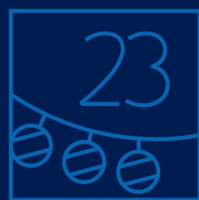
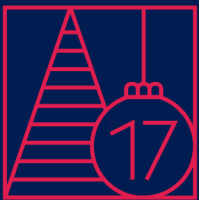
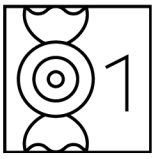


ADVENT '24

A devotional written & illustrated by
Poplar Springs Baptist Church





Nicole Hamrick

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Two thousand years is a long time.

I try every Christmas season to envision the pivotal moment when God gave up Heaven to live down here in the dirt with us, but it seems inaccessible in many ways. Like parts of a movie scene we've simply dreamed up after generations of attempting to capture, with human hands, what was a celestial moment in time.

Jesus vulnerably lying in Mary's nervous arms.

Entering life in the dark and the dirt.

The moment that shifted the direction of eternity, for us all.

I try to envision it, but I can't do it very well.

And much of the Bible feels that way to me—especially excerpts from the prophets.

Many of us have grown up here, in this small town, in homes shielded from disease, the first hand effects of war, and widespread destruction from an enemy army...so for many of us, the depths of Bible stories that narrate from these realities are often hard to grasp.

Can we really... truly... actually understand?

I've asked myself these questions often, however, the unforeseen destruction and loss we've witnessed from the foot of the mountains this hurricane season has been a window into the devastation, grief, and fear that must have plagued the people of Judah in today's passage. Jeremiah writes to a people now experiencing political takeover and exile. But even in the darkness of captivity... in the midst of death, imprisonment, and ruin... God breathes a word of hope to sustain his children.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 reads:

“‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.’

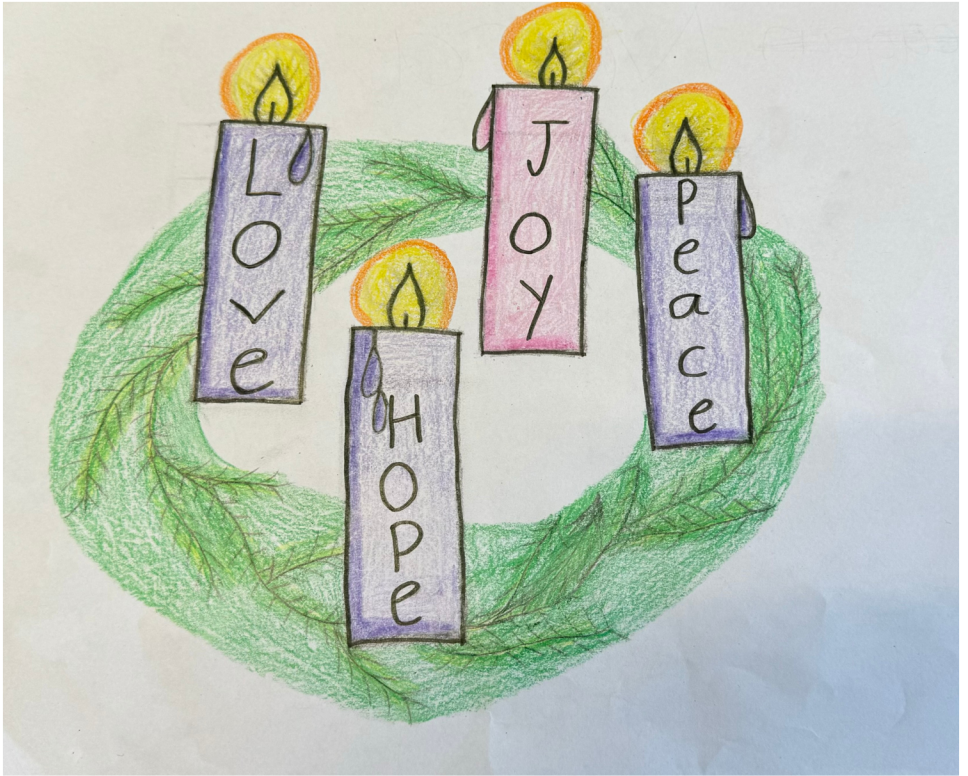
I still have to imagine the Christmas story over a chasm of two thousand years, but the lens on my telescope has been strengthened quite a bit following Hurricane Helene. The grief that comes from being just miles away from such tragedy, moves us closer to the heart of God. Earthly devastation— be it an unexpected natural disaster or by evil, human intent, is nothing new to God, and yet it grieves Him still.

