



FILLED WITH EXPECTATION

**A Daily Advent Devotional based on
Scripture from The Daily Revised
Common Lectionary Year C**



December 1, 2024 The Candle of Hope

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 64:1-9

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people."

Devotional Reflection:

The cry of Isaiah echoes a deep longing for God's presence in a broken and chaotic

world. The prophet's plea for God to "tear open the heavens" reminds us of how often we, too, desire God to intervene decisively in our lives. As we enter Advent, a season marked by expectation, we remember that God has already come among us in ways we did not expect—through the birth of Jesus, a helpless child born to an ordinary family.

Isaiah's words remind us of our need for repentance and renewal, but they do so with the hope that God, the potter, lovingly shapes us, the clay. God's work in our lives is not about punishment but transformation. Advent calls us to prepare our hearts and trust in the inclusive and outlandish love of a God who works in unexpected ways. Even when the world feels overwhelming, God is at work, shaping us for justice, kindness, and humility.

In this season of waiting, let us live with hope, knowing that God's promised kingdom is breaking through. We are God's people, called to reflect God's love and grace in a hurting world.

Prayer:

Holy God, you are the potter, and we are the clay. Shape us into vessels of hope and peace. In the midst of our brokenness, remind us of your mercy and love that never fail. Help us to live with expectation, trusting that you are at work in our lives and in the world, bringing about your kingdom of justice and grace. Amen.

December 2, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. ... But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Devotional Reflection:

The psalmist's cry for restoration resonates deeply in a world that often feels fractured and weary. "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved" is a prayer that we might return to wholeness, not through our own efforts but by God's transformative grace.

Advent invites us to remember that restoration is God's work, not ours. Even as we wait for the fullness of God's kingdom, we can trust that God hears our cries. The Shepherd of Israel is not distant but walks with us, gathering us like a flock. God's shining face represents God's presence, love, and care—a promise that even in the hardest days, we are not alone.

Let this season be a time of trusting in God's presence, even when the way forward seems unclear. God's light shines in the darkness, offering hope and peace. May we live with expectation, confident that God is restoring all things.

Prayer:

Shepherd of Israel, gather us in your loving arms. Shine your light upon us and restore us to wholeness. In our waiting, give us courage and hope to face each day, trusting that your kingdom is near. May our lives reflect your love and grace, drawing others to your light. Amen.

December 3, 2024**Scripture (NRSVUE):**

Mark 13:24-37

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the

doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Devotional Reflection:

This passage from Mark can feel unsettling with its imagery of cosmic upheaval and the call to stay awake. Yet it is ultimately a message of hope. Jesus speaks of the Son of Man coming in power and glory, a promise that God's justice and restoration will triumph.

Advent is a season of waiting and preparation, and this text challenges us to remain alert, not out of fear but out of expectation. The fig tree reminds us that change is coming, just as surely as summer follows spring. While we do not know the exact time, we can live as people of hope, actively participating in God's work of love, mercy, and justice here and now.

In a chaotic and unpredictable world, staying awake means recognizing God's presence all around us—in acts of kindness, in moments of beauty, and in opportunities to serve others. This Advent, may we live with hearts wide open, trusting that God's promises will be fulfilled.

Prayer:

God of hope, awaken us to your presence in our lives and in the world. In the midst of uncertainty, help us to live with faith and expectation, trusting in your promises. Keep our hearts open and our spirits ready to receive the joy of your kingdom. Amen.

December 4, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

"Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah ... Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 85 is a song of restoration, a reminder of God's faithfulness in the past and a prayer for renewal in the present. The imagery is breathtaking: steadfast love and faithfulness meeting, righteousness and peace kissing. These are not abstract concepts but tangible expressions of God's kingdom breaking into the world.

As we journey through Advent, this psalm invites us to reflect on God's promises and to trust in the goodness that God is bringing forth. The meeting of love and faithfulness reminds us that God's grace is active, drawing us into a deeper relationship with the Divine and with one another.

In a world often divided and hurting, these verses challenge us to embody the qualities of God's kingdom. Where can we be agents of peace? How can we help righteousness and love to flourish? Advent is a time to prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of Christ, who is the ultimate fulfillment of this psalm's beautiful vision.

Prayer:

Faithful God, you have been with us in the past, and we trust in your presence now. Help us to live with hope and expectation, reflecting your steadfast love and peace in all we do. May our lives bear witness to your kingdom, where righteousness and mercy embrace. Amen.

