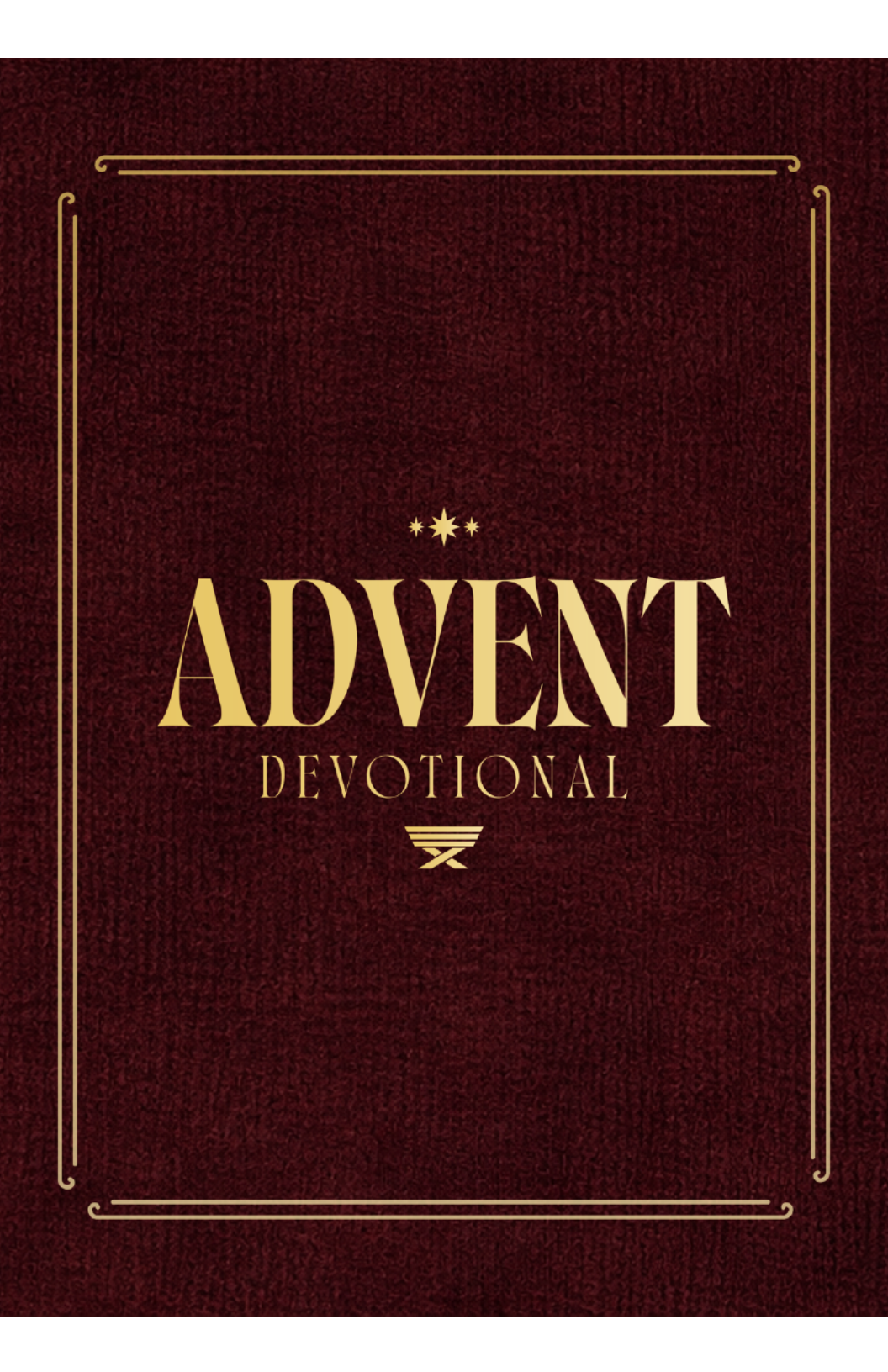

ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL

HOPE - DAY 1

Isaiah 9:2-6

The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
3 You shall multiply the nation,
You shall [b]increase [c]their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness [d]of harvest,
As [e]men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as [f]at the battle of Midian.
5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will [g]rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

When the Israelites were walking through a time of great darkness, God promised to send a Light—not only to shine upon them but to bring hope to all who were living in the shadow of death. That Light is Jesus, the promised Messiah, who is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Maybe you find yourself walking through life in the darkness and desperately need the Light of Christ to shine into your heart to draw you to Him. Or maybe you know the Light, but the weight of life, the busyness of life, or the struggles you are facing have caused that Light to seem dim. Wherever you find yourself today, Advent invites us to pause, turn our hearts toward God, and remember the hope we have in Jesus. He is the Light that darkness cannot overcome. He will not abandon us or leave us to

find our own way. He walks with us, leads us through the darkness, and reminds us that hope is never lost when our eyes are fixed on Him.

