



ADVENT
preparing for Immanuel

Advent Devotional

DAILY READINGS FOR THE SEASON

WEEK ONE | HOPE

WEEK TWO | LOVE

WEEK THREE | PEACE

WEEK FOUR | JOY

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14



Within the busyness of Christmas, it can be easy to lose the true reason we celebrate. We invite you to set aside time each day and join us as we explore the hope of this season together and celebrate Christ's birth! Our daily readings will correspond to each Sunday's sermon and lighting of the Advent Candle.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Isaiah 7:14

In our first week of Advent, we are lighting the Prophecy candle and focusing on the theme of hope. Starting in Genesis 3, God made a promise to provide a savior for the world. Hundreds of years before the Messiah was born, prophets such as Isaiah foretold his birth and reminded the people of the hope of this promise. We invite you to join us this week as we ponder this theme of hope and what it means to celebrate this season and the fulfillment of God's promise in the birth of Christ.

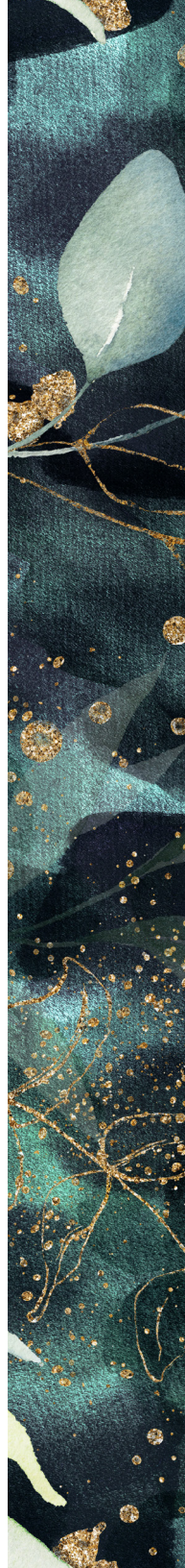
Day One | Genesis 3:8-15

Day Two | Hebrews 11:1-2

Day Three | Galatians 4:4-5

Day Four | Isaiah 9:1-7

Day Five | Ezekiel 37 & John 20:19-22





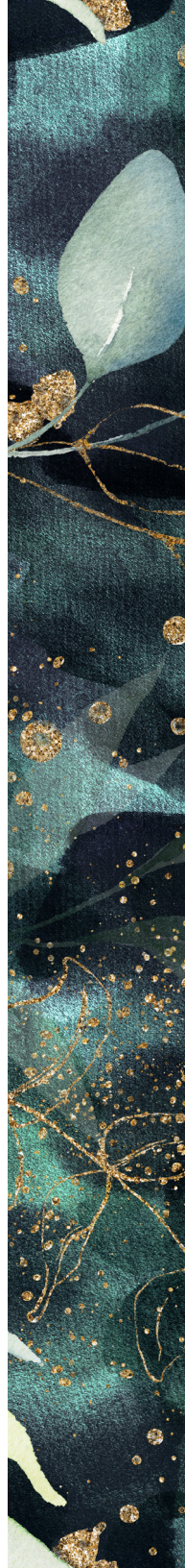
Sunday Passage: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had thought this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: "Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they shall name Him Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he named Him Jesus.

Genesis 3:8-15

Now they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me some of the fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all the livestock,
And more than any animal of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And dust you shall eat
All the days of your life;
And I will make enemies
Of you and the woman,
And of your offspring and her Descendant;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise Him on the heel."





Have you ever been in an extremely dark place when something brought just a glimmer of hope into your difficult situation?

As you've probably gathered, this passage comes right after Adam and Eve rebelled against God and sinned, which brought the curse on the world and on all of us.

Theologians refer to verse 15 as the protoevangelium, or first Gospel. It's in this moment that God promises the Messiah, the Savior, who will crush sin and rebellion which had just entered the human existence.

In one of the darkest moments in human history, God had a plan and He gave hope. This isn't just our definition of hope, but God's. God's hope is guaranteed because He's promised it. We are just waiting until He delivers and He's going to, because He can't lie. That's God's hope.

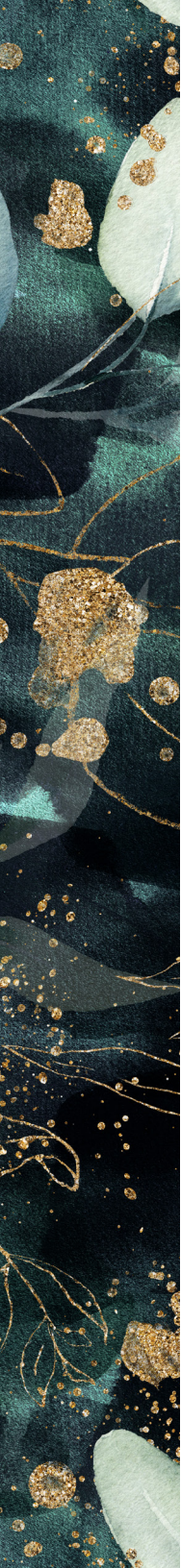
Of course, we know the hope of this promise was delivered at Christmas when our Messiah arrived. In this, we have all the proof that we need that God will deliver on another one of His promises and we look toward that moment when our Savior returns.

Hebrews 11:1-2

Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof (conviction about) of things not seen. For by it the people of old gained approval (obtained a good testimony).

"Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." This famous movie quote might have it right. Hope is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen, a feeling of trust. But in the Bible, hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised and the strength of hope is in His faithfulness. The book of Hebrews' lengthy discussion on the connection of faith and hope begins with the coming return of the Lord (10:37) which leads to the call for a righteous life lived by faith (10:38-39). Chapter 11 then gives examples of a life of faith (11:1-40). The essence of faith (11:1-2) leads off with the substance of faith - assurance of things hoped for (11:1a); followed by the evidence of faith, conviction of things not seen (11:1b).





Faith in the previous Old Testament period (11:2) reminds believers that we have an opportunity for the great hope of God's approval as we walk by faith. During this holiday season, I want to encourage each of us to keep our eyes on the precious hope we have in Jesus.

- How can we make the confident expectation of what God has promised a more real part of our prayer life?

Walt McCord - Associate Pastor

FAMILY ACTIVITY IDEAS

- As a family, make an Advent Wreath. Use a real or artificial wreath and 5 LED candles. There are 3 purple candles, 1 pink, and 1 white.
- Create a countdown to Christmas where you can mark off the days as you anticipate (hope for) the celebration of Jesus' birth. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you like.
- Create an ornament to help you remember that even in the beginning when sin entered the world, God had a plan to save us.