It is the prologue to the story of God’s people long ago...
the one that caused him to rise and leave His throne, for us.

As we inch ever closer to Christmas Day, may we remember that the cherished child that slept in Mary’s arms was the same God that has spent all of time relentlessly pursuing us, his beloved children.

As we look backwards to celebrate what God did, may we also look forward to what He promises still to do. Brokenness is never the end.

It is simply the beginning of next chapters that God finishes with healing and promise.



An Advent Wreath

Nora Bradley

5th Grade



Barbara Hodges

Isaiah 11:1-10

In this country, we get very invested in “leaders”. We take sides and believe that the politicians we follow and support will do what we feel will give us the best life. We often aren’t willing to listen to another’s point of view. Tensions get high and discord abounds. Even friends and family can turn their backs on each other. It can get ugly. But who should we really be following? And who really knows what’s best for us?

Isaiah tells us that when Jesus returns, He will rule His kingdom with perfect justice and righteousness. He will bring peace to the peoples of all nations. Jesus knows what we need and He will provide it in faithfulness as He is already doing. Sounds like a perfect leader to me!

We know that Jesus is full of wisdom and understanding, power and love. So this Christmas, let’s remember the birth of Jesus, when He first came to earth to show us the way to live and the love He has for us, as well as the hope and unity He promises in the future. There is much to look forward to for us who choose to follow Him as our ultimate leader!



The Church at Christmas

Stella Hodges

2nd Grade



Clay Putnam

Romans 8:22-25

There are many areas in the Bible that provide words of comfort or hope in times of need, but maybe none more significant than Romans 8:22-25. Verses 22-25 state, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

Paul is using the example of a woman going through labor as a comparison to what all of creation experiences (groaning). Sometimes that “groaning” is due to sin, but other times it is due to circumstances beyond our control or things difficult to control. We experience hardships such as financial problems, medical issues, natural disasters and even persecution, and while those can sometimes be extremely deflating or painful, they are not permanent. Childbirth isn’t permanent and oftentimes brings joy and happiness on the other side. Therefore, Paul doesn’t promise we won’t experience tough times but does promise that better times will come whether in our life on earth or in Heaven.

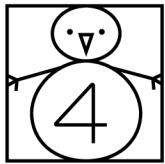
Believers are armored with the “firstfruits” of the Spirit that equip us to overcome our trials and tribulations. These are gifts from God to care for us and help us through our suffering. “Firstfruits” implies there are more to come as in the feast is coming when we are called to Heaven. This should give us hope that any suffering we experience on earth is temporary.

Any suffering we experience now may be allowed by God to make us tired of the world we live in and cause us to desire a redeemed life with Him. Our hope is in the power of God; that no matter our circumstances now, salvation will come when we believe because it was promised by God the Father, secured by Jesus Christ, and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. The last verse says that “we wait for it patiently.” Patiently doesn’t mean everything will be easy, but with hope we will persevere with God. This teaches us that the believer’s suffering in this life will be surpassed and pale in comparison to the life in Heaven and that we should use our hope in salvation to help us through difficult times in this life.



***Christmas Tree
with Presents***

Gray Putnam
3rd Grade



Angie Brame

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

When I first read v.16 - "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" - I struggled. My question is, "how do you not lose heart Paul?" I lose heart. There are really hard, painful, heart losing situations in life and Paul knew this because he had experienced pain and stress. "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. Is Paul making light of our struggles when he writes, "for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." At first glance it looks like he is trivializing our struggles.