Reflect: Take a moment to sit with these names and titles. Which one resonates with your heart the most in this season of life? Do you need the wisdom and guidance of the Wonderful Counselor? The strength and power of the Mighty God? The comfort and steadfast love of the Everlasting Father? Or the peace that only the Prince of Peace can bring?

Pray: Heavenly Father, I pray that it is this Advent season that draws our hearts back to You, the One who is our True Light. May our attention, our hope, and our gaze be fixed on Jesus—the One who has come, who is with us now, and who will never leave us. We praise you for the hope we have through Jesus. Amen.

HOPE - DAY 2

Isaiah 40:31

Yet those who [a]wait for the Lord
Will gain new strength;
They will [b]mount up *with* [c]wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

Even the strongest people grow tired sometimes, but God's power never diminishes or fades. He is never too tired or too busy to listen. God alone is our strength and our hope. His strength gives us the hope and endurance to keep going, even when life feels overwhelming. As a wife, mom of five busy kids, a job, school, and all the other things- life feels uncertain most days. And because I am only human, I grow weary. There are many moments when I feel absolutely stretched thin and wonder where the strength to keep going will come from. But as I wait (mostly patiently) on the Lord and fix my eyes on the hope of my future salvation, I am reminded time and time again that my strength does not have to come from within myself. In fact, it should not come from myself. Jesus' first Advent brought the promise and reality of salvation, and His second Advent will bring its complete fulfillment. What a hope we have in Him! As I look forward to that day, I must draw my strength from Him and Him alone. We can keep running, not because we never grow tired, but because He sustains us. His strength is made available to us in our weakness, and He gives to us what we need for each new day.

Reflect: What areas of your life feel weary right now? Where are you trying to find strength in yourself rather than relying on the Lord? What might it look like to wait on Him and draw your strength from Him today?

Pray: God, we are weary. We know that You are the source of our strength and hope. Help us seek You instead of trying to do everything in our own strength. Remind us that through Jesus, we have access to You and to a strength greater than we can imagine. With every breath, teach us to hope on You and You alone. Amen.

HOPE - DAY 3

Titus 2:13

looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

As we continue our Advent devotions, we find ourselves surrounded by a sense of anticipation. Christmas lights are going up, trees are being decorated, and the air seems alive with excitement. But what is the source of all this joy and anticipation? At the heart of it all is the celebration of Jesus' first Advent—the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior into the world so many years ago.

And yet, as Paul reminds us in Titus 2, our hope doesn't stop with looking back at what God has done. As followers of Christ, we are called to live with our eyes fixed on the blessed hope of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the fulfillment of His first Advent, while eagerly anticipating His second Advent, when He will return in glory. We are not simply looking backward at a promise fulfilled; we are looking forward to a promise yet to come. What a beautiful hope we have! The God who faithfully fulfilled His promise to send a Savior will also faithfully fulfill His promise to send Him again. As we celebrate His birth this Christmas, may our hearts be filled with anticipation for His return. Our hope is not found in the temporary things of this world, but in the eternal promise of Christ.

Reflect: When you think about the hope of Jesus' second Advent, what comes to mind? Are you living with your eyes fixed on the temporary things of this world, or is your gaze fixed on the eternal hope we have in Christ?

Pray: God of Hope, we praise You for the gift of salvation. We praise You because You faithfully fulfilled Your promise to send a Savior, and through Jesus, we have a hope that does not waver but is certain. As we celebrate His first coming, help us eagerly anticipate His return. Keep our eyes fixed on You and our hearts anchored in the hope of Your promises. Amen.