December 5, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 40:1-11

"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' ... He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."

Devotional Reflection:

This passage begins with words of comfort, reassurance that God is present and working to bring restoration and renewal. The vivid imagery of leveling mountains and lifting valleys reminds us that God's justice is transformative, creating equity where once there was division.

As we prepare the way for the Lord in this season of Advent, we are reminded that this preparation is both an inward and outward call. Internally, we prepare our hearts to receive the gift of Christ. Outwardly, we are called to reflect God's justice and love in the world, becoming instruments of peace and hope.

God's tender care for the flock—gathering, carrying, and leading—is a beautiful reminder of how deeply we are loved. This Advent, may we live in expectation of the day when all people will see God's glory revealed.

Prayer:

God of comfort and hope, prepare our hearts to receive your transforming presence. Level the mountains of injustice and lift up the valleys of despair in our lives and our world. Help us to trust in your tender care and to live as reflections of your love and justice. Amen.

December 6, 2024**Scripture (NRSVUE):**

2 Peter 3:8-15a

"But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. ... Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation."

Devotional Reflection:

This passage reminds us that God's timing is not our timing. In a world that often demands immediate answers and solutions, Advent invites us to embrace patience.

God's delay is not neglect but mercy—a sign of divine love that desires everyone to find their way into God's grace.

As we live in this in-between time, waiting for the fullness of God's kingdom, we are called to live in peace and holiness. These are not lofty ideals but practical ways of embodying Christ's presence in the world. Patience is not passive; it is active trust in God's promises, even when the journey feels long.

In this Advent season, may we remember that God's timing is always rooted in love. Let us live with expectation, knowing that God is at work, bringing about salvation for all.

Prayer:

Eternal God, teach us to trust in your timing and to live with patience and peace. Help us to see your mercy in the waiting and to embrace the call to reflect your love and grace in all we do. Strengthen our faith as we live in expectation of your kingdom. Amen.

December 7, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Mark 1:1-8

"The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"

Devotional Reflection:

The Gospel of Mark begins with urgency and anticipation. John the Baptist appears as the forerunner, calling people to prepare the way of the Lord. His message of repentance is not one of fear but of hope—an invitation to align ourselves with God's transforming work.

John's humility reminds us that our lives point not to ourselves but to Christ. As we prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth, we are called to reflect his love and grace, making straight paths for God's work in the world.

Advent is a time of active preparation, a season to clear away distractions and focus on the good news of Christ. As we listen to John's call, may we live as people filled with expectation, ready to receive and share the gift of God's love.

Prayer:

God of new beginnings, help us to prepare the way for your Son in our hearts and in our world. May we live with humility and hope, pointing others to the good news of your love. Baptize us with your Spirit and fill us with expectation for the coming of your kingdom. Amen.



December 8, 2024 The Candle of Peace

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ... For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ... I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

Devotional Reflection:

Isaiah's words are a bold proclamation of hope, justice, and restoration. The imagery of binding the brokenhearted and proclaiming liberty reminds us that God's kingdom is centered on the marginalized and hurting. This is the good news

of Advent: God's anointing is not reserved for the powerful but is for those who mourn, those who long for justice, and those who carry heavy burdens.

As we wait for the fulfillment of these promises, we are called to be co-workers in God's mission. Where can we proclaim liberty in our communities? How can we comfort those who mourn? Advent invites us to live as "oaks of righteousness," deeply rooted in God's love and actively displaying God's glory through acts of compassion and justice.

The God who loves justice is at work, even now, restoring what has been broken and healing what has been torn. Let us live in expectation of the day when all things will be made new.

Prayer:

God of restoration, anoint us with your Spirit to proclaim good news and to bind up the brokenhearted. Help us to live as oaks of righteousness, deeply rooted in your love and justice. Fill us with hope as we wait for your kingdom to come in its fullness. Amen.

December 9, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 126

"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 126 is a song of joy and hope, recalling the times when God's restoration brought laughter and celebration. Yet it is also a prayer for renewal, a cry for restoration in the midst of present struggles. This tension between joy remembered and hope anticipated is at the heart of Advent.

We are reminded that God's faithfulness in the past is a promise for the future. Even as we sow in tears, we trust that joy will come. This psalm encourages us to

hold onto hope, knowing that God is with us in the waiting and working for our restoration.

In this season, let us celebrate the great things God has done while living with expectation for the joy that is yet to come. God is faithful, and God's promises endure.