For more directions and ideas, check out our Family Activity Guide at waysidechapel.org/advent

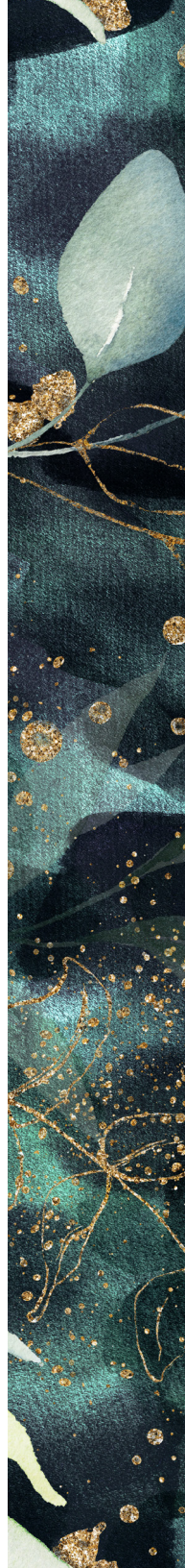
Galatians 4:4-5

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters."

When I was a child, my idea of hope, as it relates to Christmas, centered around a hope for what might be under the Christmas tree with my name on it. It was a wishful thinking and a hope that I had been good enough that year to receive some presents.

And when the time was right on Christmas morning (probably after a cup of coffee), my father and mother determined that we could begin opening gifts.

But after I came to faith in Christ, the hope of Christmas was no longer in a thing but in a Person. I could now echo the psalmist who said, "My hope is in You" (Ps. 39:7).





My hope is no longer based on my good behavior or merit. My hope is now a faith (Heb. 11:1) in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. When God the Father determined that the time was right (in the fullness of time), He sent forth His Son Jesus at Christmas to live a sinless life and die a sacrificial death on the Cross in our place and rise from the dead so that we might receive eternal life in Him. What a gift!

- What are ways we can center our hearts and minds on the gift of Christ this Christmas?

Will Davis - Stone Oak Campus Pastor

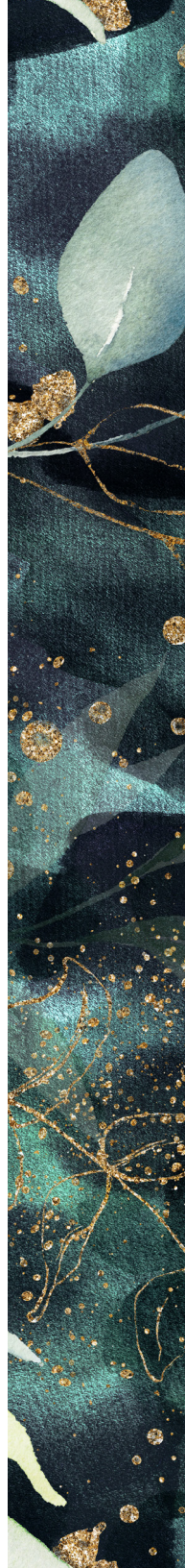
REFLECTING ON HOPE

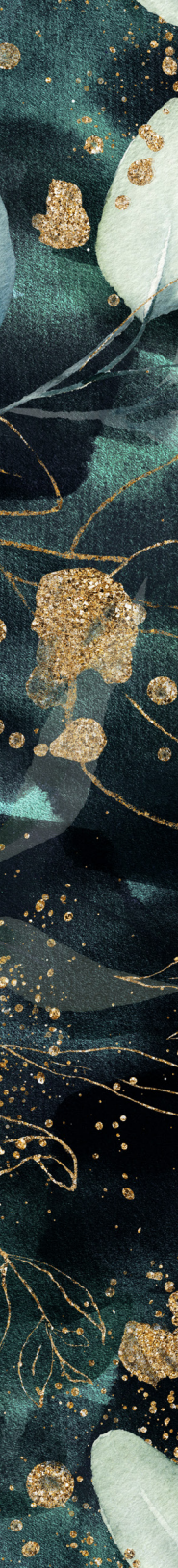
As we continue to ponder the theme of hope brought to us in this season, we encourage you to take time to worship and thank God for the faithful fulfillment of His promises!

You can find a Spotify playlist of songs on our website at waysidechapel.org/advent.

Isaiah 9:2-7

"The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
You will multiply the nation,
You will increase their joy;
They will rejoice in Your presence
As with the joy of harvest,
As people rejoice when they divide the spoils.
For You will break the yoke of their burden and the staff
on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
For every boot of the marching warrior in the roar of
battle,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for
the fire.
For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government
or of peace
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and
righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of armies will accomplish this.





O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive
Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of
God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come
to thee, O Israel!

No wonder the prophets give us so much hope!
Isaiah's name means "The Lord Saves." Isaiah's
prophecy gave Israel opportunity for repentance and
a knowledge of the reasons for her exile, but he would
also give her great hope in the promise of restoration
to the Land. But God gave them, and us, so much
more than an understanding of the events from 586-
516 B.C. God, through the prophet Isaiah, gave us the
hope of ultimate restoration in the Messiah who would
one day save His people from their sins.

The great light that has shone is none other than
Jesus!

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the
government will be on his shoulders. And he will be
called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace" Isaiah 9:6-7.

Amen.

Stephen Lay - Pastor Connect, Men's
Ministries, & Leadership Development

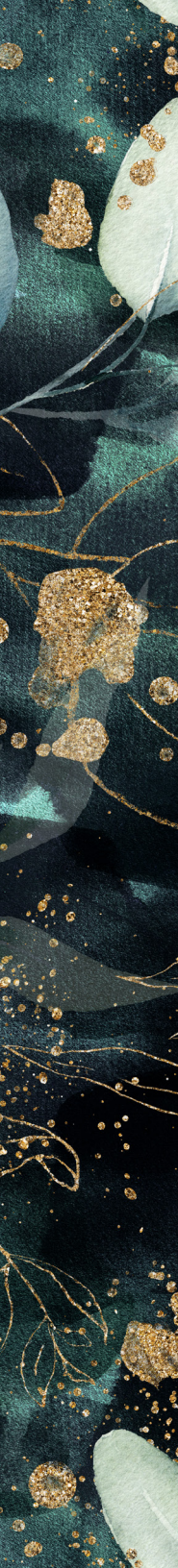
John 20:19-22 | For Further Reading: Ezekiel 37

"Now when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were together due to fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and *said to them, "Peace be to you." And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you; just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples after the resurrection in John's gospel, He greeted them and identified Himself by showing them the scars of His crucifixion. But then "He breathed on them and said to them, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'" This strange and eccentric detail is actually charged with a deep and profound meaning.

In the Scriptures, "wind," "breath," and "spirit" are intimately connected ideas. In both Hebrew and Greek, they're a single word (Hebrew: ruah, Greek: pneuma). The words can be used to speak of a person breathing or the wind blowing. But, they can also represent the animating, life-giving breath of God or the very Spirit of God himself.





The author of Genesis tells us that God made humans from dust and divine breath. But, after their rebellion, he said to them, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Tragically, that animating, life-giving breath was gone as sin severed the connection between us and our Creator.