HOPE - DAY 4

Romans 15:13

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is something about the Christmas season that makes us more open to thinking about hope. I see it in my children's faces as we drive around town looking at Christmas lights and in the excitement of celebrating Jesus' birthday. There is an anticipation and joy that seems to fill the air. But sometimes, in the midst of all the busyness and expectations of the season, we find ourselves feeling overwhelmed, anxious, uncertain, or frustrated. Paul's words in Romans 15 offer such encouragement! He doesn't give us a checklist of things to do to create more joy or manufacture more hope. Instead, he points us to the source of both: God Himself. He is the God of hope, and He generously fills us with joy and peace as we believe in Him. This is not a hope that shifts with our circumstances or disappears in the midst of suffering and pain. It is a hope firmly rooted in who God is and, in His faithfulness, to keep His promises.

At Christmas, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus and the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior. But we also look eagerly toward the future, anticipating the day when Jesus will return and put an end to all pain, suffering, and brokenness once and for all. We live with hope because we have seen God fulfill His promises in the past, and we can trust Him to fulfill every promise that is still to come.

I love that Paul uses the word *abound*. We aren't simply meant to have a little hope or hold on to just enough to get through the day. We can abound in hope! Not because our circumstances are always good or because life is free from hardship, but because our hope is in a God who is greater than our circumstances. And this hope is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us.

Reflect: What are you struggling to have hope about this Advent season? Are you trying to find hope through your own efforts or looking to God as the source of your hope? How might trusting in His faithfulness change the way you approach your circumstances?

Pray: God, thank You for always being our source of hope. Thank You that we live on this side of the fulfillment of Your promise to send Jesus. We can look back and be encouraged by Your faithfulness, knowing that You did exactly what You promised. And we can look toward the future with confident hope, knowing that You will fulfill every promise still to come. Fill us to overflowing with abounding hope through the power of Your Holy Spirit. May that hope spill into the lives of those around us, and may our words, actions, and attitudes reflect Your love throughout this Advent season. Amen.

HOPE - DAY 5

Peace (Reconciliation)- O come, O Come Emmanuel

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice [a]is calling,
"Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
4 "Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
5 [b]Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
And all flesh will see *it* together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

As the holidays approach, I look forward to a lot of things. This year I am hopeful that my family will be able to visit. Along with them coming, there are many things that must be accomplished before they can come and stay. Toys organized, floors mopped (and mopped and mopped), furniture rearranged, bathtubs scrubbed, and a myriad of other things.

We see in Isaiah 40 the preparation that someone else would do for someone far greater than ever before, the promised savior. This prophecy looks to the way of the Lord and makes it ready, valleys lifted, rough ground smooth, rugged terrain a broad valley. This preparation was what had been anticipated for generations of Israelites, the world was broken and need a savior. This savior was Jesus. So as we celebrate Advent, we are reminded of the hope the world now has because of Jesus. But we are also reminded that we are still waiting, the world is still broken, sin still present. But we look forward to the day when suffering, sickness, and death no longer have a hold on this world. All things will be restored.

Reflect: How are we preparing our hearts for Him? What things are crowding out the opportunities to slow down, make room for Jesus and remember where our hope lies?

Pray: God, thank you for keeping your promises. Thank you that you sent Jesus, our hope and our Savior. Prepare our hearts for this season. Reveal to us where we need to change our hearts desires to align with yours. We love you, amen.

PEACE - DAY 1

Psalm 72:18

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.

Peace is talked about a lot during the Christmas season. We sing about peace on earth and desperately want more peace at home (with threats of major consequences if peace is not restored!) But peace can feel elusive. Our lives are busy, packed with one thing after another. The world is filled with wars, destruction, and devastation. Anything but peaceful. But in this psalm, the psalmist reminds us of the biggest factor: God alone is the One who works wonders. He is not limited by our own circumstances; He is not afraid of wars. He does not see our weaknesses and give up. No, he is the God who keeps His promise. He is the one who works in ways beyond what we can see, He brings Peace.

The promised Messiah had been long awaited, generations had been looking. They lived in hardship, uncertainty, captivity, and suffering. But at long last, God worked a wonder, He sent the Savior, not as a conquering king, but a baby. The promised Prince of Peace had arrived. This peace bringer did not require us to be perfect, expect our circumstances to be at a certain place before accepting us. His peace doesn't waver, it stays. I can try and manufacture peace by controlling my circumstances, but true peace comes only from knowing the Savior, the one who alone works wonders.

Reflect: Where in your life are you longing for peace right now? Are you trying to find peace by attempting to control your circumstances? How does remembering the wonder of Jesus' birth help you rest in God's faithfulness today?

Prayer: God of Peace, you alone work wonders- beyond what we can fathom. Thank you for the greatest wonder—sending Jesus to bring us peace with you. Forgive us when we look for peace outside of you. Help us trust that you are working, even when we do not see it. Help us to worship you with grateful hearts this Advent season. Amen.

