Briggs

Pastor, University Baptist Church, Bloomington, Ind.

Please do not take Baby Jesus
They are all sets
Thank u

The green index cards were handwritten and taped above every shelf of nativity sets. Not a few lacked a holy infant. Every sign was in English, notable given the shop was a tiny stall in a huge Mexican market in San Antonio. The shopkeeper noticed me reading the sign and came over, “I do not understand it, he said sorrowfully, Someone who believes in the Christ would never steal the Baby Jesus. And someone who doesn’t believe in the Christ has no use for him.” I thought about it all day—white people filching brown baby Jesuses rather than paying \$20 for the sweet sets with girl shepherds and sombrero wearing wise men.

In Galatians, chapter three, Paul writes to a community of believers who were also lifting Jesus from the gospel story, adding him like a charm to their chosen worldview. Specifically, they expected those unlike them to be believers just like them, following the same rules, doing all the same rituals.

Looting the gospel story to reinforce our chosen way of faith is no less a theft than pinching Baby Jesus from a \$20 nativity. Both are rendered useless, the nativity of its worth and the gospel of its power. But left in His proper place, Jesus brings us the story of our very lives, the light of which shows us to ourselves, the children of God through faith . . . clothed in Christ . . . [made] one in Christ Jesus. The vision of our lives and life together begins again at Advent, should we have the restraint simply to watch and listen to the birth of a tiny brown baby in a certain corner of the world.

Reflect

How have I noticed in myself or my faith community the habit of regarding Jesus as a good luck charm rather than relating to Him as the savior of humanity?

What are one or two everyday habits I can establish to experience the oneness in Christ described in Galatians 3:28?

Friday, December 19, 2025

2 Samuel 7:18–22

Dr. Juan Jose Barreda Toscano

Professor of Sacred Scripture and Biblical Exegesis

Executive Secretary of the Latin American Theological Fraternity

In being known as a Galilean from Nazareth, in the choices he made, his actions, and his teachings, Jesus helps us see what God truly promised to and through “David.”

The coming of Jesus is tied to a long history of hope. In 2 Samuel 7:18–22 we see David trusting in the promise God gave him. From his perspective, he responds with gratitude, feeling both honored and committed to that calling.

Yet David’s story—and that of his family—was full of ups and downs. Contrary to expectations, 1–2 Kings shows his descendants as rulers who often brought trouble to the people (cf. 2 Sam. 7:21). Even David himself drifted far from the shepherd boy who was chosen for having a heart faithful to God.

God’s promises are connected to the human call to trust and follow. These promises are glimpses of what God will do and how God will do it. In Christ’s coming, in being known as a Galilean from Nazareth, in the choices he made, in his actions, and in his teachings, Jesus helps us see what God truly promised to and through “David.” That promise was not based on bloodline or a political monarchy, but in the joy of having been called to serve the people as an instrument of God.

Thinking of Jesus’ coming as the fulfillment of God’s promise invites us to rethink hope itself—to see in his birth the beginning of a time of fullness, where a servant shepherds us and the God of love draws near to us (cf. John 3:16–17).

Reflect

Which part of God’s long story with you do you need to remember today so gratitude can lead your next step?

When God’s promise unfolds slower than you hoped, what practices help you keep company with God rather than grasp for control?

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Psalm 80

Rev. Kristen Koger

Associate Pastor for Spiritual Growth, First Baptist Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Advent is about preparing to rejoice in Christ's birth; but it is also about looking back—remembering God's saving work in history, and how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

One of my favorite things about Advent is that it makes space for whatever we bring with us on the journey toward the manger—space for joy and wonder, but also for lament and doubt. The people we meet in the Advent story were people like us, navigating a world that was both messy and beautiful.

Today's passage, Psalm 80, is a psalm of communal lament. Three times we hear the refrain, "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved." In the midst of trial, God's people don't simply cry out; they also remember. They remember how God delivered them, and that memory makes space for hope even in their struggle.