Yet, thousands of years later, God showed the prophet Ezekiel that the wind of God would once again give life to God's people. When Jesus breathed on the disciples that evening in the upper room, He was acting out the fulfillment of that great promise.

We have hope because the baby who drew his first breath on Christmas morn would breathe his last breath on Good Friday so that he could breathe new life and the Holy Spirit into those who believe.

Cameron Contrestano - Pastor of
College & Stone Oak Student Ministries

What have been your takeaways as you've pondered the theme of hope this week? We'd love to hear what God has shown you!

Tag us on our social channels (Facebook & Instagram) @waysidechapelsa and use #waysideadvent

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

Micah 5:2

This week we are lighting the Bethlehem candle and focusing on the theme of love. At the root of God's promise of a savior is His love for us. Without God's love being shown to each of us, Jesus would not have needed to be born and die for our sins. We invite you to join us this week as we ponder this theme of love and what it means to celebrate this season and truly know the love of God.

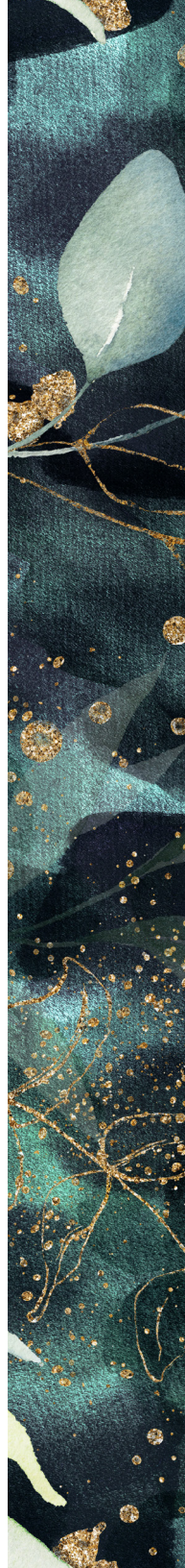
Day One | Micah 7:18-20

Day Two | 1 John 4:9-11

Day Three | Mark 10:17-22

Day Four | Jeremiah 31:3

Day Five | Luke 2:19, 51





Sunday Passage: Luke 2:1-7

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all the people were on their way to register for the census, each to his own city. Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was betrothed to him, and was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Micah 7:18-20

"Who is a God like You, who pardons wrongdoing
And passes over a rebellious act of the remnant of His
possession?

He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in mercy.

He will again take pity on us;

He will trample on our wrongdoings.

Yes, You will cast all their sins

Into the depths of the sea.

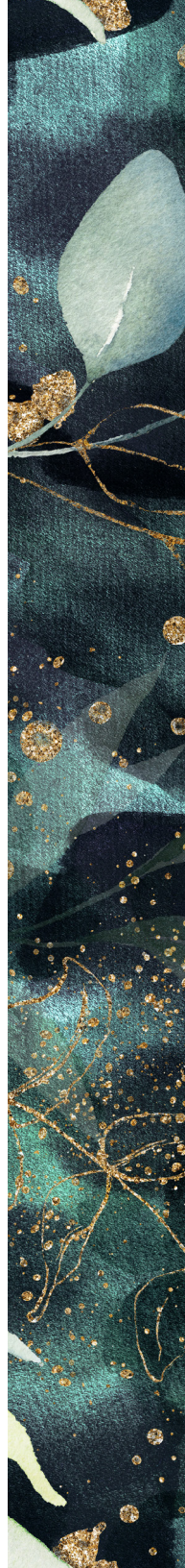
You will give truth to Jacob

And favor to Abraham,

Which You swore to our forefathers

From the days of old."

The Hebrew name Micah is short for Micaiah, meaning 'Who is like Yahweh?' In a play on his name, this prophet of the eighth century B.C., in a dark time for both of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, asks the rhetorical question of God, "Who is a God like You?" (v.18)





As he answers his own rhetorical question, Micah affirms six evidences of God's love for His people ...

1. Pardons their sins.
2. Does not remain angry with them.
3. Delights to show them mercy.
4. Has compassion on them.
5. Deals with their sins once for all.
6. Is faithful to them.

Substitute first person pronouns for each of the third person pronouns above and see that what Micah affirms is six evidences of God's love for you ...

1. Pardons my sins.
2. Does not remain angry with me.
3. Delights to show me mercy.
4. Has compassion on me.
5. Deals with my sins once for all.
6. Is faithful to me.

This Christmas ...

Take time to ask God, "Who is a God like You?"

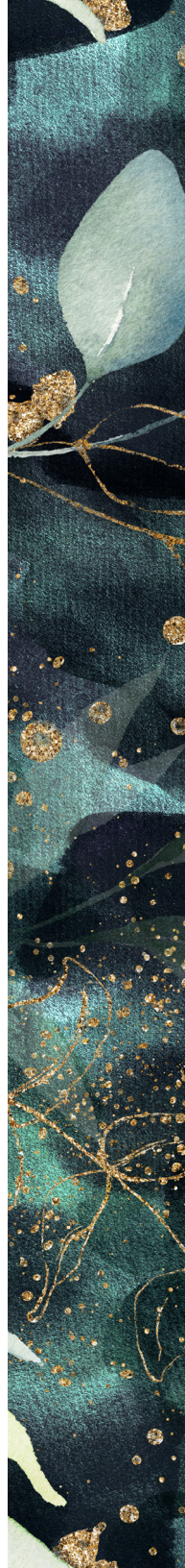
Take time to ask yourself, "What difference does God's love for me make in my life?"

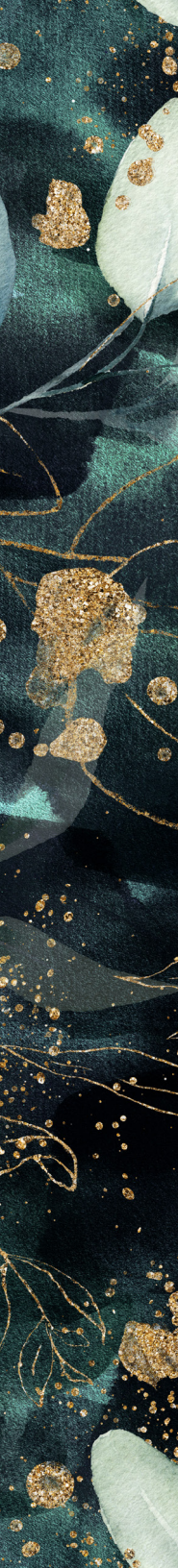
1 John 4:9-11

"By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

What comes to your mind when you think of Christmas? Excitement? Twinkling lights? Snowflakes? Well, maybe not here in San Antonio! Presents? Family? Friends? Or is it one more decoration to put up? One more gift to buy? Where is the money going to come from? I miss my family or my friends? Christmastime is a time of many emotions. For some it is a time of fun filled with family and friends and laughter, but for others, it is time of dread and loneliness and despair.