As I read more of Paul's writings and get to know him, I see that he is honest about pain and struggles and he also has a focus on what is unseen and that we are created with eternity in our hearts. The question is, how to live in this temporary/finite world and have eternity in our hearts? "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." How do we daily, moment by moment, keep our focus on Jesus and this Life of Grace and eternity that God calls us to? "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Trying to focus on eternity can be huge and overwhelming. It helps me to go to God with all of my confusion, fears, doubts, and worries and ask Him to help me to know Him. This God of all creation, that created us in His image, gave His life for us when we could not carry our burdens or fix them, or make it better. He saves us, forgives us, and loves us with an everlasting love. When the world seems to scream at us, THAT truth is our eternal focus.



The Star Over Bethlehem

Sadie Asis

6th Grade



Brett Reynolds

Isaiah 25:7-9

Over 700 years before the coming of Christ, the prophet Isaiah describes in these verses how the Lord will defeat sin and death once and for all. His salvation will be for all peoples and nations, including us. The sheet or veil that covers all nations is sin, guilt, and shame and it separates us from God.

Jesus came and defeated sin when he died on the cross for the sins of the world, and then rose from the grave. He freely shares His victory over death and sin to everyone who believes in Him thru faith. Christ bore the burden of all our sins and promises us eternal life if we trust in Him. We will see Him swallow up death forever and wipe away all tears when He comes again! When that day comes, all things will be made new, and the Lord's people will experience all of the blessings He promised.

During this Advent season, as we focus our hearts and minds on Christ, remember why God sent his only Son. He came to take away the sins of the world, and to destroy that which separates us from God. Through Christ and His victory over sin and death, we can be saved and receive the gift of eternal life.

If we trust in Him, we can truly rejoice and be glad in His salvation!



A Christmas City Scape

Bryleigh Baldwin

3rd Grade



Karlie Page

Luke 1:26-38

Mary had found favor in the eyes of God, and he chose to do the impossible through this ordinary girl. The angel Gabriel told Mary she would carry God's son. Mary said yes to God. This baby would grow to save the world from sin. Mary accepted her place in God's plan and God's word came true.

You know, the same can be true of us. God gives us instructions too, and His are the most important for us to follow. We don't have to do special things on our own power in order to be used by God. We just have to believe. Say yes to God, and be willing to follow and serve him. With God anything is possible.

We are all called by God, no matter who we are. Just as Mary accepted God's plan with joy, it's up to us to accept whatever challenge God calls us to do with faith and joy.



Mary & Gabriel
Addy Sherbert
5th Grade



Justin Witherspoon

Isaiah 61:1-3

One of the most wonderful parts of the “Most Wonderful Time of the Year” is the way that homes are decorated in celebration. In our own home we have our blow-ups in the front yard which is usually bare except for some sticks or a ball or two that’s been left out by the kids. Garland and stockings are placed along the mantle that spends most of the year lonely and dusty. The nativity we set along the buffet which is usually covered in random papers from school and the dog’s pill bottles. And of course, there is the tree lit up with all the special ornaments we’ve acquired throughout the years sitting along the partition wall that rarely sees any use.

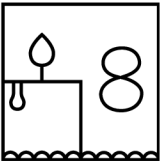
These verses from Isaiah are a message of hope for the Israelites during a moment of exile and despair. In verses 2 and 3 a Messiah is promised who will “comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion” and who will “bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes” the “oil of joy instead of mourning” and “a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” These two verses describe nothing short of a total transformation, akin to that of our own homes when we decorate for the Christmas season. A change to that of joy and celebration. Verse 1 says the Messiah will “proclaim freedom for the captives and release from the darkness for the prisoners” and will “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”. And this prophecy is fulfilled in Luke 4:18-20 when Jesus reads from a scroll of Isaiah and says, “today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” As much joy as it brings me to ride around and see the decorations, there’s no better joy than knowing that!



A Church at Christmas

Maggie Witherspoon

1st Grade



Dixon Turner

1 Corinthians 14:33

In this verse, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth to tell them their worship services should be orderly, not confusing. Disorder and confusion were disrupting services and Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to organize their worship according to God's will. We know that confusion is not the character of God. He is not chaotic or disorderly.