Corrie ten Boom once said, "When we remember what God has done, we are strengthened to believe what God will do." Advent calls us to that kind of remembering. Yes, it is about preparing to rejoice in Christ's birth; but it is also about looking back—remembering God's saving work in history, and how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. As we remember, we are strengthened to trust God's promises for today and tomorrow.

Advent also makes room for rejoicing. The psalmist's cry is not despair but hope—hope that God's face will shine again and that restoration will come. Each Advent we remember Emmanuel, God with us. May we make room to remember and rejoice in this Good News.

Reflect

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in the midst of your own lament or despair?

How can we pray this psalm not only for ourselves but for a world in need of restoration?

{ *Making Room* }

to

Give and Receive

Sunday, December 21, 2025

Isaiah 7:10–16

Rev. Dr. Jakob Topper

Senior Pastor, North Haven Church, Norman, Okla.

“God-with-us does not erase the hard choices before us—it reshapes them, grounding us in a hope that no empire can overthrow.”

King Ahaz of Judah faced a political storm. The Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Aram had joined forces to resist the expanding Assyrian Empire. They demanded that Ahaz join their coalition. When he refused, they threatened to depose him and put a puppet king on Judah’s throne. And behind them loomed Assyria—vast, violent, unstoppable.

To Ahaz, there seemed no good choices: join a desperate coalition he didn’t believe in or surrender to Assyria’s domination. When the prophet Isaiah urged him to ask God for a sign, Ahaz refused. His words sounded devout: “I will not put the Lord to the test.” But his piety was a mask for his fear. Ahaz had already chosen to send tribute to Assyria and submit Judah to its power (2 Kings 16).

God gave him a sign anyway: “The young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” Not an army. Not a throne. A child named Immanuel—God with us. A promise that God’s presence would outlast every empire.

We, too, live in times when political systems demand allegiance, when authoritarians promise safety through domination, and when fear tempts us to bow to power. Yet Advent reminds us that Immanuel does not arrive cloaked in political might, but in weakness, risk and solidarity. God-with-us does not erase the hard choices before us—it reshapes them, grounding us in a hope no empire can overthrow.

Reflect

Where are you tempted to trust in power for safety instead of resting in God’s presence?

How does the promise of Immanuel invite you to face your own political moment with courage and hope?

Monday, December 22, 2025

Isaiah 33:17-22

Rev. Lilybeth Bosch

Chaplain, Gurabo, P.R.

In Advent's final days, Isaiah calls us to look up and see the King in his beauty—bringing justice, breaking chains and giving unshakable peace.

“Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches far away” (Isaiah 33:17).

In times when we are surrounded by injustice, violence, pain and great difficulties, we must ask ourselves: What do my eyes see?

In these last days of Advent, when the expectation of Christ's birth feels closest, Isaiah invites us to lift our gaze. The prophet announces that our eyes will see the King in his radiant beauty—a King who brings justice, peace and salvation. In the face of fear, oppression and uncertainty, God promises a wide earth, a safe dwelling place, and a government that depends not on human authorities but on the Lord who legislates and saves.

In this time of preparation, this passage reminds us that true hope is not in political power or changing circumstances, but in the reign of Christ, Emmanuel, who comes to dwell among us. As we approach Christmas, let us open our hearts to contemplate the King who conquers terror, breaks down chains, and gives us a peace that no enemy can ever take away. In this way, our eyes will see with hope the birth of the King, and we will be able to share with others the joy, love and peace this world desperately needs.

Reflect

What do your eyes see?

Tuesday, December 23, 2025

Galatians 3:6–14

Logan Engle

Lay Leader, First Baptist Church, Erwin, Tenn.

Have Mine Own Way, Lord! Have Mine Own Way! I am the
potter, I am the clay. I'll mold me; I'll make me after my will, while
You are waiting, yielded and still.

