

**THE TRUE MEANING
OF
CHRISTMAS**

**DAILY DEVOTIONALS
FOR ADVENT 2021**

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND**



ADVENT SEASON

Advent is an annual season of patient waiting, hopeful expectation, soul-searching, and calendar-watching marked by many churches, Christian families, and individual followers of Jesus. There's no biblical mandate to observe Advent. It's an optional thing—a tradition that developed over the course of the church's history as a time of preparation for Christmas Day. Many of us find observing Advent to be personally enjoyable and spiritually profitable. The English word "Advent" is from the Latin "adventus," which means "coming." The advent primarily in view each December is the first coming of Jesus over 2,000 years ago. But Jesus' second coming gets drawn in as well, as the popular Christ carol "Joy to the World" makes plain:

*No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow, Far as the curse is found.*

Advent begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends Christmas Eve. That means that, depending on where it falls on the calendar each year, it can be as early as November 27 or as late as December 3. This year it begins on November 28. Christians throughout the world have their different ways of celebrating Advent. Some light candles. Some sing songs. Some eat candies. Some hang wreaths. Many of us do all of the above. Christians have developed many good ways of extending the celebration of Jesus' coming beyond merely the short 24 hours of December 25. The incarnation of the Son of God, "for us and for our salvation," as the old creed says it, is too big a thing to appreciate in just one day. Indeed, it's something the Christian will celebrate for all eternity.

Members of First Presbyterian Church of Newport, as well as friends and family of our church members, have contributed to this year's Advent Booklet. Some of our devotionals this year are from members and friends from previous Advent Devotionals written years ago.

What we wish most for Christmas this year is to join you (and many others) in seeing Christ in all his fullness. We want for all of us to be able to love what we see with a love far beyond our own half-hearted human capacities. This is our goal with these Advent devotionals: to see and savor this Jesus whose first "advent" (coming) we celebrate, and whose second advent we anticipate. Our prayer is that this little devotional will help you keep Jesus as the center and the greatest treasure of your advent season. Candles, trees, and wreaths have their place, but we want to make sure that in all the Christmas rush and celebrations, we adore Jesus above all.

Angels and the Wonder of Christmas

For me, the Christmas/Advent season is a time of wonder. I love reading all the passages of Scripture that surround the birth of our Savior. One of my favorite sections of Scripture is found in Matthew 1:18-25. It is here we read about the birth of Jesus. These verses may not be as familiar to us as those found in Luke chapter 2 but they are equally as important. Matthew writes about Mary and her husband Joseph and the amazing birth of Jesus. What stands out to me in these verses as well as all the others in Scripture is the role the angels play in this world changing event.

It has often occurred to me that if the angels were removed from the story, who could truly understand its meaning and depth? Would Mary or Joseph or the shepherds understand the birth of Jesus and the magnitude of this event without the messages the angels brought? Without the angels, would the message of the incarnation have remained a mystery? Would Joseph have turned Mary out? Is it possible that the shepherds might not have come to the manger in Bethlehem? The angels are important to the story because they are messengers who bring the God-directed revelation of the birth of Jesus to others. Now, I am not advocating the worship or an unhealthy obsession with angels. I am pointing out the importance of their role and how it fits into the wonder of Christmas. It reminds me that my God is truly an awesome God and his ways always have an eternal effect.

In **Matthew 1:21-23** Matthew writes, *“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).”*

The angels would bring God-directed revelation, *“good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”* Yes, it would start with Mary and Joseph, but the *“good news of great joy”* would change history and countless lives. It did then and it continues to do so today. Truly, this is the season of wonder.

Merry Christmas and blessings to you and yours!

Pastor Mike Herring



Monday, November 29

Where are you?

Scripture: “. . . *the Lord God called to man: ‘Where are you?’*” Gen. 3:9

The first question that God asked humans was, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). He asked this of Adam and Eve as they tried to hide from Him. God, of course, knew exactly where they were. He always knows where each of us is, and where our heart is and what resides in it. In this season of Advent, a season of arrival, the question “*Where are you?*” still resonates.

God knows where we were—lost. And so, He sent His Son to us, and in the humblest of circumstances. He meets us where we are. He meets us now. He loves us and wants to connect with us, still. When He asks, “*Where are you?*” it is not because He doesn’t know, but He wants you to ask that question of yourself. Are you part of His family? Are you living in His will, His “*good, pleasing, and perfect will?*” (Romans 12:2) Are you seeking Him daily?