During the Advent season, we can get caught up in the holiday rush and lose sight of the peace of the season. Traveling, shopping for gifts, family relationships, and finishing the school semester can all contribute to a chaotic feeling around Christmas. We can start to feel out of control and out of touch with the true purpose of the season. This kind of chaos is directly opposite to the peace of God and the peace Jesus was sent to share with us. The word "peace" is found 429 times in the Bible, which shows its importance for us as Christians.

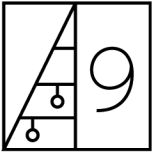
In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is called the Prince of Peace because he came to earth to dwell among us and bring divine peace to human hearts: peace with God, peace with others, and peace within ourselves. While we celebrate the Christmas season with family and friends, let's embrace the peace God sent to us through the birth of Jesus. Stop and remember Jesus' words to us in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."



Animals at the Manger

Malachi Edwards

2nd Grade



Rev. Scott Haynes

Isaiah 40:1-5

Today's passage from Isaiah is a message of hope. The general idea from all dictionary definitions is that hope is a feeling of expectation, a desire or wish for a certain thing to happen. A biblical definition of hope takes it one step further. Hope is an expectation with certainty that God will do what he has said. The difference in these two definitions is one word; God. Your entire walk as a believer is based on hope which goes beyond this life and extends throughout eternity. Everything you do as a Christian stems from hope. Why do you pray, witness, endure hardships, trials or persecution? Hope. Why did many, who have gone before us, sacrifice, give, serve, and even lose their lives for the message of the gospel? Hope.

If you remove the element of hope, then you will discover that your joy, enthusiasm, peace, focus, motivation and everything attached to your walk with God will be removed with it. That is why you cannot lose hope. John the Baptist cried out in the desert and God made straight the highway for the coming Messiah. Therefore, during this Advent season, let us renew our hope in the words from Isaiah. "And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."



A Family at Christmas

Luke Dixon

1st Grade



Kate Lemmon

Matthew 1:18-25

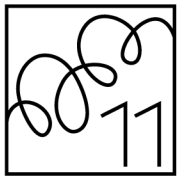
This passage is about how Jesus was born, but from the perspective of Joseph and how he accepted Jesus to be his son. If I were Joseph, I would feel surprised and a little shocked because an angel was speaking to me, and I wouldn't have expected to be told I was going to be the earthly father of God's son, someone we had waited for for over 1,000 years. This would have been startling news. If it had been me, I would want to share this news with my family and friends, because to receive big news like that makes me want to share it with the people I love. This story gives us hope at Christmas, because it's a story of looking forward to a birth that was a long time coming. It shows us that God stands by what he says and we can put faith in his promises to us.



Joseph and the Angel

Andrew Lemmon

1st Grade



Linda Lee

Psalm 25:1-10

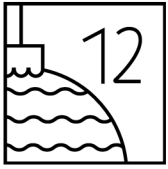
As the year draws to a close, our attention usually turns to Christmas and all it brings. Family togetherness, cheer, presents, songs, and tons of food. Hopefully, this time will have you thinking about Christ's birth and what that means for us. All of this is good and wonderful, but it ignores another aspect of a very real and underlying scenario among us. In this season there is so much busyness, even sorrow. There are so many things that can wear us down. Without realizing, we are quickly in the midst of the gotta-haves and the gotta-gets, the must-do's and the how-to do's. It could be a focus on one negative word in a sea of accolades, or the opposite. The lonely may feel lonelier and the depressed, even more so. Either way, we especially need to guard our hearts and draw close to the Lord like David did, as reflected in Psalm 25:1-10. Verses 1-3 will show you that to know the Lord means He will defend you. You are not alone or forgotten by Him. Verses 4-7 will remind you to reflect on the importance of trusting in our Lord, keeping faith in Him through all circumstances, and of His great love and mercy towards us. Finally, rejoice about His goodness as you read about it in verses 8-10. How marvelous it is to know that we belong to our good Father. He has not abandoned us to the iniquities and despair of this fallen world. He has instead given us a hope found nowhere else or in anything else.



The Church at Christmas

Claire Washburn

2nd Grade



Kaye Harris

Jeremiah 31:31 - 34

We've heard a lot about our mountain neighbors in recent months. Chimney Rock was particularly hard hit by Hurricane Helene. For me, this area is a special place where God showed me his grace and forgiveness many years ago.