PEACE - DAY 2

Isaiah 11:1-2

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Every spring I have big plans to grow a garden. This year I actually did it. Got the seeds, attempted planting, watered and waited. Some things grew, but the plants that did the best- the ones that were volunteers from last year's tomatoes- in places I did not plant them! It was a beautiful reminder that I can do all the right things, but the Lord will grow as He will.

In Isaiah 11, God gives this same message of hope. The nation of Israel had been struggling. Hardship after hardship from their unfaithfulness. But we see this imagery of a tree stump. Now, as a wife of an arborist, who also owns a stump grinding business, I have some expertise on this. A stump might look like it is over and done with, but if left alone, a new tree can grow from that very same stump. God promised the line of Jesse that a new shoot would grow. A King was coming! This King would be unlike any other king before, the Spirit of the Lord would rest on Him, of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. And just as God promised, Jesus came. The Righteous King, full of the Spirit, bringing the peace that only God can give- not the mere absence of suffering, but the deep unshakable assurance that comes from being reconciled to God and resting in His perfect rule.

We might be tempted to look for peace in our own ways. Just as we might be tempted to assume a tree stump is over because we do not see anything, but just as God grew a shoot

from the stump, He alone is the source of peace. Jesus will one day reign fully and completely, and there will be complete restoration and his Perfect Peace will cover all the earth. Peace has come in the form of Jesus, our promised king. And it is because of that that we can rest in him.

Reflect: Where are you searching for peace right now? Are you looking for peace through changed circumstances, or learning to rest in the person of Jesus? How can you trust His wisdom, counsel, and strength in an area where you feel uncertain or overwhelmed?

Pray: Father God, thank you for taking what seems to be dead and bringing life. Thank you for Jesus, who came full of your Spirit, wisdom, and peace. Forgive us when we falter, remind us of your strength. Keep our gaze fixed on you as we look towards the second Advent. We love you, Amen.

PEACE - DAY 3

Luke 1:26-33

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,**27** to a virgin [a]engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the [b]descendants of David; and the virgin's name was [c]Mary. **28** And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, [d]favored one! The Lord [e]*is* with you." **29** But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. **30** The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; **33** and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

Imagine being Mary, going about your day. And all of a sudden, an angel appears before you that changes not only your life, but the course of the entire world! And before Mary could figure out what was happening, Gabriel gives her a comforting reminder, "Do not be afraid." The angel says she will have a son, and he will be the one that they have been looking for, the Messiah, the Son of the Most High. What was Mary thinking? How could this happen? What would this mean for her future with Joseph?

I love this reminder during the Advent season, God's plans almost never look the way I want or expect them. Sometimes with uncertainty, more questions, and often circumstances that feel overwhelming. Longing for peace, wishing we knew what was coming next, what the end results would be. But Mary's story reminds me that peace is not found in the knowing of the details. It is found knowing the God who holds the details. This baby Mary was to carry was not just any random baby, this baby was Jesus. The Son of the Most High. The promised king whose kingdom would never end. It was the fulfillment of His

promises to send a savior. Through this baby, we can have peace.

Reflect: Maybe this Advent season finds you facing unexpected circumstances, unanswered questions, or a future that feels uncertain. Like Mary, you may not understand how everything will unfold. But you can rest in this truth: God is with you. The same God who fulfilled His promise through the birth of Jesus is faithful today.

Pray: God, we thank you for the fulfillment of your promises. Thank you for sending Jesus through unexpected means. Help me to be patiently waiting on you in the in between, keeping my focus on You alone. Strengthen us to rest in your presence, and as we celebrate Jesus' birth this advent season, remind us that peace, true peace, is found only in him. Amen.

PEACE - DAY 4

Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all [a]comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Christmas is often described as the most wonderful time of the year, but if I am totally honest, it can also be one of the busiest and most stressful. Between the schedules, expectations, preparations, and everyday challenges of life, it can be difficult for me to quiet my heart and experience peace. Paul reminds us that peace doesn't come from having everything figured out or having every circumstance fall into place. Instead, peace comes from bringing everything to God in prayer. Notice that he says “everything”. Nothing is too small, too overwhelming, or too insignificant to bring before Him.