And if you are feeling lost, even just a little lost, know that the Lord knows exactly who and where you are, and He is calling for you. He says, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness...*” (John 8:12). Remember, in this Advent season, He has come to us. He stands at the door and knocks, seeking our answer. So, let our answer to “*Where are you?*” be, “*I am in Christ. I am following Christ.*”

Prayer: *Lord, You know where we are, always. Yet we are truly lost until we turn our heart to You. You came to us out of pure love, so that if we believe we may not perish. Let each of us find You by losing our old self and embracing our new life in You, forever.*

Tim Schultz



Light

Scripture: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* John 1:4-5

Winter sun sometimes takes on a hazy effect in December. Not like the bright, long light of summer or the sharp focus that autumn brings, almost like a photograph that is overexposed. Days grow shorter, and if you're like me, your very being craves light. The warmth of the firelight and illumination of lamplight. Lights strung on the Christmas tree to sit in the sentimental glow of the holiday.

Only light pushes back darkness. Man-made light, however, burns out. Fires die and lamp bulb filaments last only for a time (even the new ones!). Have you ever done a precheck on your Christmas tree lights only to find out that the ones working so beautifully last year mysteriously broke in the storage box?

Yes, even the sun, moon, and stars will disappear one day. The new heaven and new earth will need nothing except the very presence of Christ. ***Shekinah*** is a Hebrew word referring to God's abiding presence that means “to dwell or permanently stay.” In the Old Testament, ***shekinah*** was found in the prevailing cloud that led the Israelites during the exodus from Egypt, resting on the Ark of the Covenant, and residing in the Temple in Jerusalem. Nowhere do we find a more profound description of the present and future permanence of God's shining glory than in John, chapter 1:4-5: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* During the Advent and Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of the One True Light, Jesus.

But what we must not lose sight of is that He still dwells among us. No matter how much this present darkness closes in on us, it is still pushed away by the Light of Men, the Word, the One who has been since the beginning. Jesus. So, while we celebrate an event that happened long ago, we also abide in the present and future glory of His glorious light with a sure hope.

Prayer: *Dear LORD, we pray that we will be people who abide in the light of Christ. We pray that the light of your Word would expose the thoughts and attitudes in our heart that are not of You. We pray that during this season that we would be lights for Jesus in our homes and community. Amen.*

Irene Herring



Give Thanks

Scripture: *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth.”* Luke 1:13-15

I think of this passage often during the advent season. God answered Jen’s and my prayers four times—and I was equally afraid each time. But *God has a plan* and we discovered it together. From that first moment in the hospital, and every day thereafter, our children have truly been our joy and delight.

We are stewards of the youth and they are our future. Zechariah and Elizabeth set the bar incredibly high raising *the forerunner of Christ*. Our role in fostering the youth of our congregation can feel daunting at times, but God guided Zechariah and Elizabeth, and He will guide us too.

Take a few minutes to give thanks for your families: your children, grandchildren, (great grandchildren), nieces, and nephews, as well as your brothers and sisters in Christ. Let’s also give thanks for John the Baptist, who taught us to repent and prepared the way for Christ.

Prayer: *Let us pray for strength each day to nurture our families, to raise them in a community of faith, and to be an example in Christ.*

Greg Bloom



The Wonder of Christmas

Scripture: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...”* John 1: 1,14

What is most wonderful about Christmas for YOU? Is it the gifts? The Christmas tree? The bright lights? The gathering of family and friends? All of that is truly wonderful, no doubt about it. But for me, and for the entire world really, these are not the true wonders of Christmas. What is it that we really celebrate? Why is there even such a thing as Christmas? What is it that makes it so truly special, so wonderful, so miraculous?

For Christians everywhere, we know the answer. We know that what makes Christmas so wonderful is that we celebrate the birth of Jesus. OK, but every baby's birth is a small miracle, so why is this one so special? Well, it was not just any birth. This was not just any baby. This birth, in that little town of Bethlehem, as foretold by Micah and Isaiah over 700 years before it happened, so long ago and so far away, was unique. It was divine. It was the incarnation, the becoming flesh and blood, of God. God the Father is Spirit. He is eternal. He can never die or cease to be the Great I Am in whom we live and move and have our being. So, what then? Why was this baby born that we celebrate at Christmas and worship forever?

What is so wondrous about Christmas is that it marks the day that God became flesh and dwelt among us! Why did He do that? Why did He have to do that? It's because we are flesh that He had to become flesh. We are imperfect. He is perfect. We cannot make ourselves perfect, try as we might. Ever since Adam and Eve we have been imperfect. We humans left God to try to do it ourselves, to be our own little gods, and failed miserably, as He knew we would. So, God knew from before time that He would have to rescue us from ourselves. This baby, the one and only sinless human ever, the only human being that was also divine, fully man and fully God, bled and died on the cross to atone for the imperfections of us all, and make a way for us to come home to God our Father. The penalty for sin is death, and so He died. As a human, He could die.