In February 2003, I was a young teacher at R.S. Middle School teaching career explorations courses. During each six weeks, one day was devoted to student job shadowing. On this particular winter day, I visited all the students that were available and decided to just drive with no plan for where my journey would lead.

If you've ever driven from Rutherfordton to Chimney Rock via US 74-Alternate, you know that it's often a busy road with lots of winding curves. On this trip, though, it was like I was the only person on the road. Each time I would see another car, it would turn onto a side road, and I was alone again.

I knew that this was an opportunity for me to have some much-needed quiet time with God. I was very newly married and had recently moved from my eastern NC roots to a place where I didn't know the people or the area. I was also extremely unhappy with my career as I had taken a job that was a "place holder" until I could become the agriculture teacher I had studied to be.

Worst of all, I was unhappy because I was holding a grudge against myself. I had been living through a period in my life where I was trying to make an impression, but I didn't really know what kind of impression that was. I was lost. I had spent time being a person I didn't want to be, and I was unable to forgive myself.

I eventually pulled off the road near the river where I could see and hear the waters rushing over the rocks beside me. I looked up to the mountain and spent time talking to God asking him why I had such a hard time liking who I was or forgiving myself for who I had been. Ugly tears rolled down my cheeks and dried there where I could feel the salt sticking to my skin. I cried until I couldn't cry anymore.

After gathering myself, I pulled back onto the road deciding that it was time to go home. Still alone on the road, I turned onto Hwy 9, reflecting on the beauty of the area around me. I soon noticed a very large vehicle approaching quickly in my rearview mirror. I found it funny since I had been so isolated on the road. Suddenly, this very large, gold SUV was flying past me on a hilly two-lane road. As it pulled back into my lane in front of me, I was drawn to the license plate. It simply sated "HE4GIVES", and I knew in that instant that He truly does just that in such a mighty way.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 reminds us that God has established a new covenant with his people and that he will forgive us of all our sins. That day, I felt a rush of relief and knowing that if God can forgive me, who am I to hold a grudge against myself? He made me new again that very day in a beautiful community that I pray will also be made new and whole again.



The Star Over Bethlehem

Reagan Bradley

3rd Grade



Andy Oliver

Haggai 2:6-9

The people of Israel had a temple to build and they were not in a hurry to build it . Through the prophet Haggai, God urges his people to get on with it!

Perhaps some were bemoaning the fact that the prior temple, Solomon's temple, had been destroyed and that was as good as it gets. They would not be able to duplicate Solomon's masterpiece. God, through Haggai, tells the people it will be even better.

The fact is that the people had grown lazy and comfortable. They were a prosperous people under Darius the king and they simply had "bigger fish to fry". Building a temple wasn't on their agenda. Which is a way of saying ...worship was not a priority.

This brings about an important question for the follower of Christ at Christmas: Are we too busy to worship during the season? Are we comfortable with our usual yuletide routine? Is the worship of God in Christ, Emanuel, God with us, even on our radar or our busy agenda?

We all need to ask ourselves these questions during the hecticness of the season.

The message of advent is that God came to earth in the flesh in Jesus and some day he will return again, and He is worthy of worship . Prepare a place in your heart for him this Christmas.



An Advent Wreath

Tilly Jones

5th Grade



Jessica McSwain

Romans 15:4-13

As we read scripture, we often see narratives of struggle, perseverance, and faith. These stories have the ability to resonate deeply with our own life experiences. Just as the early Christians faced challenges, we too face trials in our lives. Through the stories we read, we find strength, encouragement, and hope.

In verse 4, two key elements are highlighted; endurance and encouragement. In the world we live in, it can be easy to lose sight of the hope we have. However, when we immerse ourselves in His word, we are reminded of his faithfulness. As we continue through the verses, we read that Christ came not only for the Jews but for all people, bringing unity and hope. We are called to extend grace and love to others, showing Christ's love in our actions and words.

As you lay down to rest tonight, take a moment to reflect on the scriptures you've read. Let the truths seep into your heart and remember that no matter the challenges and circumstances you face, God's word is a source of hope, guiding you toward his promises and peace.