Have you ever tried to have your own way? I recently read *The Good & Beautiful God* by James Bryan Smith. Smith writes, “We are creatures who live by our stories.” Our stories, then and now, convince us to will ourselves to meet unachievable standards to be loved by our good God. That’s certainly not the God Jesus knew! It’s the God we create as we project our own narratives heavenward. The Galatian church battled these old stories as they trusted in their own law-based works and found themselves under a curse (v.10). Instead, Christ came to the earth to spread a gospel of faith, “so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit” (v.14).

Like the Galatians, we wish to have our own way. We want to meet standards we’ve set for ourselves, those we believe our family and friends expect, or assume God requires. We shackle ourselves to a performative gospel based on what we can do to meet a standard we have set. We sing a jumbled-up version of a familiar hymn that focuses on what we can mold—not how God molds us through the transformative power of the cross.

As we near the end of Advent, I hope you’ve used this time of anticipation for examination: to make room to give and receive; give up your desire for your own will; make room for God’s way in your life—both in Jesus’ birth and in His second Advent. Even if you don’t, He’ll come in His own sweet *kairos*!

Reflect

When have you sought to have your own way?

How has the fear of measuring up to an unachievable or human-made standard affected your life—at home, at work, at school, at play, at church?

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Isaiah 9:2-7

Rev. Dr. Luther S. Allen III

Senior Pastor, First Lynnhaven Baptist Church, Virginia Beach, Va.

Indeed, God's gifts are always life-changing and
freedom-producing.

In the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah, readers witness God's promise of holy disruption in the face of unrighteousness and oppression. Zebulun and Naphtali were Israelite tribes in Galilee, the primary roadway for conquering invaders in Northern Israel. These tribes had first-hand experience with the "darkness" and "trampling boots" (likely sandals) of pillaging forces like the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. Under those conditions, hope was rare, and joy seemed impossible. Yet the prophet Isaiah encouraged Abraham's downtrodden descendants with the recurring promises of nationhood and righteous leadership.

Isaiah's prophecy reminds us that God specializes in holy disruption. In the face of sinful domination, cruelty and imperialism, God inspires discerning voices to speak divine redemption, compassion and liberation. In Isaiah's words to these troubled tribes, God gave a promise of hope and righteousness that would eventually be fulfilled through the coming of Jesus Christ!

As we spend the holiday season preparing to give gifts to relatives and friends, let us remember that God has always set the standard of what it means to give. Indeed, God's gifts are always life-changing and freedom-producing. God has empowered every believer to challenge the dark despair of unrighteousness—by giving the life-changing and freedom producing hope of the Gospel.

This Christmas, may the wonder, the might and the peace of God be present as you give and receive the message and promise of God's everlasting gift: the Prince of Peace whose light shines forever! Amen.

Reflect

In your ministry context, where might God be directing you to confront darkness and the trampling of hope?

What is God calling you to give that will change lives and produce freedom?

Thursday, December 25, 2025

Luke 2:10-11

Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley

Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is the Messiah, the Lord

These words of the angel are the very heart of the Christmas message. How can we hear it best on this Christmas Day?

We should absolutely marvel at the global reach of this pronouncement. The birth of is for all people. That's why we sing, "joy to the world, the Lord is come!" The birth of Jesus is not for any one nation or language. Jesus is born because God so loves the world. The reach of God's grace shatters all boundaries. This is why our Fellowship still seeks to join Christ's mission across the world. It is why we welcome strangers and serve people from all over the world in our communities. As people remade by Christmas, we announce good news for all people.

Linger over the words of the Christmas angel. They are marvelously global. They are also stunningly personal. It is good news of great joy for you. To you is born a Savior. Wherever you are today, whatever the condition of your faith, whatever your deepest struggle, in whichever way you need saving grace most, the birth of Jesus as the boldest statement of God's love, is for you.

Good news of great joy for all of us and for each of us. That's the gospel for Christmas Day and always.

Reflect

How does the global impact of Christ's birth push the boundaries of your love and care?

Where do you most need the good news of great joy this Christmas?



More Advent resources available at
cbf.net/advent