As we celebrate Advent, we remember that Jesus came into a world that desperately needed peace. Through Him, we have peace with God, and we can experience His peace even when life feels uncertain. This peace doesn't always make sense to the world, because it isn't dependent on our circumstances. It is a peace that guards our hearts and minds as we trust in Christ.

Reflect: What worries are you carrying this Christmas season? Have you brought them to God in prayer, or are you trying to carry them on your own?

Pray: Father, thank You for the peace we have through Jesus. When worry and anxiety wiggle into our hearts, remind us to turn to You in prayer. Help us trust You with the big and little things, knowing that You hear us and care for us. Guard our hearts and minds with Your peace as we celebrate the gift of Jesus this Advent season. Amen.

PEACE - DAY 5

Joy (Celebration)- Joy to the World

Isaiah 12:2-6

"Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation."
3 Therefore you will joyously draw water
From the springs of salvation.
4 And in that day you will say,
"Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name.
Make known His deeds among the peoples;
[a]Make *them* remember that His name is exalted."
5 Praise the Lord in song, for He has done [b]excellent things;
Let this be known throughout the earth.
6 Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Christmas often is filled with lots of things that bring us joy. Family, special traditions, gifts, celebrations. But what happens when that excitement doesn't quite fill the hole, what if things aren't turning out how we had thought? Where do we find joy when we are struggling? Isaiah 12 reminds us that God himself is our salvation! He is our strength and our song, the very reason why we can rejoice. The imagery in verse three, joyfully drawing water from the springs of salvation- what a beautiful image!

As we celebrate Advent, we remember the greatest reason for our joy: Jesus came to be our salvation. He entered this broken world to rescue us from sin and through him we can have a restored relationship with God. One day he will come back and make all things new and perfect!

Reflect: Where are you looking for joy this Christmas? How can you share the joy of Jesus with someone around you this season?

Pray: Father, thank you for being our salvation, our strength, and our song. Thank you for sending Jesus to rescue us and we have a reason to rejoice! Help us to not depend on external circumstances for joy, but to continually find our joy and hope in You. Remind us of your presence as we celebrate the gift of Jesus with our hearts full this Advent. Amen.

JOY - DAY 1

Matthew 2:10-11

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11** After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they [a]fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Can you put yourself in the place of the wise men? Following the star, with just a promise found in Scripture, and then- the fulfillment of that promise is there! The joy that they felt- I can't even imagine. They did not just come to see him from afar, they drew near. They fell down and worshipped with all their beings. They opened their treasures, presented them, and worshipped.

There are many times in this season that I get busy doing. The parties, the presents that need to be wrapped, the kids and all the many activities, and in all of that I forget that my best gift to Jesus is not gold, frankincense, or myrrh- it's my heart. My time, my affection, my worship. The wise men brought their gifts, but more than that, they brought their worship. They recognized Him as the promised Savior and that fulfillment filled them with overwhelming joy.

Reflect: What are some things that are competing for your attention and joy this season? What could you lay before Jesus this Advent as an act of worship?

Pray: Father, thank you beyond what my words can express for sending Jesus, the greatest gift that we could ever receive. Forgive me when I get distracted by the excitement of Christmas that I take my eyes off the real reason why we celebrate at all- the first advent of Jesus. Give us hearts like the wise men, eagerly seeking Jesus and then filled with great joy when we draw near to Him. Let our lives be an offering of worship and let us find our greatest joy in Jesus alone. Amen.

JOY - DAY 2

Psalm 146:5-10

How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God,
6 Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and all that is in them;
Who keeps [a]faith forever;
7 Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free.

8 The Lord opens *the eyes of* the blind;
The Lord raises up those who are bowed down;
The Lord loves the righteous;
9 The Lord [b]protects the [c]strangers;
He [d]supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He [e]thwarts the way of the wicked.
10 The Lord will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
[f]Praise [g]the Lord!

Where do you find your joy? Is it in the things that are happening around you, the circumstances in life? Those things can bring happiness, but they change. People disappoint us, life gets hard, things turn out different that we had hoped. Psalm 146 reminds me that the true blessing and lasting joy comes only from placing our hope in the Lord. He alone is the Creator of heaven and earth, the faithful one forever. He cares for the hungry, the oppressed, sets the prisoners free. God sees the hurting and raises up those who are bowed down. What a beautiful picture of our God! When life gets heavy, God draws us up out of the darkness. He fulfills his promises. My joy is not dependent on having an easy life, or perfect circumstances- because that will never happen! But it comes from knowing God, the One who sees us intimately, who loves us deeply, provides for us fully, and is forever faithful through

every season. This Advent, seek the joy not in the season, but in God who has given us everything through Jesus. He is faithful, good, and will reign forever!