But for those of us who know Jesus, Christmas is a time of love no matter where we are or in what circumstances we find ourselves. John reminds us in 1 John 4:9, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world..."





When that baby boy was born in that manger in Bethlehem, He was a message sent from God to say, "I love you! I have sent my Son to dwell among you, to take the punishment for your sin, so that our relationship can be restored." And then John says in verse 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." As we reflect this Christmas on the birth of Jesus, let us be filled with the love of God who sent Him, and let us look for ways that we can share that love with others around us.

- Who do you know that needs to be reminded of God's love for them?
- What practical ways can you show love to that person?

Michelle Jenkins - Director of
Children's Ministries, Stone Oak

FAMILY ACTIVITY IDEAS

Make a craft stick nativity ornament for the tree to remind you of God's love seen in Christ's birth.

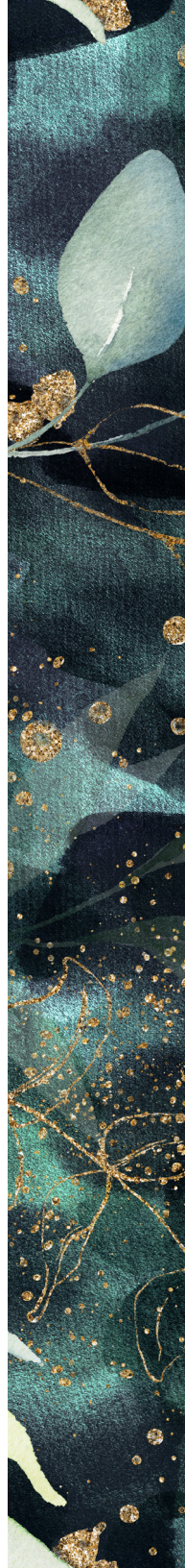
As a family, think of someone you know who might be lonely this Christmas and needs to be reminded that Jesus loves them. Make a goody bag for them. Leave the package on their front porch, ring their doorbell, and leave.

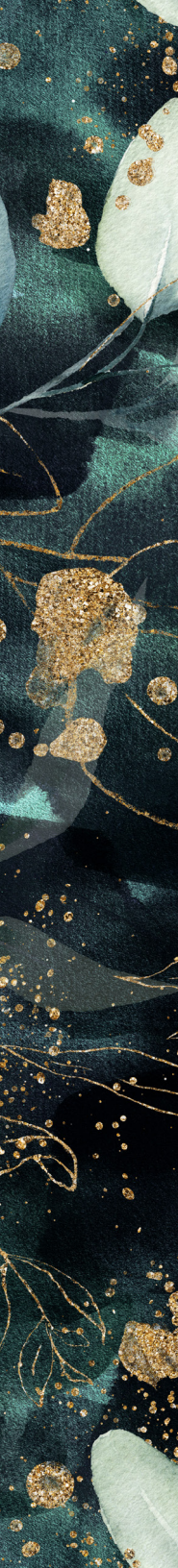
For more ornament directions, check out our Family Activity Guide at waysidechapel.org/advent

Mark 10:17-22

"As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?" But Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth." Looking at him, Jesus showed love to him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But he was deeply dismayed by these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."

The Apostle John explains that it was because of his love that Christ was sent into the world (John 3:16-17). But, what does this love look like up close and in-person?





The story of the “Rich Young Man” or “Rich Young Ruler” is recorded in three of the four gospel accounts. But, Mark alone includes an extraordinary and surprising detail. After confronting the young man’s works-based view of salvation, Jesus speaks directly to the man’s heart challenging him to give up the wealth and power he valued so dearly. According to Mark, Jesus spoke these words not out of spite, or judgment, or anger, or resentment – but out of love.

Unlike the culture’s concept of love, the love of Christ – true love – is not tolerance or blind affirmation. Rather, out of love, Jesus identifies the idol in the man’s heart and brings it into the light, not to deprive him of his possessions, but to give him something far greater – Himself.

As I write these words it strikes me that I have no name to call that young man. Ironically and tragically, he’s only known to us by that which kept him from Jesus –his wealth and riches.

My friends, as we reflect and worship this holiday, may we instead be like the wealthy rulers from the east who laid down their riches at the feet of the newborn King.

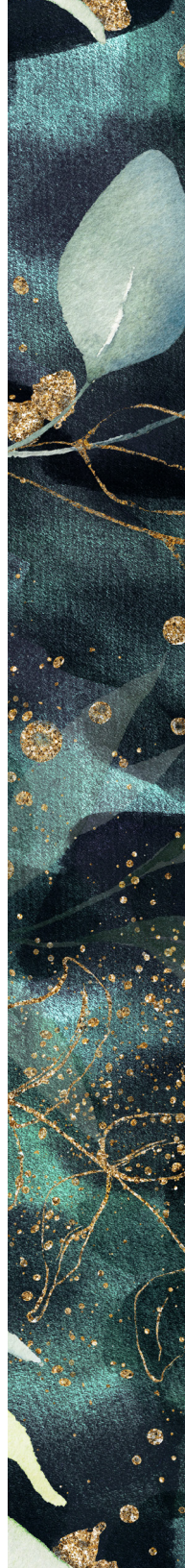
Jeremiah 31:3

"The LORD appeared to him long ago, saying,
"I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore I have drawn you out with kindness."

Christmas! I love Christmas. Presents! I love presents. My childhood memories take me back to the tree, presents, and stockings hung on the fireplace mantel. And yet, aside from those past childhood memories is the true gift of love. My father would read the Christmas story from Luke 2 and we would pray together before opening any gifts on Christmas morning. Now that I am older and have raised three sons, I have a greater appreciation for this time of worship – a time to focus on God's amazing gift of love to us.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."

The name for the LORD here is Yahweh. We have a personal God who wants to be in close relationship with us. He loves us with a perpetual, everlasting, and eternal love.





That's a big package for us to wrap our arms around! Because of His great love for you and me, He continues to demonstrate His lovingkindness to us - His covenant-keeping kindness and goodness. Even before we were, the LORD loved us, and according to His perfect will He purposed to send His very special gift to the manger in Bethlehem - the Son of God wrapped in swaddling cloths. More than the tree, presents, and stockings, this year I want to be drawn more closely to the LORD's everlasting love.

- Is there something in your life today that is hindering you from experiencing the Lord's everlasting love?
- What activity will you include this Christmas to focus on God's gift of love and draw closer in your personal relationship with Him?