Baby Jesus

Claire McSwain

Kindergarten



Nancy Ivey

1 Peter 1:8-9

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul around 60-63 AD. During this time, the Christians were being persecuted for refusing to worship the many gods of the Roman Empire. They were facing immense trials.

Peter had seen Jesus and knew him to be real. Perhaps it would be easier to believe in Jesus if we had seen him in the flesh. We've never seen a true picture of Him although many artists have attempted to depict Him. But even those who had seen Jesus face to face often had their doubts that He was truly the Son of God. When He appeared before Thomas after the resurrection, Thomas couldn't believe until he could put his hands in His wounds. When he finally saw him, he said, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28) Jesus responded by saying, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

My sister in law, Ann, has cancer that has recurred. She is a 69 year old who has always been a joyful Christian in all of her trials. She is strong and encouraging to everyone. Her faith is in the Lord, and she confesses this each time we talk. When she told the family of her condition, there were no tears. She said that God has a plan for her, and she follows his lead. She has the tallest mountain of faith of anyone I know. She is enduring treatments and has lost all of her hair, but her only disappointment is that she is sitting outside the church, in her car and listening to the service on the radio. She is my hero and the best example of 1 Peter 1:8-9.

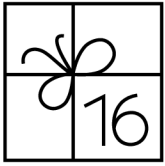
We all have trials in our lives and when they come, we can let our faith in God be our comfort and joy. We don't have to see Him to believe.



Christmas Tree with Presents

Izzy Sherbert

5th Grade



Karen Costner

Isaiah 12:2-6

Have you ever ordered something online only to be disappointed when it arrived? Perhaps it was smaller than expected, the quality of the materials wasn't as described, or it arrived broken. While our online shopping experiences may fall short at times, the gift of God's son never disappoints! He came to us perfect and without blemish, and his arrival brought inexpressible joy to all those who experienced his birth firsthand. Even though we can't physically see him, even though we didn't get the privilege of witnessing his birth, we are still filled with joy to know that God loved us so much that He sent his son to be the Savior we needed.

Aren't you glad He loves you? I am! He has loved me when I have made it impossible to love. But He still came to save me. Let's shout that so they can hear us in Jerusalem. Our Father is here for His children. Makes my heart want to rejoice in song! Rejoice with me!



A Christmas City Scape

Ella Washburn

4th Grade



Phil & Myra Talbert

Zephaniah 3:14-17

In this scripture, Zephaniah is describing a future day when the remnant of Israel is going to be delivered. It is a message of hope and deliverance to the faithful. The Lord will be with us and will refute our enemies. He not only delivers us but 'rejoices over us with singing.' He celebrates the faithful.

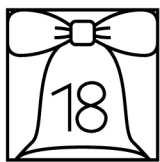
Today, we face many 'enemies' - political, economic, international, cultural, and natural. Let us strive to be like the faithful remnant who persevered under foreign rule. Though we feel the humnity of our situations, let us keep our perspective by measuring it against God's promises of deliverance, love, and celebration. He is our 'mighty warrior'! Let us embrace the anticipation of this season!



A Family at Christmas

Wesley Edwards

1st Grade



Rev. Tony Tench

Micah 5:2-4

As World War II was dawning over Europe, British author C.S. Lewis gave a lecture at Oxford University during which he said, “Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice.” He spoke this way to encourage his listeners to continue to pursue beauty even in the face of the coming war because, “Life has never been normal.”

Normal. A calm place, calm time, calm season. We just can’t wait to “get back to normal.” We try to get used to the “new normal.” We hope for “normal working hours.” We long to operate under “normal conditions” and find a way to engage in a “normal conversation.”

The Prophet Micah lived in a day when folks in the southern kingdom of Judah wished for some “normal” (8thC, BCE). The northern kingdom had already fallen. Micah declared that due to Israel’s disobedience to God, evidenced by the injustices of their leaders, judgement was soon to visit southward. Micah’s prophecies alternate between judgement in the short term to visions of hope for the long haul -- a day of messianic promise in which Jesus’ advent brings something better than “normal.”

