



CHRISTMAS

2025

Advent Devotional

Daily Readings Preparing for Christmas

BY PASTOR CHAD FRANSEN





There are many incredible Christmas Carols that have been written throughout history. They help us to enjoy the many blessings that God gives to us surrounding the tradition of celebrating the birth of the Son of God. This Advent Season, we are going to focus on four carols; Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Joy to the World, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and Come Thou Long Expected Jesus.

Each of these songs point back to Scriptures that tell about the world-changing life of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

In this daily devotional, we will be looking at these carols and also the Scripture passages that tell the greatest story in all of history. My hope is that you take time each day to reflect on the carols and scriptures so that your holiday season is filled with hope and life in a new and rich way because of Jesus Christ.

-Pastor Chad Fransen





Monday, December 1st

Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. - Colossians 3:16b

Somehow, music echoes through our minds, conjuring memories and feelings from our past. Christmas carols do this for me. I remember sitting in the pew at my Grandmother's church and hearing her voice sing Hark the Herald Angels Sing. I was so excited for presents and getting to play with my cousins, that it was difficult to sit still.

There is power in music. Mysteriously, poetry and melodies unite together and get stored in our brains in a way that we can access those files once we hear those same notes sung. God knew that we would need creative ways to remember. That is why traditions are so important. We are often filled with so much information and experiences that we need ways to remember that allow us to go back in time and recall what was happening.

This Advent season, take a moment to listen to the music and the sounds around us. Take in the ones that bring up memories and focus on those that are part of your current traditions that you will one day use to remember these times. They are more important than you might realize.





Tuesday, December 2nd

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings. - Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark the Herald Angels Sing was originally a section of a symphony written by Felix Mendelssohn about the inventor of the printing press, Johannes Gutenberg. The press allowed for the "Gutenberg Bible" to be printed so that people had access to the Word of God. Many years later, Charles Wesley, who founded the Methodist Church, rewrote the words to become a classic Christmas carol.

Felix Mendelssohn was born into a Jewish family in Germany. The family became Lutheran to escape persecution. As a result, Felix had a rich heritage to draw from. He became quite popular as a conductor and was able to do remarkable things, remembering entire symphonies without notes. In the song where we get Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Felix wrote beautiful words about Jesus (in German) in different parts. One of the main themes about this entire symphony is how God shines His light on us.

When we think of the angels appearing to the shepherds on the night of the birth of Jesus, we imagine the light show with movement and brilliant colors dazzling these humble people in a field. Lights expose the darkness and they create awe and wonder.

As we watch the Christmas lights this season, take a moment to remember to reflect on the birth of Jesus and how God chose to send us the Light of the World.



Wednesday, December 3rd

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. They were calling out to each other,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies!

The whole earth is filled with his glory!" - Isaiah 6:1-3

As we sing the line,"Hark, the herald angels sing," do you ever stop and picture what angels looked like as they are described in the Bible? While we don't know exactly what the shepherds saw, angels are sometimes described as having 4 or 6 wings and covered in eyes. They are often glowing with bright clothing, and sometimes burnished with bronze.

Whatever they looked like, they put on a show that was beyond spectacular! The shepherds were treated to the full pageantry of God's messengers. There is something so captivating about the thought of the newborn king lying in a feed trough while the angels danced before the shepherds.

Take a moment to think about how Jesus was both humble and powerful all at once. What impact does that have on our faith?





Thursday, December 4th

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. - Luke 2:8-9

I love to hear stories about how people were won over by God. Each story is different and filled with creativity and individually designed circumstances. I once heard a story about a Turkish lawyer who was living in Mexico where he met someone on the beach who asked him if he wanted to follow Jesus? He claimed that if they wanted to argue with him about Jesus, they would have lost because he was a good lawyer. Instead, God met him on that beach and it changed his life forever.

Why did God choose the shepherds? We don't think they were that important. They didn't have much influence in culture. And yet, the angels targeted them to tell about the newborn Jesus. Just some humble workers in a field with their flock.

When God chooses us, it is not because we are any more or less valuable than anyone else. God recognizes us as His creation and hopes that each one of us will understand how special we are to Him, not because of our social rank, but because He made us.

Take a moment to think about how God won you over. What were the circumstances that demonstrated how God individually cares for you. If you get a chance, ask someone about their story. What were the circumstances that catered to who they are?