Brenda McCord - Director of Women's Ministries

Luke 2:19, 51

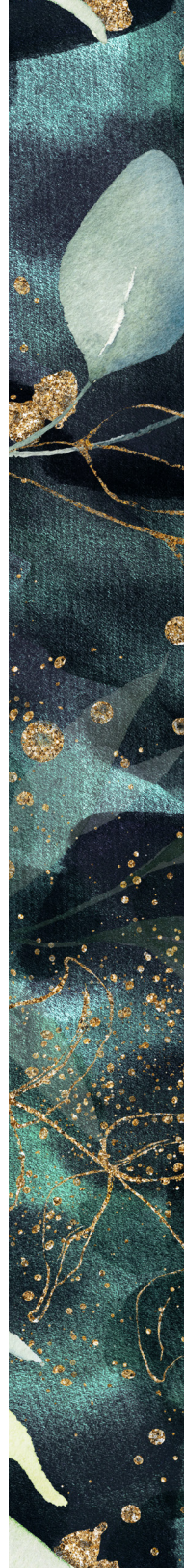
"But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart."

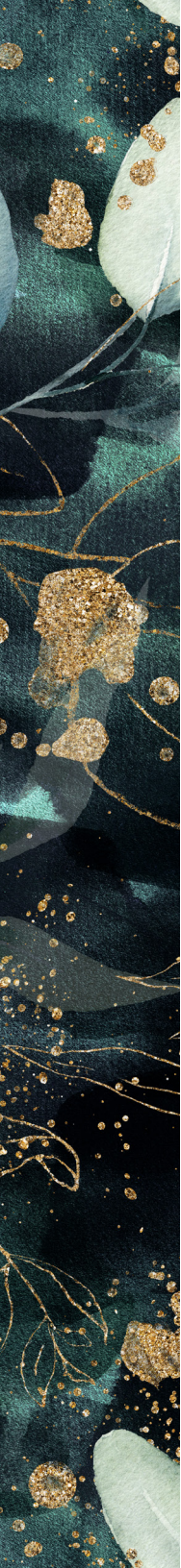
"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued to be subject to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart."

When the shepherds arrive at the manger in Bethlehem to see the Newborn King, they recount to Mary and Joseph how an angelic choir had announced to them the birth of Jesus, "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

And then twelve years later, his parents desperately search for the AWOL pre-teen Jesus when they return to the Passover feast. Unbeknownst to Mary and Joseph, Jesus had stayed behind in Jerusalem and is found 3 days later in the temple. And all those sitting around Him are amazed at the depth of spiritual understanding displayed by this adolescent.

And after both of this incidents in the young life of Christ, we read that his mother "treasured all these things in her heart". What are "all these things"? Like filling the pages of a scrapbook, Mary stored up all of the moments of wonder and amazement that surrounded her extraordinary Child.





All of the events of His life filled out the tapestry of the love and the care she had for Him. From the time that the angel Gabriel announced that she would be the one to bear Messiah, to the miracles performed by this sinless God-Man, to the unimaginable grief she felt as she witnessed her son dying on the Cross, to the glorious joy of His Resurrection, she stored it all in her heart.

- When you consider how the love of God has played out in your life, what do you treasure and have stored up in your heart?

Will Davis - Stone Oak Campus Pastor

What have been your takeaways as you've pondered the theme of love this week? We'd love to hear what God has shown you!

Tag us on our social channels (Facebook & Instagram) @waysidechapelsa and use #waysideadvent

"How delightful on the mountains
Are the feet of one who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Isaiah 52:7

This week, we are lighting the Angel candle and focusing on the theme of peace that was proclaimed by the angels as they announced the birth of the Prince of Peace. Through Christ's birth and death, we can have peace with God. And through His work in our lives, we can live at peace with others. We invite you to consider with us what it means to live a life that celebrates the peace of God brought to us in this season!

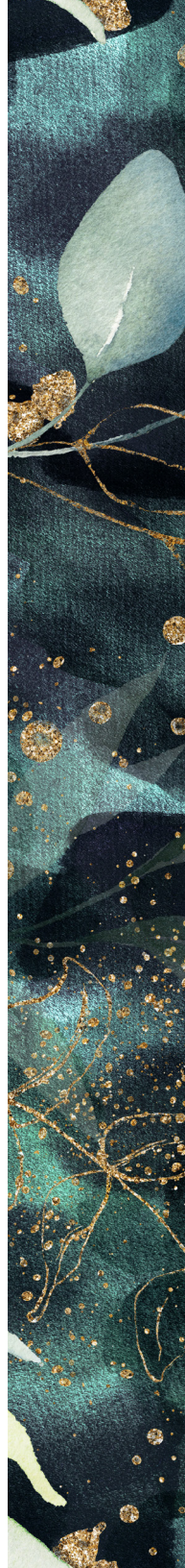
Day One | Philippians 4:4-7

Day Two | Ephesians 2:13-15

Day Three | John 14:25-27

Day Four | Galatians 5:22-25

Day Five | Isaiah 9:6-7





Sunday Passage: Luke 2:8-14

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army of angels praising God and saying,

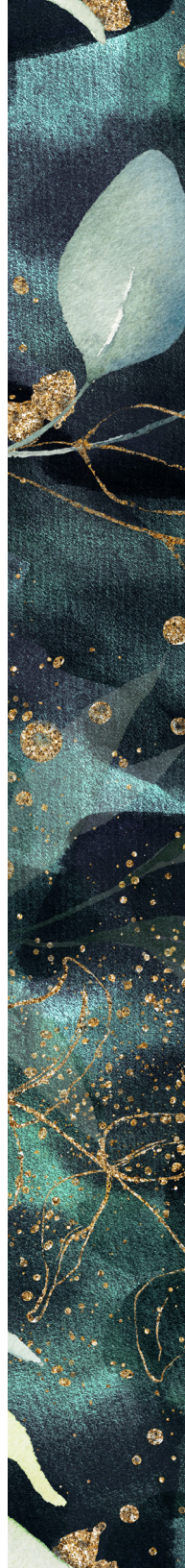
"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased."

Philippians 4:4-7

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all people. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

The dictionary defines peace as "freedom from disturbance; tranquility". Is that what the peace Paul talks about in Philippians means? That we won't experience trouble? That we won't have any disturbances? I don't think so. In fact, when we look at Paul's life, it was far from tranquil - he was shipwrecked, stoned, thrown in jail, and yet he talks about peace. Paul says in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This is a peace that is not freedom from trouble but comes in spite of trouble. And Paul tells us how to achieve this peace. Rejoice and pray.





Does this mean we need to be happy about our troubles? No, but it does mean that we can rejoice in who Jesus is – God sent to dwell among us. When we do this, our perspective shifts from our troubles to the God who created us, who knows us, and who loves us so much that He became one of us for a time. Then, when we remember that instead of being anxious we can take our troubles to God who always hears us, God’s peace fills our hearts. Do our troubles go away? Not always. But when we rejoice and pray, God’s peace comes. It may not make sense; it is not a peace that can be explained, but it is God’s peace. Friends, wherever you are in life, may you experience “the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension” this Christmas season.

- What troubles do you need to take to God today so that you can experience His peace?

