

December 1 - Son of God

Prophecy

Psalm 2:7

Fulfilled

John 1:14; 3:16

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

In a time when it appears most people receive the latest news instantly over the Internet or continuous television news networks, the days of the printed newspaper seem to be nearing an end in many communities. But many years ago in Chicago, as I walked down a snowy winter's street, and saw the shivering paper boy selling the Tribune, or the Daily News, from his news stand where he might be fortunate enough to have an electric space heater, or more likely a little kerosene heater to keep from freezing, I could hear him cry: "Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Extra!"

You see, an "Extra" was a special edition to the newspaper that was only printed and released when something truly **extra**ordinary occurred that would be of great interest to a large number of people. As a matter of fact, that is precisely where the word "extra" comes from: the word "extraordinary."

In today's reading from Psalm 2:7, the prophet writes, "I will proclaim the decree of the Lord!" He is saying, "Hear ye! Hear ye!" or "Extra! Extra!" And then he proceeds to tell us the good news, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

And then Jesus Himself proclaimed: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! God the Father loves all of you SO much, that He sent Me, His Son, to take unto myself YOUR sin, so that all of you shall live in heaven with God forever!

Wow! What an “Extra!” As we begin this Advent season, a time of preparation of our houses with decorations, our pantries with all the special Christmas treats and myriad of gifts, in the midst of all this bustle, **let us not forget the true meaning of all this celebration and rejoicing.** Let us prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of the birth of that baby in Bethlehem. May this truly be a most forgiving time; a most generous time. His love is reaching all the way to where you are. Let us together share that love with everyone as we proclaim with the prophet:

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Jesus is coming!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, Thank You for this wonderful season of Advent as we celebrate the Extra-ordinary gift of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.*



December 2- Seed of a Woman

Prophecy

Genesis 3:15

Fulfilled

Galatians 4:4

When God made Adam and Eve, they were perfect; and He intended for them to live forever with Him. However, once they ate of the forbidden fruit, sin became a part of their lives, and they were no longer perfect. God loved them so much that He put a plan of salvation into action. With sin comes certain death, so Holy God promised a Savior. Someone who would take the weight of the world's sin upon Himself, so we wouldn't have to.

In Galatians 4:4, it speaks of the promise of the Savior. God sent His own Son, born of a woman, to live on this earth. Jesus, our Savior, died on a cross, taking on all of our sin, only to rise in triumph. His victory is our victory. We, who believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior and made it possible to be with God, experience God's richest blessings and eternal life in heaven.

Prayer: *Dear Creator God, Thank You for giving Your Son, Jesus, born of Mary, to be our Savior. Help us to live our lives in thankfulness for Your gift of salvation. Amen.*



December 3- Savior

Prophecy

Isaiah 42:5-7

Fulfilled

Matthew 1:21

In Isaiah 42:5-7, God promised to send a servant to help Him save His people. He would bring them into light and free them from their sins. Who would this person be? What if God chose you? Would you be able to serve Him?

God chose. He sacrificed His only Son to be our Savior. This was His promise kept. In Matthew 1:21, it speaks of the birth of Jesus, and the name He is given means “the Lord saves.”

How exciting it is to know that we are chosen to be saved!

Prayer: *Thank You, God, for the Savior that came to save us all, Jesus Christ. Amen.*



December 4 - Born of a Virgin

Prophecy

Isaiah 7:14

Fulfilled

Matthew 1:18-25

Has anyone ever made a promise to you? Has anyone ever made a promise to you and then did not keep it? I think that has happened to all of us at least once. It is disappointing when a promise is broken. God, our Father, is the only one who makes promises and keeps them 100 percent of the time. Did you know that? Throughout the bible there are countless promises that God has made.

An even more amazing thing is that God's promises stand the test of time. Our two Bible readings for today are a perfect example. Long before Jesus was born, God made a promise through the prophet Isaiah. He promised that a virgin would give birth to a son and He would be called Immanuel, "God with us." Lo and behold, almost word for word, that promise came true as read in Matthew 1:18-25. The virgin, Mary, gave birth to a son, and He was called Immanuel.