Prayer:

Faithful God, thank you for the joy of your restoration. Even in times of tears, help us to trust in your promises and to live with hope. May our lives reflect your joy and faithfulness as we wait for the fullness of your kingdom. Amen.

December 10, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Luke 1:26-38

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ... Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her."

Devotional Reflection:

Mary's response to the angel Gabriel is a profound act of faith and trust. Her willingness to say, "Let it be with me according to your word," invites us to consider how we might respond to God's call in our own lives.

This moment is not without fear or questions. Mary's perplexity reminds us that faith does not erase uncertainty—it embraces it with trust in God's promises. In a

world that often celebrates power and status, Mary's story shows us that God works through ordinary people in extraordinary ways.

As we journey through Advent, Mary's faith inspires us to live with expectation, trusting that God's promises are unfolding in ways we cannot always see. Let us respond to God's call with courage and hope, knowing that we are part of God's redemptive story.

Prayer:

God of wonder, thank you for Mary's faith and willingness to trust in your promises. Help us to respond to your call with courage, even in the face of uncertainty. Use our lives to bring your kingdom closer, and fill us with hope as we wait for Christ's coming. Amen.

December 11, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 35:1-10

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. ... Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ... And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Devotional Reflection:

Isaiah paints a vivid picture of transformation—a barren desert bursting into bloom, streams flowing through parched land, and sorrow replaced with joy. This vision reminds us of the redemptive work of God, who brings life and renewal even in the most desolate places.

In Advent, we live in the tension between this vision and our present reality. There are still deserts in our world—places of injustice, grief, and fear. Yet Isaiah's

words call us to live with hope, trusting in God's promise to make all things new. The wilderness will not last forever, and God's joy is already breaking through.

This passage also challenges us to be part of God's transforming work. How can we strengthen weak hands and fearful hearts? How can we bring joy to those in need? As we wait for Christ's coming, let us live as people of hope, carrying the light of God's love into the world.

Prayer:

God of renewal, bring life to the dry and barren places in our hearts and in our world. Strengthen us to be agents of your transformation, sharing your love and hope with those in need. Fill us with joy as we trust in your promises and await the fullness of your kingdom. Amen.

December 12, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 146:5-10

"Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!"

Devotional Reflection:

This psalm is a song of praise to the God who reigns with justice and compassion. It reminds us that true happiness is found not in worldly power or wealth but in trusting the One who is faithful and loving.

The psalmist paints a picture of God's priorities: freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, and lifting up the vulnerable. These are not just actions of a distant God but a call to God's people to live out these values. Advent invites us to reflect on how we can embody this divine justice in our own lives.

In a world that often feels harsh and uncaring, this psalm reassures us of God's steadfast love for all people. The God who made heaven and earth is also the God

who watches over the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Let us live with expectation, knowing that God's reign is one of compassion, equity, and hope.

Prayer:

God of justice and compassion, we praise you for your faithfulness and love. Help us to trust in your promises and to live as reflections of your care for the oppressed, the hungry, and the vulnerable. Fill us with your hope as we wait for the fullness of your kingdom. Amen.

December 13, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

James 5:7-10

"Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord."

Devotional Reflection:

James uses the image of a farmer waiting for the harvest to encourage patience and trust in God's timing. Just as crops require both early and late rains, our spiritual growth and the unfolding of God's kingdom often happen in seasons we cannot control.

Advent reminds us that waiting is not passive. Strengthening our hearts, as James exhorts, means nurturing our faith and choosing kindness and grace in our relationships. This season calls us to trust in God's presence and work, even when it feels hidden.

The prophets' example encourages us to persevere in hope, knowing that God's promises will be fulfilled. As we wait for the coming of Christ, let us live with patience, trusting that God's timing is perfect and God's love is unending.

Prayer:

God of patience and hope, help us to trust in your timing and to live with hearts strengthened by faith. Teach us to wait with grace and to reflect your love in all we

do. May we be patient witnesses to your kingdom, knowing that your promises are sure. Amen.

December 14, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Matthew 11:2-11

"When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.' ... Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Devotional Reflection:

John's question from prison reflects a moment of doubt and longing. Even this great prophet, who prepared the way for Jesus, wondered if his hope was misplaced. Jesus' response doesn't directly answer the question but points to the evidence of God's kingdom breaking into the world: healing, restoration, and good news for the poor.