Reflect: Where are you finding your Christmas joy? Is it in circumstances or in the Lord? How can you reflect God's care and compassion to someone else who is hurting or in need this Advent?

Pray: Faithful God, you never change. Thank you for seeing us when we are hurting, remaining faithful when we are not always faithful. Thank you for the fulfillment of your promises through Jesus. Help us to find our joy in You rather than the temporary things of this earth. When things are hard, remind us that you are still good, you are still faithful, and you reign forever. Let our lives reflect your love and compassion to those around us this Christmas. Amen.

Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
And the [a]Arabah will rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus
2 It will blossom profusely
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the glory of the Lord,
The majesty of our God.
3 Encourage the [b]exhausted, and strengthen the [c]feeble.
4 Say to those with anxious heart,
"Take courage, fear not.
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance;
The recompense of God will come,
But He will save you."
5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
For waters will break forth in the wilderness
And streams in the [d]Arabah.
7 The [e]scorched land will become a pool
And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,
Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes.
8 A highway will be there, a roadway,
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean will not travel on it,
But it *will* be for him who walks *that* way,
And fools will not wander *on it*.
9 No lion will be there,
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;
[f]These will not be found there.
But the redeemed will walk *there*,

10 And the ransomed of the Lord will return
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,
With everlasting joy upon their heads.
They will [g]find gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

This is a bit of a longer passage, but the message is special. This passage in Isaiah gives a picture of hope. And I don't know about you but this year has me needing to cling to hope in a big way. My heart is like the desert, dry and wilderness. But the promise is that even the desert will blossom. God promises restoration, healing, and everlasting joy for His people.

As we celebrate Advent, we remember that Jesus came to fulfill these promises. He came to bring the good news, heal the broken and broken hearted, and rescue the lost. But we also look forward to the day when He returns and makes all things new. One day, the sorrow and sighing will flee, and everlasting joy will be ours! What a reason to rejoice- our joy is not dependent on whether we are walking through a season of abundance or wilderness. It is rooted solely on God restoring all things. The desert will bloom, the weary will be strengthened, and the redeemed will come home rejoicing.

Reflect: Are you walking through a season of wilderness right now? How does the promise of God's restoration give you joy and hope? If you are in a season of abundance, where have you seen God work in your life in the past? How can you praise him for his faithfulness?

Pray: Father, thank you for the promise that sorrow will not last forever. Thank you for sending Jesus to bring salvation and for the hope of the day when You will come again and make all things new. When life feels like a wilderness, help us to remember Your promises and find your joy in You. Strengthen our weary hearts and help us to live in joyful anticipation of Your coming. Amen.

JOY - DAY 4

Luke 2: 8-14

8 In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. **10** But 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; **11** for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is [a]Christ the Lord. **12** This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a [b]manger." **13** And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men [c]with whom He is pleased."

Imagine being one of the shepherds that night. Watching over your sheep, doing your ordinary work, when suddenly the glory of the Lord shines around you! I imagine fear was high on the list of emotions that was probably quickly turned to joy. Why joy? It was not any ordinary baby that was being born, it was the long-awaited Savior had been born! It was that God had fulfilled His promise. The Savior had finally come! And it was not just for a few people; it was for all people! The shepherds, the ordinary working men, were among the first to hear this wonderful announcement. God's gift of salvation was not limited by status, position, or background. Jesus came for us!

As we celebrate Advent, we are reminded that our greatest joy is not found in the season's excitement, but in the good news that Jesus has come. The Savior was born, salvation was made possible, we have a reason to rejoice! The Savior came to rescue His people from sin and bring us back into right relation with God.

Reflect: What is competing for your joy this Christmas season? Have you paused to remember the good news that Jesus came to be your savior?

Pray: Father thank you for the good news of great joy! Thank you for sending Jesus, our Savior and Messiah. Forgive us when we become so distracted by the busyness of the season that we forget the reason why we celebrate. Fill our hearts with the joy of knowing You and help us to share this news with others around us. Let us echo the praise of the angels: Glory to God in the Highest! Amen.