Friday, December 5th

Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die, born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. - Hark the Herald Angels Sing

In the last verse of this Christmas carol, we see a deep theological concept that we sing about that is very important. When we look at what the angels were singing about to the shepherds, we see the purpose of Jesus. The Gospels lay out the plan for Jesus that he was born to give us a new life(See John 3 where Jesus explains His purpose to Nicodemus).

I love how this story gives us a brilliant combination of emotions. We see people adoring a precious newborn baby. He is innocent, fragile, and swaddled so that He is cozy and can't move. And yet, His purpose is to die to bring us life.

God wants us to understand that the point of this birth is full of power and life and therefore God sends His angels to Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds. They "Hark" because they want us to understand how amazing this humble baby's birth will be for the world.

When we only look at earthly situations, we miss out on the spiritual dimension that impacts the way that we understand God's plan for our lives.

Take a moment to picture angels dancing around you. How does that make you feel? Are you scared? Do you sense the power of God? Do you feel at peace?





Saturday, December 6th

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King:
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled! - Hark the Herald Angels Sing

What a powerful start to this Christmas carol! God sent His Son Jesus to reconcile us with God. Reconcile comes from the Latin word reconciliare. Re-'back' (also expressing intensive force) + conciliare 'bring together'. Therefore, reconciliation assumes that we have been separated from God. This happened at the start of the Bible. Adam and Eve disobey God and they hide because they don't want to get caught. Their shame reveals their nakedness and the separation happens instantly.

Don't miss what happens in Genesis. God then confronts them and asks them why they were acting strangely. Instead of destroying them, God sacrifices some animals and makes clothes for them. God desired reconciliation right from the start. That is God's heart, but He knows us, and knows that we sin. That's why He sent His Son Jesus. So that through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are brought back into the loving arms of our Creator.

Take some time to join the angels in singing praise to our newborn King!





Sunday, December 7th

Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King. - Joy to the World

Isaac Watts wrote Joy to the World as a poem early in the 17th century. It is based on Psalm 98 and not intended to be a Christmas carol. It wasn't until 1848 when American composer Lowell Mason arranged the poem into a musical piece, attributing the tune to George Frideric Handel. It was then released around Christmas time and it quickly became associated with Christmas.

When we sing this song, it makes me want to celebrate. I can't help but picture the angels flying around in the sky declaring the greatest news in all of the history of the world. This is important for us to remember because when God enters into our lives, we should welcome Him like we welcome the most important, and the most desired guest. We should prepare our houses, get excited with anticipation, and then be overjoyed when the time finally arrives.

Each Christmas, we sing about this incredible news. Each year, we remember that we have the option to receive our King, or to reject Him.

Take a moment to check the status of your heart. Are you prepared for Jesus to take over your heart? When Jesus arrives, are you overjoyed or filled with shame? Make a plan to prepare for Jesus to visit you. You will never be the same.





Monday, December 8th

Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy! - Psalm 98:4

Try to imagine a time when you were overjoyed. It probably is the best memory that you have. How did you feel? Did you want to sing? Were you able to control what you did? King David, who likely wrote Psalm 98 caught himself dancing with joy in front of everyone while only wearing the priestly robe. This apparently wasn't the greatest clothing with which to cover himself. So he was confronted by Michal, the daughter of King Saul. But David replied, "Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes!" (See 2 Samuel 6).

When we fully understand the gift that God gave to us, we shouldn't be able to fully contain ourselves. That is how wonderful this gift is to us. When we become overjoyed, it will make us look foolish by the world's eyes, but that shouldn't stop us. Instead, we should respond without reservation because we are singing to God and God alone.

The next time you worship God, try to evaluate what holds you back from fully expressing your praise.





Tuesday, December 9th

No more let sins and sorrows grow

Nor thorns infest the ground

He comes to make

His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found

Far as the curse is found

Far as, far as the curse is found - Joy to the World

This verse of Joy to the World directly describes the foundation of sin in Genesis. In the Garden of Eden, we find perfection. But when sin enters into it, the ground becomes cursed with weeds and thorns. Therefore, we have a choice. The difference is between a perfect garden filled with fruit, beauty, and peace, and a land filled with thorns and curses.

Then look at this line: "He comes to make His blessings flow..." I love that line. God's character is full of attempts to bless. He truly wants to give us what we want, what we need, and the very best that He can give.

Unfortunately, we tend to reject that concept. Our sinful nature tends to create a wall that prevents the blessings of God from flowing into our lives. We doubt God's plans and we tend to think that we can do it without God's help. Then we find our sins growing and taking over the property of our hearts.

Take a moment to look at your own character. Does it reflect the character of God? Or do you find yourself guarded and defensive? Wherever you are, it will impact the way you show praise.