Advent reminds us that faith often requires trust in what we cannot fully see. Like John, we may sometimes wonder where God is in the midst of our struggles. Yet Jesus invites us to look around and see the signs of God's kingdom—a community fed, a friend comforted, an act of justice that changes a life.

This passage also humbles us with the reminder that greatness in God's kingdom is not measured by power or achievement but by faithfulness to the call to love and serve. As we wait for Christ's coming, let us seek to embody this kingdom, even in the smallest acts of kindness and mercy.

Prayer:

God of all, in moments of doubt, remind us of your presence and the evidence of your kingdom among us. Strengthen our faith and guide us to live as reflections of your love and mercy. Fill us with hope as we await the fullness of your reign. Amen.



December 15, 2024 The Candle of Love

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 7:10-16

"Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, 'Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.' Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.'"

Devotional Reflection:

Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz speaks to a moment of fear and uncertainty for the people of Judah. In the face of political turmoil and looming threats, God promises a sign: Immanuel, "God with us." This name is a powerful assurance that, even in the midst of chaos, God is present.

Advent is a season of waiting and trusting in this promise. The birth of Jesus fulfills this prophecy in ways far greater than Ahaz could have imagined. Jesus is the ultimate sign of God's presence, not only with Judah but with all of humanity.

In our own lives, we may face moments of fear or uncertainty, wondering where God is in the midst of it all. This passage reminds us that God is always with us, offering hope and guidance. As we prepare our hearts for Christ's coming, let us live with the expectation that God is working, even now, to bring about restoration and peace.

Prayer:

God with us, thank you for your constant presence in our lives. In times of fear and uncertainty, help us to trust in your promises and to find hope in your love. Prepare our hearts to receive Christ and to reflect your light to the world. Amen.

December 16, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. ... But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 80 is a heartfelt cry for restoration and renewal. The image of God as a shepherd leading the flock reflects God's deep care for us, even in times of difficulty. The repeated refrain, "Restore us, O God; let your face shine," emphasizes the psalmist's trust that God alone can bring about the healing and salvation they long for.

As we journey through Advent, this psalm resonates with our own longing for restoration—in our personal lives, our communities, and our world. It reminds us that God hears our cries and is actively working to bring about renewal.

This season calls us to trust in God's presence, even when the way forward feels unclear. Let us live with expectation, knowing that God's face shines upon us and that God's promises are sure.

Prayer:

Shepherd of Israel, restore us and let your face shine upon us. In our moments of sorrow and longing, remind us of your love and care. Strengthen our trust in your promises and help us to live as reflections of your hope and light. Amen.

December 17, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Zephaniah 3:14-20

"Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. ... At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord."

Devotional Reflection:

Zephaniah's words overflow with joy and promise. After warning of judgment earlier in the book, this passage shifts to a vision of hope and restoration. The image of God rejoicing over us with singing is a tender reminder of how deeply God loves us. God's presence in our midst is not one of fear but of renewal and celebration.

Advent invites us to live in the joy of this promise. Even in times of difficulty or doubt, we can trust that God is working to bring us home, to restore what has been broken, and to renew us in love. The call to rejoice is not rooted in present circumstances but in the sure hope of God's redemptive work.

As we prepare for Christ's coming, let us embrace the joy and renewal that God offers. Let us live with expectation, knowing that the God who rejoices over us is also the God who gathers, restores, and redeems.

Prayer:

God of joy and renewal, thank you for your steadfast love and your presence in our midst. Help us to live with hearts full of hope and joy, trusting in your promise to restore and renew us. Teach us to reflect your love in all we do as we wait for the fullness of your kingdom. Amen.

December 18, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat)

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Devotional Reflection:

Mary's song is a hymn of praise and a bold proclamation of God's justice. Her words celebrate a God who upends the status quo, lifting the lowly, feeding the hungry, and scattering the proud. The Magnificat reminds us that God's kingdom is one of radical reversal, where mercy and justice reign.

In Advent, Mary's song calls us to align ourselves with God's vision for the world. It invites us to magnify the Lord—not just with our words but with our actions, reflecting God's care for the vulnerable and oppressed.

Mary's joy and faith in God's promises inspire us to live with courage and hope. As we await the coming of Christ, let us sing with Mary, trusting in the God who does great things for all generations.

Prayer:

Mighty God, we praise you for your mercy and justice. Help us to magnify your name in our words and actions, reflecting your care for the vulnerable and the

lowly. Strengthen our faith and fill us with joy as we trust in your promises and prepare for Christ's coming. Amen.