How awesome to know that God keeps all of His promises all the time!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, You keep all Your promises. Help us to learn more about Your promises by studying Your Word. Thank You, that we can count on You and Your promises all the time. Amen.*



December 5 - Born in Bethlehem

Prophecy

Micah 5:2

Fulfilled

Luke 2:4-7

What is the True Meaning of Christmas?

The day after Thanksgiving is called Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year. Decorations are put up around the house. We spend time with family and friends to eat holiday treats and exchange gifts. We attend Christmas gatherings and holiday events. After the Christmas season, these decorations are put away and the house seems empty. Do you sometimes feel empty? Is this the true meaning of Christmas?

It is so easy to be wrapped up during the Christmas season and take our focus off of Jesus. We can enjoy shopping, decorating, eating, and exchanging gifts, but this should not be the spotlight of Christmas. Our main focus during Christmas should be on Jesus' birth. Attending Advent and special holiday services is a great reminder of the true meaning of Christmas.

What a special event for Joseph and Mary to be a part of God's plan. The Old Testament prophecy in Micah Chapter 5 reveals that Bethlehem is promised as a ruler of Israel. The New Testament in Matthew 1:18 states, *"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His Mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit."* We thank God for sending His Son into this sinful world. His death on the cross has saved us and has given us eternal life. God provides us with all our needs, and we thank Him for His many blessings. Each day we should always keep God in the center of our lives.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Help us to remember that Your son, Jesus, is the reason we celebrate this season. Amen.*



December 6 – The Way Prepared

Prophecy

Isaiah 40:3-5

Fulfilled

Matthew 3:1-3

Ready for the King to Come

The prophecy from Isaiah is one of many Old Testament promises that God would someday send a Savior to save the world from sin. It foretells the mission of John the Baptizer – to make us “ready” for the Savior. But what is it that makes us “ready”?

In Old Testament times, when a king planned a visit to a portion of His kingdom, the citizens made the area “ready” to receive their king by cleaning up the surroundings, removing trash from the streets, filling in potholes and smoothing out the roadway to make the king’s visit as pleasant and glorious as possible.

In Isaiah’s prophecy, the final “getting ready” for the LORD to come would be done on a grand scale – making the hills and mountains low, filling in valleys and straightening out the roadway. We anticipate that fulfillment at the final judgment day.

In the meantime, we ready ourselves to celebrate the birth of the coming King by cleaning up the surroundings of our lives – those secret sins that clutter our vision and distract us from our faithfulness to the coming Savior. We repair the potholes – those things we have done that hurt others – and we smooth out the roadways – those selfish paths our lives sometimes take. We get “ready”, not because we have to, but because we want to honor our King.

Are you ready for the coming of the King?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, as we make room in our hearts for You this Advent season, help us to remember that our lives are to honor our King. Amen.*



December 7 – Teacher

Prophecy

Psalm 78:2-4

Fulfilled

Matthew 13:34-35

People love puzzles . . . be it riddles, mazes, crosswords or Sudoku! And everyone knows that good puzzles aren't for the faint of heart, the lazy, or the indifferent. They take work... and frankly, sometimes puzzles can drive you crazy! But isn't that what makes solving them all the more rewarding?

Jesus often spoke in parables, which are in their own way puzzles. Biblical parables are not easy to understand, because they challenge the listener to step into the thought world of Jesus and see things from His perspective. Reading and understanding parables require a faithful, open heart and downright effort... and that's what makes them so enjoyable.

The parables offer people much more than just a challenge. Through them our Lord heals and strengthens our ears and eyes, so that we might hear and see Him as He truly is. Are you willing to devote a little of your time this season to solving a parable puzzle?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for the teachings of our Savior, Jesus, as we use those words as guidance to try to solve the many “puzzles” of our lives. Amen.*



December 8 – Deliverer & Healer

Prophecy

Isaiah 61:1-3

Fulfilled

Luke 4:16-21

Stress. Worry. Trouble. Do those three words describe aspects of your family's life? Do you ever feel like everyone in your family is so busy, moving so quickly (often in multiple directions) that you find it hard to spend time together? Do your daily prayers tend to focus more on your needs for the moment, rather than in thanks for your blessings?