JOY - DAY 5

Love (Adoration)- O little town of Bethlehem

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said: “My soul [a]exalts the Lord,
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
48 “For He has had regard for the humble state of
His [b]bondslave;
For behold, from this time on all generations will count
me blessed.
49 “For the Mighty One has done great things for me;
And holy is His name.
50 “And His mercy is [c]upon generation after generation
Toward those who fear Him.
51 “He has done [d]mighty deeds with His arm;
He has scattered *those who were* proud in the [e]thoughts of
their heart.
52 “He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones,
And has exalted those who were humble.
53 “He has filled the hungry with good things;
And sent away the rich empty-handed.
54 “He has given help to Israel His servant,
[f]In remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and his [g]descendants forever.”

What is the reason why Mary was rejoicing? Have you ever stopped to think about that? She was young, facing an unexpected pregnancy, life full of uncertainty. But she did not despair or fear. She chose to praise. Mary recognized that God was doing something far greater than she could fully understand. He was fulfilling His promise to send a Savior. What I love about Mary’s song is that she reflects on God’s character. He is mighty, holy, merciful, and faithful. It is His mercy that extends from generation to generation. God had not forgotten His people, nor abandoned the promises He had made to them.

As we celebrate Advent, we are reminded of the greatest expression of God's love: He sent his Son into the world to rescue us. Sometimes I struggle to recognize God's love when life doesn't look the way I expected. But Mary's song reminds me that God's love is not dependent on my circumstances, His mercy is constant, his promises are sure, and his faithfulness will never end.

Reflect: Take a moment to pause and remember the love that brought Jesus into the world. The God who remembered His people then won't forget us now. We are loved by a God who keeps his promises. Where do you need to be reminded of God's love this advent season?

Pray: Heavenly Father, Thank you for your constant love and mercy. Thank you for not forgetting your promises and for sending Jesus as the greatest gift of love. When we are struggling with uncertainty, help us remember that Your love never changes. Let us never lose sight of the incredible gift of Jesus this Christmas. Amen.

LOVE - DAY 1

Psalm 24:1-10

The earth is the Lord's, and [a]all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
2 For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.
3 Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?
And who may stand in His holy place?
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul [b]to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive a blessing from the Lord
And [c]righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 [d]This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face—*even* Jacob. *[e]Selah.*

7 Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O [f]ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
8 Who is the King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift *them* up, O [g]ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
10 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory. *Selah.*

Psalm 24 reminds us that the whole earth belongs to the Lord. Sit with that for a minute. He is the Creator, the King of Glory, strong and mighty. And he came into our world in the humblest of ways- as a baby in a manger. What a breathtaking example of God's love! The King of all creation stepped into His broken creation and made a way for us to know Him personally. Not because we had to earn His love or make ourselves worthy, but because he loved us and desired to

bring us into relationship with him. So as we celebrate Advent, I invite you to lift up your head and open the doors of your heart to the King of Glory. This Christmas, in the midst of the busyness, let us make room for Jesus. The King of Glory has come and His love has changed everything!

Reflect: are there areas of your heart that you have not fully opened to the Lord? What would it look like to welcome the King of Glory into those places?

Pray: God of Glory, we cannot thank you enough for loving us so much that you sent Jesus into the world to bring us to you. Help us open the doors of our hearts to you this Advent season. May we seek your face, welcome your presence, and reflect your love to those around us. Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Amen.

LOVE - DAY 2

John 3:16-19

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His [a]only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. **18** He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the [b]only begotten Son of God. **19** This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

Christmas is more than a season of giving, gathering, decorating, and celebrating. At its heart, Christmas is the story of God's incredible love for the world. The manger of Christmas reminds us that love drew near. The cross reminds us of how far that love would go for us. And the empty tomb reminds us that it is His love alone that can offer eternal life.

What a beautiful reminder to me in this season that the Light of the world came in and through Jesus we can walk in the light. The love that God had for my brokenness, my sin, my disappointment, my rejection- He knew all along it would happen. And yet His response was still the same. He sent His Son, not to judge me, but to shine the light of life into my dark heart. I pray this season our hearts are not consumed with the distractions that come so easy, but that we would be people who walk in the light- our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.

Reflect: Am I allowing the love of Christ to shine through my words, actions, and relationships? How can I share the love of Jesus with someone who needs hope this Christmas?

Prayer: God, we thank you that you drew near to us. You thought us worthy even despite all the many times we mess up. Help us to adjust our hearts and minds toward you in all that we do. Let us share your love with others today as you have so lavishly loved us. Amen.

LOVE - DAY 3

Isaiah 7:10-14

0 Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying,**11** "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; [a]make *it* deep as Sheol or high as [b]heaven." **12** But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" **13** Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? **14** Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a [c]virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name [d]Immanuel.