December 19, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

"I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: I will establish your descendants forever and build your throne for all generations.' ... Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: 'I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted.'"

Devotional Reflection:

This psalm is a song of praise for God's steadfast love and faithfulness. It recalls God's covenant with David, a promise that points to the coming of Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for redemption.

Advent is a time to reflect on God's faithfulness throughout generations. Even when the world feels uncertain or chaotic, we can trust that God's promises endure. The psalmist's proclamation of steadfast love is an invitation to root ourselves in the unchanging love of God.

As we sing of God's faithfulness, we are reminded that this love is not just for us but for all people. Let us live with expectation, proclaiming God's steadfast love to the world and participating in God's work of justice and restoration.

Prayer:

Faithful God, we praise you for your steadfast love that endures through all generations. Help us to trust in your promises and to live as witnesses to your faithfulness. Fill us with hope and joy as we prepare for the coming of Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

December 20, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Isaiah 9:2-7

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

Devotional Reflection:

Isaiah's prophecy is one of the most beloved texts of Advent, a vision of light breaking into darkness and a child bringing peace to the world. In a world often overshadowed by violence and despair, this passage offers a promise of hope: God's kingdom is one of justice, righteousness, and endless peace.

The titles given to this child—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—invite us to reflect on who Christ is and what his coming means for us. These names remind us that Jesus is not only a gift to humanity but also the embodiment of God's love and power.

As we prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth, this prophecy calls us to live as people of the light. How can we reflect the peace and justice of God's kingdom in our daily lives? Let us live with expectation, rejoicing in the great light that has dawned upon us.

Prayer:

God of light and peace, thank you for the promise of your kingdom, where justice and righteousness will reign forever. Help us to reflect your light in the world and to live as instruments of your peace. Fill us with joy and hope as we await the birth of your Son, our Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace. Amen.

December 21, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Luke 1:67-79 (The Song of Zechariah)

"Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'"

Devotional Reflection:

Zechariah's song is a proclamation of God's faithfulness and mercy. After months of silence, his voice returns with a message of hope, declaring the coming of salvation and peace. The imagery of dawn breaking upon those in darkness is a powerful reminder of God's love, which brings light and guidance to a world in need.

Zechariah's words also point to John the Baptist's role in preparing the way for the Lord. This preparation is not just for those in Zechariah's time but for us as well. How are we preparing our hearts to receive Christ? How can we help others find the way of peace?

Advent is a time to embrace the tender mercy of God and to share that mercy with others. Let us live with expectation, trusting in the dawn of God's love and reflecting that light in our lives.

Prayer:

God of tender mercy, thank you for the light that breaks upon us, guiding us in the way of peace. Help us to prepare our hearts for Christ's coming and to share your mercy and love with those around us. Fill us with hope and joy as we await the fulfillment of your promises. Amen.



December 22, 2024 The Candle of Joy

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Romans 16:25-27

"Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen."

Devotional Reflection:

Paul's doxology in Romans is a hymn of praise to the God who reveals mysteries and strengthens us in faith. The long-hidden mystery Paul refers to is the gospel of Jesus Christ—a message of salvation and reconciliation for all people, both Jew and Gentile.

This passage reminds us of the inclusivity of God's love. The revelation of Christ is not limited to one group or nation but is for the entire world. In Advent, we celebrate this expansive love and the promise that all are welcome in God's kingdom.

As we reflect on this season of waiting, Paul's words encourage us to live with faith and trust in the wisdom of God. The mystery has been revealed, and we are invited to respond with lives of praise and obedience. Let us live with expectation, glorifying the God who brings salvation to all.

Prayer:

Wise and eternal God, we praise you for the revelation of your love through Jesus Christ. Strengthen us in faith and help us to live as witnesses to your inclusive and outlandish grace. May our lives bring glory to you as we await the fulfillment of your promises. Amen.

December 23, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Micah 5:2-5a

"But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace."

Devotional Reflection:

The prophecy of Micah focuses on the small town of Bethlehem—a seemingly insignificant place chosen to bring forth the ruler who will embody God's peace. This reminds us that God often works through the unexpected and the overlooked to accomplish extraordinary things.

In Advent, we are invited to reflect on how God's power is made perfect in humility. Just as Bethlehem was chosen, so too are we called to participate in God's kingdom, not because of our greatness but because of God's grace. The ruler Micah describes is not a conqueror but a shepherd, one who feeds and protects the flock with strength and love.