Today as you read the passages listed on your proclamation ornament, find comfort in the truth of their message. As a family, take time to make a list of the uplifting reasons that God sent Jesus to us as listed in the prophecy reading. How many can you find?

Prayer: *Father in Heaven, Thank You for the fulfillment of Your promise that is our Savior, Jesus Christ, the good news to the world. Amen.*



December 9 – Rejected by Men

Prophecy

Isaiah 53:3

Fulfilled

John 1:11

Despised. Rejected. Familiar with suffering. These words describe Jesus' life on Earth. How strange for the Son of God to come like this! Even more, Jesus was then arrested, tried, nailed to a cross and executed.

But that's not the end of the story. The "Rest of the Story" is that Christ rose from the dead! He ascended into the glory that was His. And, in the words of the Nicene Creed, "He shall come again with glory." In the Old Testament, Isaiah foresees how Christ's strength in His saving actions impacts our own weakness. On the cross, He carried not only our transgressions and our iniquities, but also "our infirmities" and "our sorrows." We too will live in glory with Christ as we cling to the cross, trusting that Christ has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

As we live our lives today, facing rejection and suffering of our own, in this world filled with sin and temptation, remember the promise that we have in the complete Gospel story. This great message is ours to share with our children and other families during this season of Advent!

Prayer: *Thank You, dear Lord, for sending Your son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sins so that we may be with Him in glory for eternity. Amen.*



December 10 – Triumphal Entry

Prophecy

Zechariah 9:9

Fulfilled

Matthew 21:1-11

Today's reading clearly shows the Old Testament prophecy of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and the New Testament fulfillment. Isn't it amazing to think about God's power and sovereignty? He created the world; He created YOU; He's omniscient (all knowing); He's omnipresent (present everywhere all the time); and He has a plan for everything and everyone.

As you add ornaments to your family proclamation tree this month and read your devotions as a family, take time to wonder in God's power, have faith in His plans, and share the wonderful promises of His word with those you meet this holiday season.

Prayer: *Dear God, Thank You for the plans You have made for this world and for us as we live in it. We are glad You are always here with us, all the time. Amen.*



December 11 – Betrayed

Prophecy

Zechariah 11:12-13

Fulfilled

Mathew 26:14-16,

30 Pieces of Silver

Whenever I read biblical prophecy and fulfillment, a certain song by Twila Paris pops into my mind named, “God is in Control.” If you’ve never heard the song, look it up online and listen to it when you get the chance!

Today’s prophecy read in Zechariah and the fulfillment of that prophecy as read in Matthew speaks of the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot. Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver, the given price of a slave (Exodus 21:32), by the chief priests to turn Jesus over to them. Imagine that: The Son of God betrayed for the price of a slave!

However, as reminded by Miss Paris’ song, God was (and is) in control. It is God who gave Zechariah that prophecy over 500 years before it was fulfilled. It is God who saw that prophecy into fulfillment, as recorded in Matthew. It is God who took one of the darkest hours in history and turned it into the greatest blessing of all time. And it is God who has promised to always be with us no matter what life may throw at us. God is in control!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to always remember that You are the one who is in control. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*



December 12 – The Disciples Scattered

Prophecy

Zechariah 13:7

Fulfilled

Matthew 26:31, 55-56

Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him. Even though Peter assured Jesus he would not, he would and did! Not once, but three times. It seems as if Jesus was hurting. Here, His friends, who He had taught and led for so long, were all “scattering.” For what reason? He was still their teacher and friend. What had changed? How downtrodden He must have felt. But Jesus knew He had to fulfill His purpose.

How many times have we denied Jesus? We’ve all had times when we had the opportunity to tell someone about Him... times we could have offered prayer... invited someone to church... turned down an opportunity for a small group Bible study to become closer to Him...