Michelle Jenkins - Director of Children’s Ministries, Stone Oak

Ephesians 2:13-15

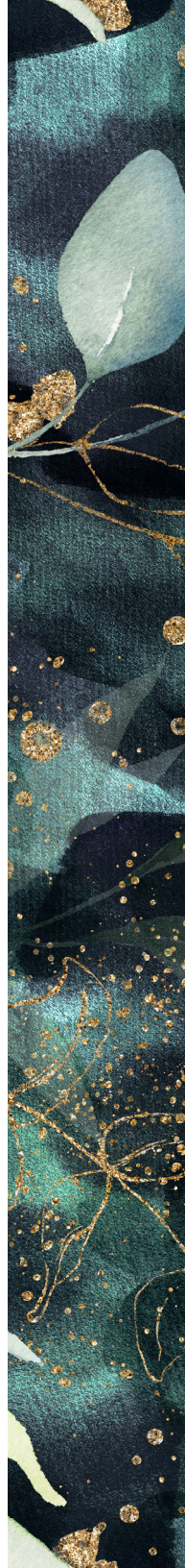
"But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the hostility, which is the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, in this way establishing peace..."

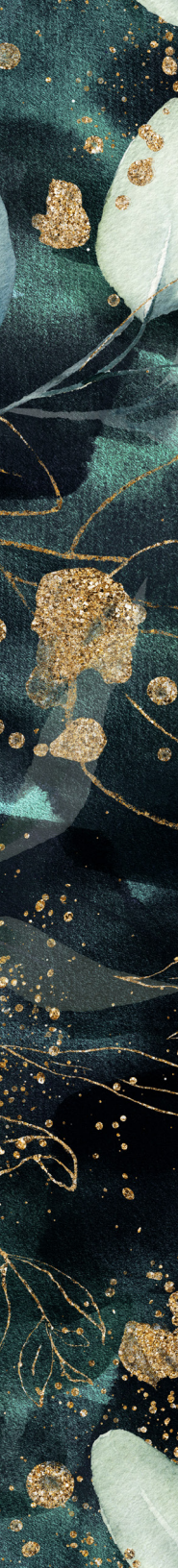
When I was in high school, my youth pastor used to tell us to watch on Christmas Eve how the world settles down just a bit. I think of that every year and wonder if he was right. Some years, I think so. Other years, I'm not so sure.

The idea of peace is discussed a lot at Christmas. What kind of peace? What does that really mean?

Jesus made peace between us and God by being the perfect and permanent sacrifice for our sins which had previously separated us from a holy God.

The "two" referred to in this passage are Jews and Gentiles. There is no longer enmity between the two because we are both one in Christ because He alone can redeem us all.





Jesus is our peace. He made us at peace with God through His death and resurrection. He made us at peace with others.

Do we always see that peace reflected in the Christmas season? I still wonder about that, but I do know that in Christmas we see the beginning of the peace that is reflected in faith and that we will see in eternity. We look forward to that day.

Tim Nowell - Pastor of High School Ministries

FAMILY ACTIVITY IDEAS

Make an angel card to give away.

Spend time as a family talking about things that are bothering you right now. Write them down on sheets of paper. Then spend time praying together -- praise God for who He is and tell Him about your troubles. When you are finished, crumple up your "troubles" and throw them in the trash (or in the fire if you have a fireplace and it is cold enough to have a fire).

Create a string of fruit to hang like a garland to help you remember the fruit of the Spirit. Label each piece of fruit with one of the qualities mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

For more card directions, check out our Family Activity Guide at waysidechapel.org/advent

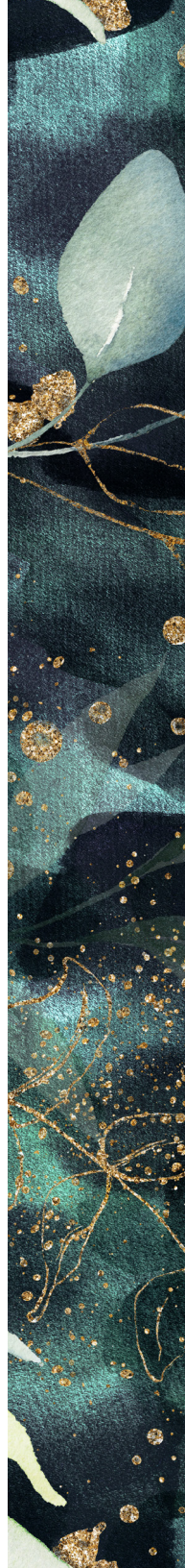
John 14:25-27

"These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you. Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful."

This Christmas it is my desire for each of us to enjoy a very special gift. After these past months of uncertainty, concern, and difficulty, our hearts yearn for a taste of peace. The world offers a false peace that seems to satisfy for a short time in the midst of happy circumstances. Yet our daily lives are filled with trials and difficulties and genuine peace seems elusive, hard to grasp.

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."
~ John 14:27 (New Living Translation)

When we experience God's gift, it is an inward peace initiated in your heart because of the forgiveness of sin and a new relationship with God.





The One who offers this gift to you and to me is our Savior, Jesus. He entered this world as a helpless babe and walked on the earth as a man. After three years of ministry, Jesus spoke these words of comfort to His disciples and told them the Father would send the Holy Spirit to help and teach them.

Take some personal time and “unwrap” this gift of peace. A thankful heart accepts forgiveness, rejoices in God’s love, and embraces His peace. Even though there is difficulty and suffering in your life, verbally express or write down your thoughts of personal trust in God. Tell Him that you truly believe He will fulfill every one of His promises. This Christmas may our hearts overflow with the gift of peace.

- Are there troubles or fears that are keeping you from tasting God’s peace right now?
- Set aside some quiet time to listen and sing the hymn, “Like A River Glorious”. Reflect on the words in the chorus – “Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.”

Brenda McCord - Director of Women’s Ministries

Galatians 5:22-25

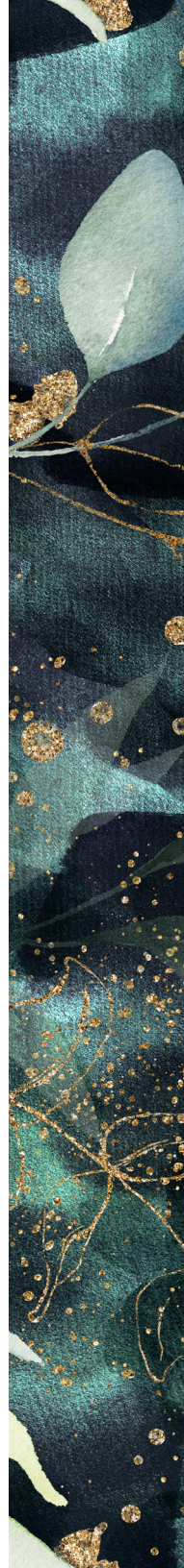
"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

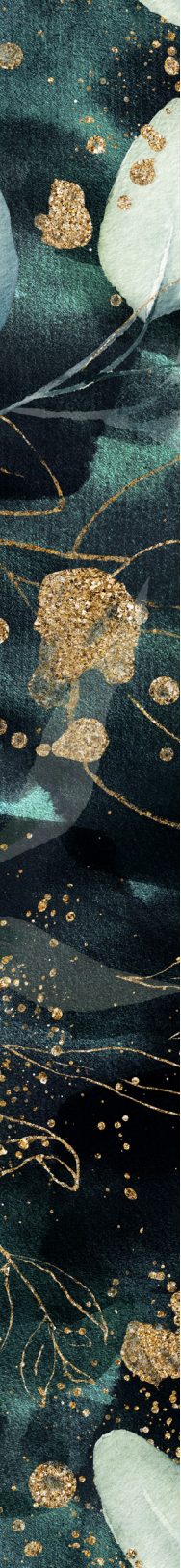
If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit as well."