This season calls us to embrace the peace of Christ and to share it with a world longing for security and hope. Let us live with expectation, trusting in the God who brings greatness from small beginnings and peace to all the earth.

Prayer:

God of peace, thank you for choosing the humble and unexpected to carry out your purposes. Help us to trust in your ways and to live as agents of your peace. Fill us with hope and joy as we prepare for the coming of Christ, our Shepherd and Ruler. Amen.

December 24, 2024 (Christmas Eve)**Scripture (NRSVUE):**

Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ... Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'"

Devotional Reflection:

The story of Jesus' birth is both simple and profound. A child born in a stable, wrapped in cloth, and laid in a manger becomes the Savior of the world. This humble beginning reveals the heart of God's kingdom: power is found in vulnerability, and salvation comes through love.

The shepherds are the first to hear the good news, emphasizing that God's message is for everyone, especially those who are often overlooked. The angels' proclamation of peace reminds us that the birth of Christ brings reconciliation between God and humanity.

On this holy night, we are invited to join the shepherds in wonder and the angels in praise. Let us live with expectation, celebrating the good news that God has come to dwell among us, bringing peace and joy to all the earth.

Prayer:

God of glory, thank you for the gift of your Son, born in humility and love. Help us to receive this good news with joy and to share it with others. May your peace reign in our hearts and in our world as we celebrate the birth of Christ. Amen.



December 25, 2024 (Christmas Day)

Scripture (NRSVUE):

John 1:1-14

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

Devotional Reflection:

John's prologue takes us beyond the manger to the cosmic significance of Christ's birth. The Word, who was with God from the beginning, has become flesh and dwells among us. This profound mystery—God taking on human form—reveals the depth of God's love for creation.

The imagery of light shining in the darkness speaks powerfully to the hope that Christ brings. No matter how dark the world may seem, the light of Christ cannot be overcome. This is the good news of Christmas: God is with us, full of grace and truth, bringing life and light to all.

On this day of celebration, let us rejoice in the wonder of the incarnation. Let us live with expectation, knowing that the light of Christ is with us, guiding us in love and hope.

Prayer:

Word made flesh, we praise you for the gift of your presence among us. Thank you for the light and life you bring to the world. Help us to reflect your grace and truth in all we do. Fill our hearts with joy and wonder as we celebrate your birth. Amen.

December 26, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60

"Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue ... stood up and argued with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ... When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ... While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died."

Devotional Reflection:

The story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, reminds us of the cost of discipleship. Stephen's courage, even in the face of death, was grounded in his faith and the vision of God's glory. His final prayer echoes Jesus' words on the cross, reflecting a spirit of forgiveness and trust.

This passage invites us to consider how we can remain faithful to God's call in our lives, even when it is difficult. It challenges us to respond to hostility with grace and to trust that God's Spirit is with us, strengthening us in every circumstance.

In the days after Christmas, as we celebrate the coming of Christ, Stephen's story reminds us that living as followers of Jesus calls for courage, love, and a willingness to reflect God's forgiveness and mercy. Let us live with expectation, trusting in the victory of God's love.

Prayer:

God of grace and courage, thank you for the witness of Stephen and all who live faithfully in the face of opposition. Strengthen us with your Spirit and help us to reflect your love and forgiveness in all we do. Guide us to live as faithful disciples, trusting in your promises. Amen.

December 27, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

John 21:19b-24

"After this, he said to him, 'Follow me.' Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them ... When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true."

Devotional Reflection:

In this passage, Jesus calls Peter to focus on his own path of discipleship, reminding him that his task is to follow Jesus, not to compare himself to others. This interaction highlights the personal nature of our relationship with Christ: each of us is called to follow in our own unique way.

Advent and Christmas remind us that God's call is not about competition or comparison but about faithfulness. Like Peter, we may be tempted to look at others and wonder about their journey, but Jesus invites us to trust in the path set before us.

As we reflect on Christ's call, let us commit to following with courage and faith, trusting that God's purposes for each of us are good. Let us live with expectation, confident in the unique role we play in God's unfolding story.

Prayer:

Jesus, help us to focus on your call to follow you. Teach us to trust in the path you have set before us and to walk it with faith and courage. Free us from comparison and competition, and guide us to live as faithful disciples, reflecting your love.

Amen.

December 28, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Matthew 2:13-18

"Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. ... When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ..."