A day that would dawn over Bethlehem (“house of bread”) as the bread of life was born...over Ephrathah (Bethlehem’s older name meaning “fruitful”) as the vine would come to life from which the fruit of discipleship would grow (v.2, John 6:48, 15:1).

A day of humility when from the smallest of clans, the lamb of God would come to take away the sins of the world through submission to death on a cross (v.2, Phil. 2:8).

A day when a woman would give birth to a son who would intentionally reach out to the ends of the earth to share the joy of life in God (v.3-4, Matt. 28:18-20).

A day when a new shepherd would be born in the town of shepherds who would live to be the good shepherd of our souls by the strength of the Lord (v. 4, John 10:11).

A day when peace comes to live in our hearts (v.5a, Luke 2:14).

Truly, “human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice.” Real life, with all its highs and low, removes any possibility for “normal” being a real thing. But something better than normal is on the way this Advent, viz, the son to be born will be our peace (v.5).

And the dawn of peace overshadows the need for normal all day long.



Animals at the Manger

Branch Harmon

Kindergarten



Brian Earley

2 Samuel 7:18-29

The Christmas season is a great time for making plans. Plans to meet with family and friends, plans for celebration, and plans for the next year. It is also a beautiful time to reflect on the past year's plans - did everything go as you thought? Did you accomplish what you wanted?

In 2 Samuel chapter 7 David had a good plan that came from an honest sense of reverence. Even Nathan the prophet was on board. But God had different priorities and wanted something much more from David. In verse 18 we see that David's response was that of humility and gratitude - "Who am I, Oh Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?".

Many times, we have plans that feel right to us, but God has something bigger in mind. He doesn't always explain it to us like he did with David through Nathan, but then again - He is God, that is His prerogative. We can learn from David's response to God's plan - a plan that ultimately led to the birth of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Seeing God's plan requires trust, and reflection. David understood that God is faithful and fulfills His promises. Sometimes it may even feel like it is impossible for God's plans to be fulfilled through us - we are broken, imperfect vessels. At those times we can lean on David's words from verse 21 - "Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it."

If you look closely, you may notice that it's all about God, and not about David (or you or me!). God chose David, but didn't need David to be perfect. In fact, we find out later that he was FAR from perfect, and God still used David's brokenness to fulfill His plans.



Christmas Worship

Preston Earley

3rd Grade



Heather Black

Titus 3:4-7

As the Christmas season approaches, we are often asked the question, “What do you want for Christmas?” So many times we struggle with what to buy for someone and the fear of them not liking what we buy them. Christmas has become so commercialized with so much emphasis put on buying “nice expensive gifts” that we feel immense pressure to purchase the “perfect” gift.

Thankfully, God’s method of “gift giving” is that He did not ask us what we wanted, but rather saw what we needed. His giving was motivated by His goodness and loving kindness for us. Christ’s gift of salvation gave us a new start. The birth of Jesus gave us all a new beginning where our past does not determine our present or our future. We are fortunate that God’s gift giving was not based upon our goodness or we would be gift-less.

I am so thankful for this new season of life with the birth of JESUS!



Christmas Tree with Presents

Reese Dixon

1st Grade



Piper Bryson

1 John 1:5-7

This passage in the Bible says that God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. I think that means that if we love him and say we want to follow him but we are sinning, we aren't practicing the truth. God loves us very much, but he does not like that we are acting as if he cannot see our sin.

We don't want to live in spiritual darkness because then we don't have fellowship with God. But, in verse 7, it says that if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other. He tells us that the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. That makes me happy that he can cleanse us of our sins and that we can go to heaven and live with him.



A Family at Christmas
Piper & Sydney Bryson
5th Grade



Tina Wesson

1 John 4:9-12

For 15 years, I worked in a local, very busy retail store full-time. These were up to 14-hour days, standing on your feet the whole time and having to be mentally on top of things for the entire shift. On top of the stress that goes along with making sure medications were leaving the pharmacy correctly, was the stress of dealing with people. Now, most of our customers in this store were phenomenal individuals who were patient and understanding when things were not always ready or covered under their insurance plans. These were the people we loved most to see come in! However, there were others who we weren't so excited to help and deal with. These people were HARD to love. Many days, I had to bite my tongue and take deep breaths. Don't you know that's probably what God looks down and does to us most days, too? I know he sure does with me! He loves me though, even on my worst days where I'm so hard to be loved. As a result of his unfailing love to us all, we should have unfailing love for others, which includes those we find hard to love.