Wednesday, December 10th

And heaven and nature sing - Joy to the World

We already have had a taste of what heaven singing means when we hear the story about the angels dancing in the sky for the shepherds, but what does it mean to have "nature sing"?

One time, I was with a group of men that attempted to climb Huron Peak in Colorado. We left in the dark from our tents to summit the top in one day. As we got to the top, a storm came out of nowhere and started snowing on us. Then it got scary. We could feel the electricity in the air. Some other people we were with jumped under a rock, while our guides were loudly urging us to get off the mountain and down to beneath the tree line.

I stopped and lifted my arms up to pray. And the strangest thing happened. My arms started singing. I had heard a whistling sound come from the rocks as well. I couldn't believe my ears. So I tested it. I moved my arms up and down and the tones changed.

The storm eventually passed and we were left with a peaceful descent with a light dusting of white snow. But God demonstrated to us His power that not only could He make the rocks sing, but we are all vulnerable. The entire way down, I worshipped God.

When was a time when you felt vulnerable? How did you respond?





Thursday, December 11th

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. - Isaiah 9:6

I remember hearing this statement in a Charlie Brown Christmas Special. The word government always stood out to me. What is the significance? When we look at the word in Hebrew, it is hammisrah. It not only means government, but also rule or dominion. I think this helps in understanding what this passage is describing.

When we think of a leader of a country, his/her dominion only extends as far as the borders of that country. Once they leave their territory, a new leader's dominion begins. The dominion of Jesus will rest on his shoulders and this dominion will extend well past boundaries here on earth. The reign of Jesus will make the governments on earth seem incredibly small and insignificant.

Therefore when we sing, "Joy to the world! the Savior reigns," we are acknowledging the prophecy from Isaiah 9 that Jesus is not just a baby in a manger, but also a global leader that is set to rule the earth.

Take a moment to think about how Jesus leads. His way is filled with truth and grace. How does this impact the way that you worship?





Friday, December 12th

Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has done wonderful deeds. - Psalm 98:1

Isaac Watts wrote Joy to the World as a poem based on Psalm 98. He had a knack for rhyming that he used to reflect on Scripture. There is a story about how his father, who was a pastor, spanked him for writing too many rhymes because it was too childish. The young Isaac responded, "O father, father, pity take, and I will no more verses make."

Fortunately for us, Isaac didn't stop. He became one of the most prolific writers of hymns. Sometimes in life, we have to trust what God tells us. Even if it seems to go against the way things have always been done.

Take a moment to reflect on the creativity of God. Write down three ways that you could try something new because of God's wonderful love calling you into the unknown and then pray for God to give you the courage.





Saturday, December 13th

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders and wonders of His love - Joy to the World

Have you ever stopped to look at the stars or a beautiful sunset and just sat in awe? Then, if you marvel more, you think about God's incredible design of how our eyes can take in this beauty with delicate precision. The earth not only dazzles with God's handiwork, but then we see the relational side of His creation and we get to see more incredible inventiveness. God seems to watch us and give us the option to believe in Him, or to just pretend He doesn't exist. Yet, God in His righteousness, rules us with truth and grace.

This verse of Joy to the World is highly insightful. It describes the character of God and His leadership. His righteousness really is something to marvel upon. As I see pictures of what the manger scene looked like, I picture awe and wonder. Jesus is the central part of God's plan to win us back and reconcile the world to Him.

Take a moment to imagine being in the room with the shepherds or the wise men and just marvel at the baby Jesus, who came into this world to give us life and to demonstrate God's amazing love for you.



Sunday, December 14th

O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. - O Come, O Come Immanuel

This is one of the oldest songs that we sing during the Christmas Season. We believe it is from the 8th century, written in Latin that monks used to chant. It was translated into English by John Mason Neale, an Anglican priest and hymn writer. The tune was composed by Thomas Helmore, who often worked with Neale.

It is seven verses long. The start of every line begins with a word in Latin that describes the Messiah. If you take the first letter of the first word of each verse, you get the letters SARCORE. When you spell this backwards, it is ERO CRAS, which is the Latin phrase which means tomorrow I will come.

We cry out to God to come and visit us. And the response is that God will visit us tomorrow. This is an important relationship that we have with our Lord. We invite Him into our lives with anticipation, and then we wait with hope and excitement.

And when He comes, He brings freedom and eternal life. This incredible gift is what fulfills God's plan from the beginning.

Take a moment to enjoy the time between hope and fulfillment. It is in this process where we grow and then are made aware of God's work in our lives.