Did you know the fruit of the spirit is not a coconut?

Even so, I bet you're singing the song in your head right now! The Fruit of the Spirit reminds us of who we are supposed to be. These are the attributes that are supposed to be evident in the life of those who claim Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

So, of course, it would make sense that the angels would sing of God's peace when they arrived on the scene glorifying His Name to the shepherds.





In this season, do you feel like you have peace? If you don't feel at peace, do you know that it is something God freely offers to you? The holidays can be stressful for many reasons. We remember loved ones who were with us last year but are absent now. We think about budgets and the stress and worry of parties and presents.

God offers us peace. I pray that in this season of remembering the gift of God's Son to us, you would find rest in the peace that God offers to us all year long.

And while you are remembering that peace in your own life, I pray you would seek to help those around you find peace as well.

Ronald Long - Pastor of Middle School Ministries

REFLECTING ON PEACE

As we continue to ponder the theme of peace brought to us in this season, we encourage you to take time to worship and thank God for the promise of peace we have because of the gift of His son!

You can find a Spotify playlist of songs on our website at waysidechapel.org/advent.

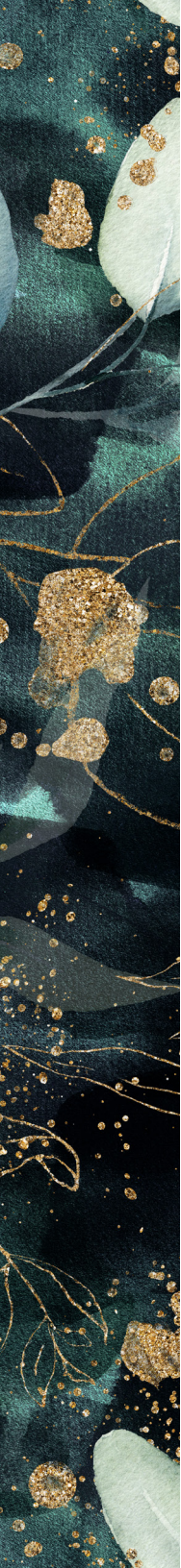
Isaiah 9:6-7

"For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of armies will accomplish this."

This amazing passage of the child prince who will reign eternally on the throne of David presents four throne names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The assignment of these names to a child has given Jewish theologians significant struggle for years since they should only apply to God the Father.

As believers we know Jesus as the God Man, born in a stable and placed in a manger, and yet He is the eternal Son of God. He was sent by the Heavenly Father to make a way for each of us to become His sons and daughters. Through this personal relationship with Jesus, we experience the gift of His peace.





Someday, the Prince of Peace, Jesus, will return and establish His Kingdom here on earth just as it is in Heaven. There will be no end to the increase of His government or the gift of His peace.

- Focus on these four names of Jesus and ask the Lord to direct your heart toward greater peace.

Walt McCord - Associate Pastor

What have been your takeaways as you've pondered the theme of peace this week? We'd love to hear what God has shown you!

Tag us on our social channels (Facebook & Instagram) @waysidechapelsa and use #waysideadvent

"Clap your hands, all you peoples;
Shout to God with a voice of joy."

Psalms 47:1

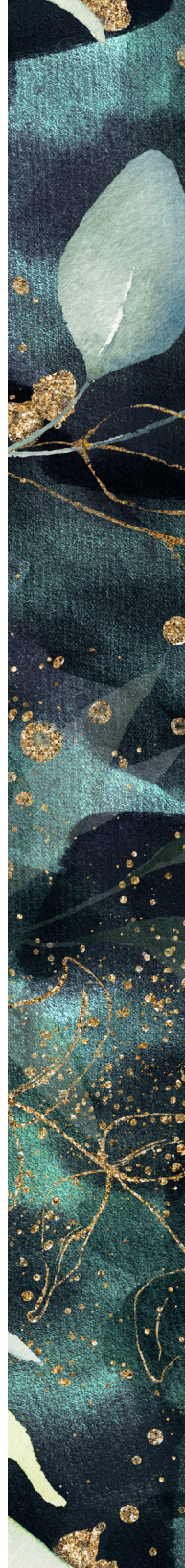
This week, we are lighting the Shepherd's Candle and focusing on the theme of joy that was evident in the shepherd's response (and later that of the wise men) to the news they were given. As we have considered the themes of hope, love, and peace that flow through this season, our final theme reminds us that the response to all that this season holds is joy. We can celebrate with joy the beauty of this season and the gift God gave us many centuries ago!

Day One | 1 Peter 1:8-9

Day Two | Matthew 2:10-11

Day Three | Psalm 16:8-11

Christmas Eve | waysidechapel.org/christmas





Sunday Passage: Luke 2:15-20

"When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen Him, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

1 Peter 1:8-9

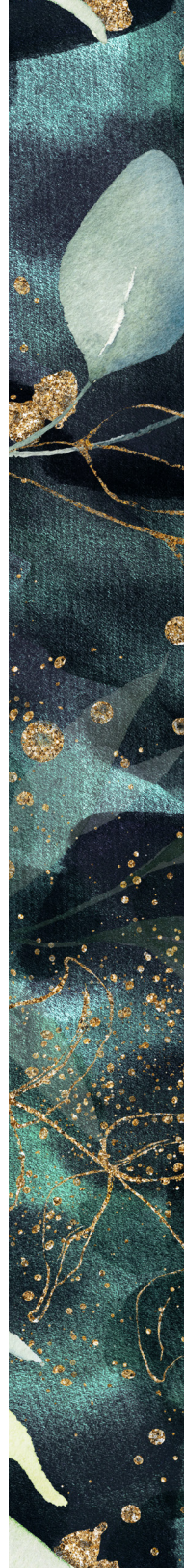
"...and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

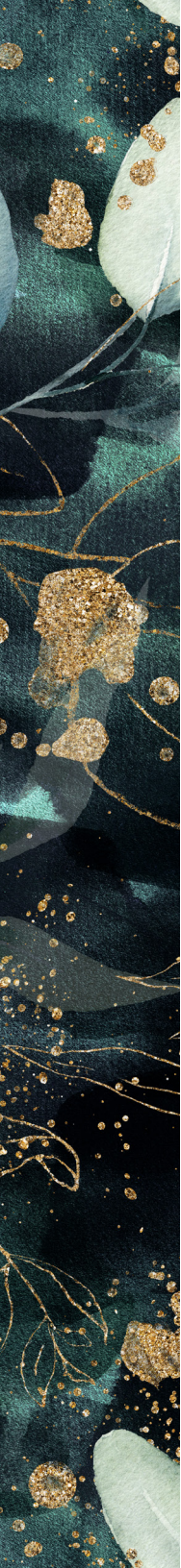
I love that the reaction of the shepherds when they heard the good news was to go immediately to see the Savior. I wonder how exciting such a meeting would have been!