Devotional Reflection:

This passage, known as the story of the Holy Innocents, is a sobering reminder of the brokenness of the world into which Jesus was born. Even as we celebrate the joy of Christ's birth, we are confronted with the reality of suffering and the cost of human sin.

The flight to Egypt and the massacre of the children show us that Jesus came not to a perfect world but to one desperately in need of redemption. His presence among us is a sign that God is with us in our suffering, working to bring healing and hope.

In this season of Christmas, as we reflect on the light of Christ, let us also remember those who suffer in the shadows. May we live with expectation, committed to being instruments of God's peace and justice in a hurting world.

Prayer:

God of compassion, we grieve the brokenness of our world and the suffering of the

innocent. Thank you for sending your Son to be with us in our pain and to bring hope and redemption. Help us to reflect your light and to work for justice and peace in all we do. Amen.

December 29, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Luke 2:22-40

"When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ... Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ... Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'"

Devotional Reflection:

The story of Simeon and Anna is a testament to lives lived in faithful expectation. Both were advanced in years, yet their hope in God's promises remained steadfast. When they saw the Christ child, they recognized him as the fulfillment of those promises—a light for all nations.

This passage invites us to reflect on our own sense of expectation. Like Simeon and Anna, we are called to remain attentive to God's work in the world, trusting that God's promises will be fulfilled. Their joy reminds us that even in the waiting, God's presence is with us, sustaining and guiding us.

As we near the end of this year, may we renew our commitment to living in hope and expectation, trusting that God's light continues to shine in the darkness and bring salvation to all.

Prayer:

God of hope, thank you for the faithful witness of Simeon and Anna. Help us to live with trust in your promises and to remain attentive to your presence in our lives. Fill us with joy as we recognize your salvation and share your light with the world. Amen.

December 30, 2024

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 148

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host! Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. ... Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 148 is a call to universal praise, inviting all creation—angels, sun and moon, mountains, and humanity—to glorify God. It reminds us that worship is not confined to a specific place or time but is the natural response of all that exists to the Creator.

As we reflect on the season of Christmas, this psalm encourages us to join in the cosmic chorus of praise. The birth of Christ is a gift not just for humanity but for all creation, a sign of God's redemptive work in the world.

This passage also challenges us to consider how our lives can be acts of praise. How can we reflect God's glory in our care for creation, our relationships, and our daily choices? Let us live with expectation, joining all creation in glorifying the God who brings life and hope.

Prayer:

Creator God, we join all creation in praising your name. Thank you for the gift of Christ, which reveals your love for the world. Help us to live lives that reflect your glory, offering our worship through our words and actions. Fill us with joy and wonder as we celebrate your goodness. Amen.

December 31, 2024 (New Year's Eve)

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. ... What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of eternity in their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."

Devotional Reflection:

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, this passage reminds us of the rhythms of life—the seasons of joy and sorrow, growth and rest. Ecclesiastes invites us to trust in the God who weaves these seasons together, bringing meaning and purpose to our lives.

The acknowledgment of “a time for everything” encourages us to embrace the present moment, knowing that God is at work in all things. It also calls us to gratitude, recognizing that each day is a gift and an opportunity to reflect God’s love.

As we look to the year ahead, let us live with expectation, trusting in God’s guidance through every season. May we embrace the call to love, serve, and rejoice, confident that God’s purposes will unfold in God’s perfect timing.

Prayer:

Eternal God, thank you for your presence in every season of our lives. As we enter a new year, help us to trust in your timing and to embrace each day as a gift. Guide us to live with purpose and gratitude, reflecting your love and grace in all we do. Amen.

January 1, 2025 (New Year’s Day)

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Numbers 6:22-27

"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Devotional Reflection:

As we begin a new year, the words of this ancient blessing offer a powerful reminder of God's care and faithfulness. The prayer asks for God's protection, grace, and peace—gifts that sustain us through all the seasons of life.

This passage invites us to consider how we can be channels of blessing in the year ahead. Just as Aaron and his sons were instructed to bless the Israelites, we are called to speak and act in ways that reflect God's love and bring peace to those around us.

On this first day of the year, let us live with expectation, trusting in God's blessings and committing ourselves to be instruments of grace and peace in the world.

Prayer:

God of blessings, thank you for your faithfulness and care. As we enter this new year, help us to trust in your grace and peace. Teach us to be a blessing to others, reflecting your love in all we do. Guide us to walk in your light, filled with hope and joy. Amen.