Monday, December 15th

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us'). - Isaigh 7:14

Growing up, I remember driving on Christmas Eve in a very cold car to get to church. There I would see my grandma and cousins and my aunts and uncles. Being together was all part of the celebration of Christmas. After church, we would go to one of our houses and begin to laugh, eat and play games.

There is nothing like being together with our loved ones.

God understood this. As a matter of fact, He invented it. God designed us to want to be with Him and He longs to be with us. That is the word Immanuel.

Many times, the word Immanuel is spelled differently because it is translated from Hebrew. Imanu means with us and EI is one of the words for God. What a wonderful promise that God lives with us.

Jesus was born into our world to demonstrate this in a very tangible way. However, Jesus lived a long time ago on Earth. The promise that God makes with us is that He is with us even now through His Holy Spirit.

Take a moment to invite God into every part of your life. God loves being with us all the time and brings joy and contentment.



Tuesday, December 16th

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" - Luke 1:28

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and gave her this amazing message. God chose her to be the mother of the Messiah. What an incredibly shocking turn of events. One day, Mary is engaged and nervous about her future husband. Then, she gets this message that is highly disruptive. She is pregnant and has to face this reality.

Fortunately, the angel Gabriel gives her the phrase, "The Lord is with you." This is the word immanuel. We can easily skip past the significance of this. Yet, we see the response from Mary and she composes her song that we find at the end of the first chapter of Luke. She is humble, honored, and incredibly aware of the gift that God has given her because she was chosen for this important role.

We, also, are chosen for an important role in our lives. It may not look anything like Mary's purpose, but God has created us to play a part in the story of reconciling the world back to Him. This season, let's remember how Mary responded and try to live with courage into our mission and find comfort in the knowledge that "The Lord is with you."

Take a moment to remember your calling in your life. The more we lean into it, the more we experience God's presence.





Wednesday, December 17th

O come, O King of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind. Bid all our sad divisions cease and be yourself our King of Peace. - O Come O Come Immanuel

Unity is a very strong message in the Bible. When we are united in Christ, we experience peace and prosperity so that the sick are healed and the poor are taken care of. This takes work. We have to have an understanding of who we are and be open to the perspective of others.

When God is "with us," we see our hearts change as we welcome those into our lives with whom we normally wouldn't associate. When we go to church, we see people from all different backgrounds and experiences. Yet, we unite because of our common love for God through Jesus Christ.

Not only that, we unify because our missions align to show mercy to the poor, and to seek justice in our world. Humility allows us to walk alongside one another in true community. That's exactly where we find Jesus.

Take a moment to praise Jesus for your church and for the community that is made stronger because we are united in Christ.





Thursday, December 18th

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. - Luke 2:16

Can you imagine being invited to see the baby Jesus? Not many people were. The angel personally delivered the invitation to some shepherds out in the fields at night. Then an entire host of angels accentuated the message by giving the shepherds a glimpse of Heaven in the night sky.

The shepherds rushed off to a stable in Bethlehem and found the baby Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothing, and lying in a manger, just as the angel said.

As they walked into the room, I imagine Mary's skeptical eyes looking at the shepherds, who were strangers. But they shared the same secret. This baby was the promised Messiah. Soon they realized that they were all part of this massive part of the history of the world.

Soon, joy filled their hearts even more because Mary, Joseph and the shepherds knew the gravity of the situation. God gave them each other to help them understand that this was indeed the One.

Community is important. It helps us to see God's plan while we are in a world of cynical people. Take a moment to write down a list of people who you believe are united with you in Christ.



Friday, December 19th

And ransom captive Israel - O Come O Come Immanuel

What gift was given to you that communicated the most love? It usually involves sacrifice and a great knowledge of what you would want.

While O Come, O Come Immanuel is my favorite Christmas carol, this line, "Ransom Captive Israel," always seemed out of place to me. But then, as I learned more about the plan of God, I realized the deep theology that this line communicates.

The Bible is one united story that is written to communicate God's love for us who are separated from Him through our own sin. Because of God's desire to reconcile with us, He pays a ransom to release us from our slavery to sin.

Do you understand how amazing this is? The Creator of the Universe was willing to sacrifice His one and only beloved Son for you. The birth of Jesus was the start of this elaborate effort to win you over to Him.

Take a moment to reflect on the amazing gift that is Jesus. Respond by praising God in whatever way feels right.