Today we are surrounded by representations of Jesus. We see Him in the nativity scenes and on the cross. We see him represented in pictures and in movies.

The reality is however, we have not seen the physical form of our savior like those shepherds did that day.

Even though we have not seen Him, we can still experience the same joy that the shepherds did.





Peter reminds us that we can rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy because we have received the goal of our faith. Our salvation.

Let's not ever lose the joy of knowing that God sent His Son for us. Even though we have not seen Jesus, we can worship Him. Even though we have not seen Him, we can rejoice and believe in Him. Even though we have not seen Him, we can know that He loves us and we can return that love to Him. Even though we have not seen Jesus, we can live a life of joy

Ronald Long - Pastor of Middle School Ministries

FAMILY ACTIVITY IDEAS

Use a candy cane to tell your child and others about Jesus.

As a family, go caroling in your neighborhood. Knock on doors and when someone answers sing songs that share the joy of Jesus' birth.

Make a J ornament to remember the joy we have in Jesus. Use pipe cleaner with beads, dough, or construction paper to make your J.

For more ideas, check out our Family Activity Guide at waysidechapel.org/advent

Matthew 2:10-11

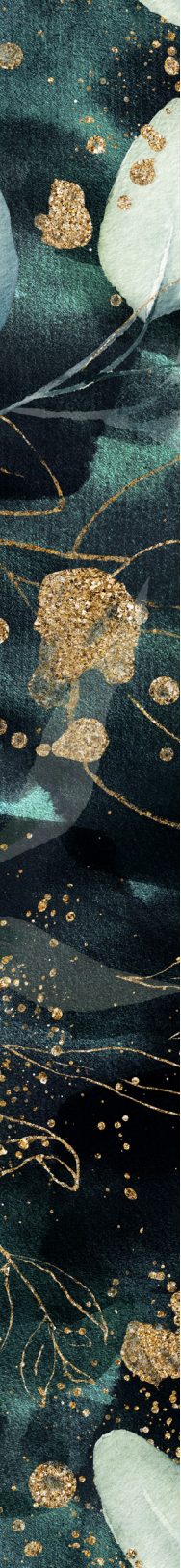
"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And after they came into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Many Christmas cards and Nativity scenes include images or figurines of the wise men at the birth of Christ. But when the Magi followed the star they had seen in the East, they arrived, not at a manger, but at a specific "house" (Matthew 2:11).

This indicates that Jesus was no longer a baby but a Child when these special guests arrived in Bethlehem.

Centuries before, the prophet Micah had said that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). And now God uses this celestial light to supernaturally guide these specialists in astronomy to this extraordinary Child who would become the Light of the world.





Upon their arrival, the wise men appropriately respond with joy and worship of the Lord. They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. They also brought gifts that no doubt sustained the family during their time in Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15).

The King of Israel is worshiped by Gentile leaders. What does this say about His own people's response to His arrival?

- What 3 gifts did the Magi bring to Jesus?
- What symbolic significance is seen in these gifts?

Will Davis - Stone Oak Campus Pastor

Psalm 16:8-11

"The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;

You support my lot.

The measuring lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

Indeed, my inheritance is beautiful to me.

I will bless the Lord who has advised me;

Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.

I have set the Lord continually before me;

Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;

My flesh also will dwell securely.

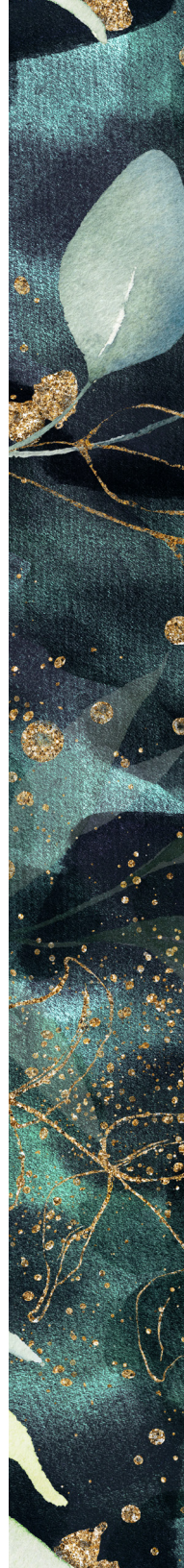
For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;

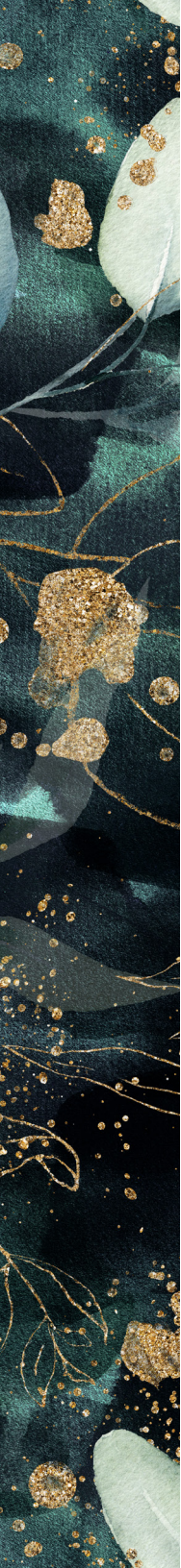
You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

You will make known to me the way of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.





"The first Noel, the angels did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; In fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep. Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel."

Many years before the shepherd's rejoiced in Jesus' birth, David penned Psalm 16, expressing his confidence and joy in the refuge and protection the Lord provides. But this Psalm didn't only apply to David. It looked forward to the Messianic King, who would find His joy in the Lord, and would never see decay because of the "path of life" in resurrection.

"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let you faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" Psalm 16:8-11.

May we find joy in the presence of Jesus. Amen.

Stephen Lay - Pastor Connect, Men's Ministries, & Leadership Development



We hope this devotional has allowed you to connect more deeply with the themes of hope, love, peace, and joy that we celebrate this season!

We invite you to join us Christmas Eve as we celebrate Christ's birth. **Visit us at waysidechapel.org/christmas to reserve your seat today!**