Prayer: *Dear God, Help us to tell Your story to those who do not know You. Sometimes we are afraid and hesitate to teach others about You. We pray to You for strength and to help us say the right words at the right time to those who need to hear them. We do not want to deny You, but to proclaim Your love to those who do not believe. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



December 13 – Accused by False Witnesses

Prophecy

Psalm 35:11

Fulfilled

Mark 14:57-58

In the Old Testament verse, Psalm 35:11, God is asking us to “rise up,” to evangelize and tell any who will listen of the awesome power of God. If we are not knowledgeable enough to properly evangelize to others, then it is our obligation to learn what is necessary and to then spread God’s word. It is not enough to just have our own faith and secure our place for eternal life with God in heaven. We are to use the Holy Spirit to tell others, so that the kingdom of God on Earth and in heaven will be enlarged. This includes teaching our children. Bringing our children to faith and securing their place in heaven is the greatest gift we can provide them. Be a fierce witness to your children and others of the gift you have already received.

In the New Testament verses, those who would try to trick or deceive Jesus Christ couldn’t understand how the temple could be built without hands in three days. They didn’t understand that Jesus was not talking about a temple on Earth. Instead, after rising from the dead, the kingdom of heaven would be secured; a heavenly temple, not an earthly one.

Jesus, while on Earth, was continuously being accused by “false witnesses” or those who would try to trick Him. They didn’t realize, or refused to realize, that they were not just dealing with a prophet, but with our Lord and Savior himself, the one True God.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, Please help us to be knowledgeable, faithful witnesses of Your gift of salvation. Amen.*



December 14 – The Silent Lamb

Prophecy

Isaiah 53:7

Fulfilled

Matthew 27:12-14

Jesus knew He did not need to defend Himself in front of the chief priests and elders. God, His Father, knew He was innocent and that was all that mattered.

Jesus knew what He had done and what He needed to do to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. Defending himself from them was not part of the plan. His silence said more than anything He could have said. Those who followed Him knew who He was and what He was here for.

We all need to remember that Jesus was born and lived to fulfill His Father's plan. Everything that happened from that Christmas Day until Good Friday, so many years later, was all in His plan. And, He did it all for us. One of the reasons we attend church is to be reminded of this.

Prayer: *Dear God, Please help us remember that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to fulfill Your plan for us. We praise and thank You for Your Plan that guarantees us eternal life. In Your name we pray. Amen.*



December 15 – Reviled and Mocked

Prophecy

Psalm 22:6-7

Fulfilled

Matthew 27:39-44

According to Matthew's accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, the two thieves who were crucified on either side of Jesus mocked Him. However, after almost three hours of hanging on a cross, one of the thieves had a change of heart. Perhaps he was moved to repentance by witnessing Jesus' prayer for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him, and that he did not return the insults of the many who mocked Him. Jesus loved those who hated Him. The one thief realized that Jesus was an extraordinary person, obviously innocent and holy, and came to believe that He really was the Messiah. He rebuked the other thief for mocking Jesus, saying, "Don't you fear God even when you are dying? We deserve to die for our evil deeds, but this man hasn't done anything wrong" (Luke 23:40-41). Then, without shame, he asked the Lord, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus promised him even more than he asked for, saying that they would be together in paradise that very day (see Luke 23:43).

Is it possible for a person who has led a sinful life to be saved right before he dies and go to heaven? Yes, and the thief on the cross is proof. Because salvation is a gift of God's grace, people can be completely forgiven at any time in their lives, even with their last breath. God's mercy is amazing.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we thank You that Your salvation is for us all, no matter the depth of our sins. Help us to share this message of hope with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



December 16 – Lots Cast for His Garments

Prophecy

Psalm 22:18

Fulfilled

John 19:23-24

If we don't know much about the Bible, it is easy to think that the Old Testament is separate from the New Testament. If we do not study the Bible, it is difficult to see that it is a complete book; that the Old Testament points to the New Testament and that the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and points us back to it. The account of the men casting lots for Jesus' garments is a perfect example of this.

In the Old Testament book of Psalms, it points us to an event that would not happen until it actually does occur in the New Testament, as recorded by John. Why do you think the Bible is written that way? It could be that our God wants us to know that He is timeless, unchanging, and master over His creation. His will is accomplished always and in His timing. The verses you have been reading are perfect examples of God's master plan becoming reality. Will you pray to know God's will and His plan for you? When you learn more about Him through His Word, you will learn more about His plan for you.