Saturday, December 20th

He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble .- Luke 1:52

The mother of Jesus, Mary, sings a song to respond in worship because she truly had front row seats to the work of God. She understands so much because the presence of God was in her life. She realized how the plan of God was so opposite of how the world expected.

Mary was first humiliated because she was told that she was pregnant out of wedlock. Then, she was forced to travel 70 miles by donkey while almost ready to give birth. And if that was inconvenient enough, there was no room for them, so she was forced to give birth with the animals.

When bad things happen to us, we are tempted to blame God or assume that He doesn't exist. Not Mary. She responds by singing a song that is worshipful and celebrates the humility that God elevates.

How do you respond when circumstances don't go as you would like? Do you respond with humility and worship or do you scream and complain?

Take a moment to reflect about how humility is what God desires from us.





Sunday, December 21st

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. - Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

This carol was written in 1744, by Charles Wesley, as a poem to talk about the nativity of Jesus in a time when there were tremendous social problems, like mistreatment of orphans. It was included in a collection of hymns, but then was made famous by Charles Spurgeon, when he used it in a sermon in 1855.

Not only does this song refer to our receiving of the Messiah at Christmas time, but also points us to His second coming. We live in a state of remembering when Jesus first arrived and hoping for his return. Wesley writes that we are set free because Jesus was born to set us free from our sins by His sacrifice for us on the cross.

Now, we wait for Him to return where we know that He wins the battle and reclaims our world for His glory. That is where we "find our rest in thee."

Where do you find rest? Are you able to be at peace?

Take a moment to rest in Jesus-who was and is and is to come.





Monday, December 22nd

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart. - Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Do you remember a Christmas when you really wanted something? Did you get what you longed for? If you didn't, I assume you are still disappointed. It can really leave a mark. But if you did get what you wanted, do you remember how it felt? You felt cared for, known, and a sense of joy that overcame all the other things going on in your world.

That is the sense of the carol Come Thou Long Expected Jesus as well as the plan for God to give us our hearts' desires. Sometimes we long for temporary happiness. That will feel good for a little bit, but there is something greater if we dig deeper into our hearts and what we truly desire.

Take a moment to reflect on what you truly long for. Does this come easily? If not, what are some things you can do to explore your heart?





Tuesday, December 23rd

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring .- Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

The Magi (or sometimes called wise men), brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus. This might seem a little confusing. Yet, if we do some investigation, we see that the word magi is also found in the book of Daniel. Magi were advisors to the kings and queens. Not only that, but they were responsible for anointing new royalty.

Jesus was born into this world to be the promised king in the line of David. And when the magi looked into the night sky, they were led to Bethlehem, to find the king that they were looking for. When they find the child, they respond in worship and give gifts fit for a king.

Here is where it gets interesting. Jesus is declared a king by the magi who discovered Him through a star in the sky. Yet, the baby was born in a stable and placed in a manger in the humblest of circumstances. The carol describes this mystery well. Jesus is a king but He was born to reign IN us forever. His Kingdom is in our hearts.

Pray for Jesus to rule your heart. Ask Him to get rid of your rebellion and pride and join His gracious kingdom.





Wednesday, December 24th Christmas Eve

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. - Luke 2:6-7

The situation was difficult. The timing was bad. The accommodations were decrepit. Yet, there was beauty and majesty because of the birth of Jesus. In the midst of hardship was a miracle of new life. This supersedes every difficulty.

God is a God of life. Jesus was brought to life to be THE LIFE. He brought hope and healing in everything He did. His mission was to bring abundant life and to give eternal life to anyone who believes in Him.

This Christmas Eve, look for signs of life and hope. It's all around us. We just have to look for it.





Thursday, December 25th Christmas Day

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! - Luke 2:11

What an adventure! Mary and Joseph were commanded to return to Bethlehem and there was no room for them to stay. The shepherds visited and then the wise men found them. But it didn't get any easier for them. The dreadful King Herod commanded every boy under two to be killed because he heard that a new king was born.

God guided them to Egypt and they raised Jesus there until it was safe for them to return. Long journeys, unknown and uncomfortable detours were the foundation of the birth of the Messiah.

Yet, Jesus was the giver of life who was born to become our Savior and to rescue us from death!

Praise be to God!

May you celebrate this day and lean into the life that Jesus gives to you!







Wednesday, Dec. 24th Five Services - Something for Everyone

2:00pm & 4:00pm

Family Contemporary Worship Services in the Sanctuary

7:00pm and 9:00pm

Traditional Candlelight Worship Services with the Chancel Choir in the Sanctuary

11:00pm

Communion Candlelight Midnight Worship Service



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