January 2, 2025**Scripture (NRSVUE):**

Psalm 8

"O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet..."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder and gratitude, marveling at the majesty of God's creation and the incredible care God shows for humanity. The psalmist's awe invites us to reflect on the gift of life and our responsibility as stewards of creation.

As we begin a new year, this psalm challenges us to live with humility and purpose. The reminder that we are “a little lower than God” and entrusted with dominion over creation calls us to reflect God’s love and care in how we treat the world and one another.

Let us live with expectation, marveling at the beauty of God’s works and committing ourselves to lives of gratitude, stewardship, and praise.

Prayer:

Majestic God, we praise you for the wonder of your creation and your care for us. Help us to live with gratitude and humility, reflecting your love in all we do. Guide us to be faithful stewards of the world you have entrusted to us, bringing glory to your name. Amen.

January 3, 2025

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Jeremiah 31:7-14

"For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.' See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

Devotional Reflection:

Jeremiah’s vision of restoration is a promise of hope for those who feel scattered and weary. God’s assurance to gather the people, leading them with tenderness and care, reminds us of the deep compassion of the Divine.

This passage speaks to a God who brings people together, making a way where there seems to be no way. It invites us to trust in God’s guidance, even in the midst of uncertainty, and to participate in the work of healing and restoration in our communities.

As we walk into the new year, let us live with expectation, trusting in God’s promise to lead us and rejoicing in the hope of restoration and unity.

Prayer:

God of compassion and restoration, thank you for your promise to gather and guide us. Help us to trust in your care and to live as agents of healing and unity in the world. Fill us with hope and joy as we walk in your light. Amen.

January 4, 2025

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Ephesians 1:3-14

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us."

Devotional Reflection:

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a rich celebration of God's love and grace. The reminder that we are chosen and adopted as God's children speaks to the radical inclusivity of the gospel. God's grace, freely given, is a gift that calls us to live with gratitude and purpose.

This passage reminds us that our identity is rooted in Christ. We are redeemed and forgiven, not because of anything we have done but because of God's boundless love. This assurance gives us the freedom to live boldly, reflecting God's grace in all we do.

As we move deeper into the new year, let us live with expectation, confident in God's blessings and committed to sharing the good news of redemption and love with the world.

Prayer:

God of grace, thank you for choosing us and calling us your children. Help us to live in gratitude for your love and to share your grace with others. Strengthen us to reflect your light in the world, trusting in the spiritual blessings you have given us in Christ. Amen.

January 5, 2025

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

"Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. ... For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight."

Devotional Reflection:

Psalm 72 is a prayer for a ruler who governs with justice and righteousness, reflecting God's care for the most vulnerable. The psalmist's vision of leadership rooted in compassion and equity reminds us of Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of this prayer.

As followers of Christ, we are called to reflect these values in our own lives, seeking justice for the oppressed and caring for those in need. This passage challenges us to examine how we use our influence and resources to serve others and to participate in God's work of redemption.

Let us live with expectation, trusting in the reign of Christ, who brings justice, peace, and hope to all people. May we join in this work, embodying God's love and care in our communities.

Prayer:

God of justice and compassion, thank you for your care for the poor and vulnerable. Teach us to follow Christ's example and to live as agents of your justice and mercy. Help us to reflect your love in all we do, working for a world that reflects your kingdom. Amen.



January 6, 2025 (Epiphany)

Scripture (NRSVUE):

Matthew 2:1-12

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' ... When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road."

Devotional Reflection:

The story of the magi is a powerful reminder of God's revelation to the nations. These wise men from the East represent the inclusion of all people in God's plan of salvation. Their journey, guided by the light of a star, reflects the universal reach of God's love.

The gifts they bring—gold for a king, frankincense for worship, and myrrh for burial—speak to the identity and mission of Christ. He is the King of Kings, the one worthy of worship, and the Savior who gives his life for the world.

Epiphany invites us to reflect on how we respond to the revelation of Christ in our own lives. Like the magi, we are called to offer our gifts, our worship, and our lives in service to the King. Let us live with expectation, guided by the light of Christ and committed to sharing his love with the world.

Prayer:

God of light and revelation, thank you for guiding the magi to the Christ child and for revealing your love to all nations. Help us to follow your light and to offer our lives in service to your kingdom. Fill us with joy as we celebrate the gift of your Son and share his love with the world. Amen.

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Scripture from NRSSV-UE

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