Prayer: *O God Almighty, give us the desire to learn more about You, through the Bible, that we may know Your plan for us. Amen.*



December 17 – Not a Bone Broken

Prophecy

Psalm 34:20

Fulfilled

John 19:31-37

No Broken Bones

This Advent season we celebrate the coming of Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Approximately 1500 years before Jesus was born, the Children of Israel were in slavery in Egypt. God said in Exodus 12:12-14: *“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord.”*

Each Israelite household was to select a lamb, one year old and without blemish, kill it, eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs and “not leave any of it till morning **nor break any of its bones.**” Numbers 9:12

For over 1500 years each faithful Jewish household killed a lamb and celebrated the Lord passing over their house, sparing them from destruction by the Lord and freeing the faithful from slavery in Egypt. Imagine how many lambs were killed over 1500 years and no bones were broken. Imagine how much blood was shed each year in celebration of being “passed over” and set free from slavery.

Five hundred years after being set free from slavery in Egypt

and 1000 years before Jesus was born, God spoke through King David in Psalm 34:19-20, “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; **He protects all His bones, not one of them will be broken.**” Biblical scholars say that this verse points us to the coming of Jesus.

One thousand years after the prophecy in Psalms and approximately 50 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Apostle John writes the words in our prophecy fulfilled (John 19:31-37). Take a special look at the words in verse 33: ***“But when they came to Jesus and found that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”***

Notice the similarities between the sacrificial lambs of the Passover, instituted by God at the time of Moses and approximately 1500 years later at the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus is the “Lamb of God” who frees us from the slavery of sin and gives us eternal life through the shedding of His blood. Notice God’s command **not to break the bones of the Passover lambs and God’s prophecy in Psalms that none of Jesus’ bones would be broken.**

Two thousand years after Jesus we celebrate our “being passed over” when we partake in Holy Communion. We receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Jesus said to “do this in remembrance of me.” Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is the fulfillment of the Passover instituted by God through Moses 3500 years ago.

Prayer: *Father, we thank You for providing the Children of Israel with freedom from death and slavery in Egypt by the blood of lambs and providing all of us with a vision of the cross to come. Father, we thank You for the “Lamb of God” whose blood sets us free from slavery to sin and provides us with the gift of eternal life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*



December 18 – Pierced for Our Transgressions

Prophecy

Isaiah 53:5

Fulfilled

Luke 23:33

John 19:34

Every year we sing carols and send Christmas cards that talk about peace, but where does true peace come from? Are we talking about peace among nations, among religions, or something more?

True peace is not found in the Christmas story but further ahead in the Easter story. When sin entered the world, we were immediately placed in conflict with our sinless Maker. We were no longer at peace with our Lord.

In today's Gospel verses we are told that the soldiers pierced Jesus' side. They did this to prove to themselves, and all of us, that Jesus did die on that cross. Isaiah foretold this very action, the piercing of our Savior. Isaiah also told us why. Look carefully at verse 5. Jesus was pierced for *our* sins. His punishment washed away our sins and brought us back into **peace** with the Lord.

Jesus Christ came to earth to restore peace, not peace among the people, as the Jewish people had hoped, but *for* the people. His peace is greater.

As you share greetings of peace this Advent season, consider the kind of peace you wish for those around you and where that peace can be found.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we thank You for the immeasurable gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We are humbled and grateful for the blood that was shed for our sins, and we rejoice in the peace that was brought to us all. Help us to find ways to share our joy and peace this Christmas season. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



December 19 – Buried with the Rich

Prophecy

Isaiah 53:9

Fulfilled

Matthew 27:57-60

Christmas is all about the infant Jesus – the sweet, soft, cuddly baby in Mary’s arms. We envision the gentle lullabies of His mother, the wonder-struck worship of the shepherds, and the excited praise of the angels. In the midst of such life, such joy, such delight, thoughts of death and burial seem grossly out of place. But if we do not connect, the Baby Jesus with the risen Christ, then our Christmas celebration is just “stuff,” and this Baby is like any other infant on earth.

The Bible verses above remind us that Jesus died and was buried. End of story? No way! Those stones, that well-constructed tomb of a rich man could not hold Jesus. Neither will our grave hold us. That’s the real joy of Christmas. We know the rest of the Baby’s story, and that makes all the difference!