One of the most beautiful promises of Christmas wrapped up in one name- Immanuel. God with us. Long before the baby in the manger. Long before the shepherds heard the news. God had promised a savior would come. In Isaiah 7, King Ahaz was facing a time of uncertainty and fear. God invited him to ask for a sign, but Ahaz refused. Although his response may have sounded spiritual, his heart was not demonstrating the trust God desired. Yet, even in the midst of this situation, God gave a promise. He declared that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son, and His name would be Immanuel. This was not a miraculous birth alone- this was the declaration that God's faithfulness and His desire was to be with his people.

Reflect: Think about what that means- God did not look down from Heaven and leave us to figure it out. He stepped down, and came near. Are we trusting God's presence even when we cannot see what he is doing? How can I help someone else experience the comfort and presence of God this Christmas?

Pray: Thank you for being a God who keeps your promises. Thank you that even generations before the birth of Jesus, you had already spoken your plan for a savior. Thank you Immanuel- God with us. Remind us that You are present when times may be uncertain, help us to trust You even when we do not understand what You are doing. Let us never lose sight of the miracle of Your presence in our lives. Amen.

LOVE - DAY 4

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and [a]dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of [b]the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The miracle of Christmas is beyond what we could fully comprehend. That the God of all the heavens and all the earth- stepped from his throne and into this mess of a world renders me speechless. The Word became flesh. Jesus, Son of God, came to dwell among us. Not from afar, with us. The Creator a part of His creation. The King of kings came as a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. I ask myself why? Why would he do such a thing? Love. He loved us to come near. He loved us enough to suffer the pain of hunger, weariness, sorrow, rejection. He loved us enough to be human. Through everything, He revealed the glory of the Father- full of grace and truth. I love that John describes Jesus as being full of grace and truth. We need both in our lives. Grace reminds me that I am loved, forgiven, and offered mercy. Truth reminds me of Who God is and how He calls us to live. Jesus did not compromise one for the other- He was the perfect expression of God's character. As we celebrate Christmas this advent season, it is so easy to get swept away by the external beauty of the season. The lights, decorations, the songs- but John 1:14 invites us to dig deeper into the manger scene we have become so familiar with and sit with the incredible truth of what happened there.

Reflect: Have I truly stopped to consider the miracle that God became flesh and dwelt among us? Am I allowing the grace and truth of Jesus to shape my life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, How amazing is your love. Thank you for sending Jesus into this world full of brokenness. For drawing near. Thank you for the Word made flesh and dwelt among us. Forgive us when the often-familiar story becomes commonplace, let us see anew the miracle that it is. Spark in us the wonder of our first love for you. Thank you for the grace and truth that covers and guides us. As we celebrate Christmas- remind us that the greatest miracle is not simply a baby born, but that You came and dwelt among us. Amen.

LOVE - DAY 5

Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord a new song;
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.
3 Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.
4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are [a]idols,
But the Lord made the heavens.
6 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

7 [b]Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
[c]Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
8 [d]Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name;
Bring an [e]offering and come into His courts.
9 Worship the Lord in [f]holy attire;
Tremble before Him, all the earth.
10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved;
He will judge the peoples with [g]equity."

11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea [h]roar, and [i]all it contains;
12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy
13 Before the Lord, for He is coming,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness.

Advent is the season of anticipation, a time when we have prepared our hearts to celebrate the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever known: the coming of Jesus. This psalm calls all of creation to sing a new song to the Lord, proclaiming

His salvation, and to declare His glory to all the nations. God's love was not just empty promises but were made evident through the gift of His Son. Jesus entered this world in His first Advent as the fulfillment of God's great love for all of humanity. He came to bring salvation, hope, and the promise of life everlasting. Verse 13 reminds me of just how God's people anticipated the coming Messiah for so long, we are now celebrating His first coming but we are in the same expectant waiting as generations so long ago were experiencing. Jesus is the greatest gift of love, and His coming is the reason for all creation to rejoice!

Reflect: How does the coming of Jesus reveal God's incredible love for us? Is there someone in your life who needs to experience the love of Christ through your words or actions?

Pray: God of Love, you are good. You reign over all creation, splendor and majesty are before you, strength and beauty are in your sanctuary. Let us never forget the anticipation of the second advent of Jesus when creation will be perfected and we will stand in your presence whole and complete. We love you, Amen.