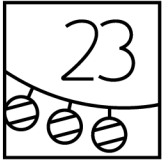
Lord, thank you for loving us in a way that is hard to comprehend and for sending your Son to wipe away all of our sins. Help us to remember each day that you have commanded us to love ALL people just as you love us.



Mary & Joseph

Josie Wesson

6th Grade



Eli Simmons

John 1:1-18

This Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Apostle John testifies of him in John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” What better message to hear as we remember how our Lord came into this world. The good news of a merciful God who long ago chose to leave his heavenly home and come to earth in his mission of redemption for his fallen creation.

In one of his many great Christmas sermons, the late Billy Graham once told the story of a son who lived with his mother while his father was overseas during WWII. He said: “This mother and son had a framed picture of the father in a room in their house. Everyday, the son would go into this room and admire the picture of his father on the wall. So much so, that his mother began to get worried. One day, his mother opened the door and finds her son staring so intently at the picture frame. She asks her son, “What’s the matter?” The son replied, “I just wish dad would hop down from the picture frame so he could be here with us right now’.” Billy Graham went on to say, “This is exactly what took place on that first Christmas. God the Father stepped down from the picture frame and entered into our lives through his physical incarnation, Jesus Christ.”

He was not welcomed into this world with a parade and ceremony, but rather with no place to lay his head. He wasn’t born into a palace of gold, but rather laid in a stable. The Almighty Messiah, whose coming had been foretold long ago, found himself that night not entering into a life of luxury, but rather a life of humility and servitude.

This shows God's love for you and me. Christ loved us enough to leave behind his title of 'The King of kings and Lord of lords' and took on the burden that had plagued mankind: sin. At the end of his short life, he would endure the wrath of God in our place on the cross, paying the penalty for our sin once and for all. This is the amazing gift He offers us this Christmas: to be reconciled back to him and enjoy relationship with him forevermore.

From the cradle to the cross, Jesus Christ's mission of redemption rings out the same old song from John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."



The Star Over Bethlehem

Hayes McSwain

3rd Grade



Mollie Hayes

Luke 2:1 - 20

Why do you think the shepherds were the first to know about baby Jesus?

Maybe because the shepherds were humble - nobody cared about them.

Jesus was like that, too. At first he seemed just like any other baby in the world - just a baby. But then the angels told the shepherds to tell everyone that the baby was the greatest treasure of the world.

Even if you are poor or not the best, the good news is still for you just like everyone else!

You are still special to God!



Angels and Shepherds

Olsen Hayes
Kindergarten



Rev. Aaron Hinton

Isaiah 9:2-7

Do you ever need a reminder? We write in our planners, put things in our phone, and add details to sticky notes so we won't forget all the upcoming events and things we need to be ready for...

The book of Isaiah reminds the people of God that there is hope. God reminds Israel through Isaiah that He is still God, He is still in control, and He still has a plan. God uses Isaiah to send hope that a Savior is coming, Immanuel—God with us.

We have spent the month of December preparing our hearts and minds to celebrate the birth of Jesus. But I wonder, which reminder of hope do you need this Christmas? Is it that Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor? How about that He is still the Prince of Peace? Maybe, you just need to be reminded that there is an Everlasting Father who loves you so much, He sent His Son, a child, to be born for us. That the world would be on His strong shoulders. That a little baby would promote justice and righteousness—a way for us to be in a right relationship with a Mighty God.

Whatever we need to be reminded of this Christmas, Jesus covers it all. In the midst of the presents, decorations, and family get-togethers, let's take time to remember.

Come, O Come Immanuel. Merry Christmas, Poplar Springs.



Manger Scene

Rheece Hinton

3rd Grade

You are always welcome at Poplar Springs!

Sunday School: 9:45am

Sunday Worship: 11am

Wednesday Night Activities: 5:30pm



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