Prayer: *Father in Heaven, Thank You for the joy that we have in knowing that as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we can also look to His death and resurrection and what it has done for us. What joy we have in knowing that we will one day be with You in Heaven! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



December 20 – He Arose!

Prophecy

Psalm 16:9-10

Fulfilled

Matthew 28:2-7

Our Refuge in Life and Death!

Does it sound strange to you to be talking about Christ's resurrection during Advent? After all, isn't that what Lent and Easter are all about? When King David wrote Psalm 16, he began it with a prayer, "Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge." David clearly recognized that his life was not his own. His life and calling to be king was a blessed gift granted by God to be utilized in faithful service to Him and others. David rejoiced in life, knowing that God protected him numerous times from death. Besides the many enemies David faced and fought, including the Philistine giant, Goliath, he was delivered from his closest enemies whom he once trusted and loved. When King Saul issued jealous threats, he hunted David trying to kill him just as his son, Absalom, tried to do in his coup attempt to take his father's throne. But David was protected! Thus David could exult, "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance!" Yet, even when David faced the last and greatest enemy, death itself, David knew even then that he could rest secure, "because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay!" Jesus' resurrection on Easter secured our victory over sin and death!

Are you resting securely today or are you frazzled by anxiety, trapped by fear, or choked in the face of sickness or death in your own life or that of a friend? God's Word says to you in the midst of Advent anxiety, "The boundary lines have fallen for YOU in pleasant places, surely I have a delightful inheritance...my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices... because God will not abandon me to the grave!" You may not always recognize the boundary lines in your life, except through hindsight, but God provides safe boundaries and pleasant places because your life is hidden in His gracious hands. Just as David firmly believed that Jesus, the Messiah, would come to die and raise Him and all believers giving them eternal life, so may you grasp with that same faith God's unswerving love for you! He watches over all of your life and even your death. Because He raised His own Son from the dead, you and I as His baptized children, are certain of that same wonderful fate, eternal life in heaven!



December 21 – The Righteous One

Prophecy

Jeremiah 23:5-6

Fulfilled

2 Corinthians 5:21

Before you actually read this devotion, it might help to read the Bible passages, or at least open your Bible so you can refer to them. “The Lord our Righteousness” What does that mean? To be righteous means to be upright, moral, good, honest, fair, and right. So, righteousness means to have the qualities of being righteous. In Jeremiah 23:6, “the name by which He will be called: The Lord our Righteousness” is written. Jesus is truly the Lord our Righteousness. He is upright, moral, good, honest, fair, and right. Jesus is perfect.

Just like in 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul wrote, “God made Him who had no sin.” Beyond Jesus’ perfection, He was willing to be sin for us, because of His great love for us. Because Jesus was willing to be our sin, He gave those who believe in Him the blessing of becoming “the righteousness of God.” Let us live out that blessing. Let us live with righteousness.

Prayer: *O Lord our Righteousness, thank You for becoming our sin, even in Your perfectness. Help us to learn more about You, so that we may live out the blessing of Your righteousness. Amen.*



December 22 – He Ascended!

Prophecy

Psalm 68:18

Fulfilled

Mark 16:19

Think of some short 2-word phrases that bring joy and make people feel good. How about: Good game! You're hired. We won! That's great! It's Friday. Thank you.

We all like to hear those words. Positive comments make us happy. It is encouraging to know others notice and care, isn't it? Let's add one more encouraging phrase to the list. **He ascended.** What?? How is this special?

The Bible tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven. Every year, we celebrate His Christmas birth and His Easter victory. But that's not the end of His-story, because after all His days on this earth, **He ascended** to His home in heaven. It is proof that God's plan to rescue us was complete! **He ascended** is the real deal. Someday, we will also ascend to live with Him forever. **He ascended** is God's promise and gift of eternal love for us. Merry Christmas!

Prayer: *Dear God, thank You for strengthening our faith as we believe Your promise that we will also ascend someday as **He ascended.***



Sing

(from "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High")
You came from heaven to earth to show the way,
From the earth to the cross my debt to pay,
From the cross to the grave,
From the grave to the sky,
Lord, I lift Your name on high!

December 23 – The Cornerstone

Prophecy

Psalm 118:21-23

Fulfilled

Acts 4:11-12

Have you ever built a house? I mean either by yourself or as part of a crew? If you have, then you know how important it is that the foundation is dug deep enough, wide enough, and that it must happen first. The rest of the house is built upon this foundation.

Now, have you ever seen a house built like the ones during New Testament times? They also needed a foundation. However, they had very different equipment and tools. The foundation was built one stone at a time. The first and most important stone was called the cornerstone (capstone). The rest of the building was based upon the proper placement of this stone.

Based upon this ancient building plan, the cornerstone is often referred to as a symbol of the foundation for many things – character, faith, liberty, or other excellences.

As we prepare for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, we need to know what our foundation is and the cornerstone of that foundation. Our cornerstone is not a what; rather, it is who – the baby Jesus. Jesus is the savior promised to Adam and Eve. He was born as a baby on Christmas Day! This birth was announced to the shepherds in the fields by the angels. This Baby was sought by the Wise Men. This Baby grew up and taught church leaders in the synagogue. This Baby ultimately was rejected by the Jewish leaders and crucified on a cross.

But do you know the greatest part? This Baby, This Jesus, did it all out of love for each and every one of us. He lived His life knowing how it was going to end – and then begin again. You see, He didn't stay dead – He rose from the dead – all so that we could have forgiveness of sins – and receive the free gift of eternal life, a fantastic eternal life in heaven.

So this Christmas season, build the foundation of your faith by starting with your cornerstone – the Baby Jesus – the Savior of the World!! Merry Christmas!!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank You for the gift of Your son, Jesus, and for the salvation He brought to us. Help us to remember to make Him the cornerstone of our lives so that we will steadily walk in faith supported by the foundation of Your Word. Amen*

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December 24 – He Is Coming Again!

Prophecy

Isaiah 9:7

Fulfilled

Rev. 19:11-16

The term “advent” means “to come.” During the season of Advent we ready ourselves for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the initial thing that comes to mind in our Advent preparations is the first coming of Jesus at Christmas. That certainly is part of the Advent observance, but even more than getting ready for Christmas, Advent should draw our attention to the second coming of Jesus. That is, when He will return to this earth, not as a baby born in Bethlehem, but as Judge and King who reigns from heaven.

In the reading of Revelation, the disciple John saw a vision of a white horse whose rider is called “Faithful and True.” There is no question that this is a picture of Jesus Himself coming to judge sin and unbelief. Clearly this is a frightening picture for those who are the Lord’s enemies. Of course, due to sin, we all are His enemies. However, since Jesus shed His blood to save sinners, we who place our faith in Him are spared His coming wrath and judgment. Notice how the Rider on the white horse is wearing a robe that is dipped in blood. That, of course, reminds us that Jesus shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. And because our Savior did that for us, you also notice that those who follow Him are “dressed in linen, white and clean.” The reason there is no blood on those who follow Him is because He did it all when it comes to saving us!



December 25 – Jesus

Today's Scripture

Luke 1:26-35; 2:1-20; Matthew 2:1-12

“And you shall call His name Jesus.”

Luke 1:26

Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus! But who exactly is this “Jesus”? What was the purpose of His coming into our world? For some, Jesus is an important figure of Christmas that rates right up there with things like presents under the tree or cookies and eggnog around a warm, crackling fire. Others might think of Him with a bit more importance. They may say He grew up to be a great teacher of morals and an example of love for others. Still others may look at Him with a more historical perspective and explain how He is an ancestor of the great King David, and the son of a young maiden named Mary who grew up in the Galilean town of Nazareth and was betrothed (that is, engaged) to a carpenter named Joseph.

Certainly all the various understandings of who this “Jesus” is have some merit to them, but at the same time, they fall way short of what Christmas Day is all about. Out of His love for us, God the Father made it so unmistakably clear as to who Jesus is and why He came that He revealed it for us in the very name that was given to this Holy Child born in Bethlehem. In Matthew 1:21, it says: “you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” The name Jesus literally means, “The Lord saves.” Today, we celebrate the greatest gift of all gifts – the gift of forgiveness and salvation that is ours through Jesus!

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Merry Christmas
from St. Peter's Lutheran Church!