But then... He arose! Those whom He has called and brought to faith in Him are saved, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and made right with God. His Holy Spirit now fills us and is working in us to bring us to sanctification. The Holy Spirit of God is transforming us, perfecting us. As brothers and sisters of Christ, purified by His blood, we are made sinless, acceptable to God, able to stand in His presence to worship and adore Him forever! Amen! Merry, wondrous, Christmas!!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you, for becoming flesh as Jesus and dying for us to make us holy and part of Your family forever!*

Living by Faith

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:11

Another Advent season is upon us. This will be my 85th Advent season. As has been our family's tradition, we will put up our tree and decorations the day after Thanksgiving. In spite of Covid 19, we will attend the various Christmas Services, worship and sing praises with our friends and family, send cards and give gifts.

We celebrate two Advents. The first was when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We celebrate His birth, life, death and resurrection. We now celebrate the second Advent when Christ will return and establish his Kingdom that will know no end. We believe these things that we have not yet seen through our faith in Jesus Christ, and it is through that faith we receive God's free gift of our salvation.

This past year, I was diagnosed with recurring non-metastatic prostate cancer. Shortly thereafter, Alma was diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer, stage 4. She has never smoked, but she has a genetic mutation. We have the faith that God is able to deliver us from this, but whether He chooses to or not, we will try, by faith, to serve Him as best we can. It is because of these events that I have only recently understood a verse the I have struggled with for years. That verse is James 2:17. It has caused arguments between many Christians where it says "*Faith without works is dead.*" It seems to contradict Ephesians 2:8-9. As I was reading Romans 1:17, where it says "*the just shall live by faith,*" and Hebrews 11 describing the amazing things accomplished by people in the Old Testament "*by Faith,*" I suddenly realized that we are saved *Through* Faith but we are to live out our Christian life *By* Faith. That is what I believe James was referring to.

Those Old Testament believers saw great miracles that we do not see today, but those of us who came after Christ birth, life, death and resurrection have a freedom they did not experience. Advent - the beginning of the great divide between old and new testament believers. What a great season.

Prayer: *Father, help us to live our lives by faith. As we celebrate the birth of your Son, may we realize the importance of doing your work and be faithful in accomplishing it. We ask these in the name of your son, our savior, Jesus. Amen.*

Dick Hanson

The Kingdom of God

Scripture: *But he (Jesus) said "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent."* Luke 4:43

Over the last year, God has placed on my heart and that of friends, the Kingdom of God. Luke 9:2 states, *"and he (Jesus) sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."*

The kingdom of God was on Jesus's mind and heart. Shouldn't it be on ours? But how to comprehend such a concept? We can begin to understand through a study of the scriptures and pondering what is said about it.

The kingdom of God is through all time and outside of time. It is eternal. I believe it is past, present and future in character. What does this have to do with Christmas? When Jesus came to earth as a newborn and later performed miracles, he ushered in the kingdom of God for humans. The past.

Jesus taught about the kingdom. He said the kingdom of God is within in Luke 17:21 KJV. Other translations indicate it is "among you." The present. It is within us when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior and then allow him to reign in our hearts and lives.

The future is spoken of in Revelation 11:15 when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven which said "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

So, the first Christmas ushered in the kingdom and it is reigning in our hearts now and will be the most glorious kingdom in heaven and earth in the future. We should be eagerly awaiting his kingdom yet to come. Thy kingdom come, Lord!

Prayer: *Thank you Lord for Your kingdom. Thank You for coming to earth and ushering in Your kingdom. THY KINGDOM COME, LORD!*

Cindy Price



Sunday, December 5—Second Sunday of Advent

Part of the Family of God

Scripture: *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ . . . and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*

Matthew 1:1, 16.

One of my favorite gospel songs is Bill and Gloria Gaither's "Family of God." The lyrics ring out:

*"You will notice we say "brother and sister" 'round here,
It's because we're a family and these are so near;
When one has a heartache, we all share the tears,
And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear."
"I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, The Family of God."*

There is no one like you. You are unique! No one has a fingerprint like yours, a DNA that exactly matches yours. Roots are important, and not just to plants. Your DNA shows what tendencies you may have regarding disease, intellect, temperament, and so much more.

There are 47 names listed in Matthew 1, most almost unpronounceable to many of us. Some are great or notable individuals in the Bible, and some not so great. From paupers to princes, shepherds to slaves, kings to harlots spanning twenty-one centuries of human experience, the list ends in a stable on a starlit night with one name that is above every other name: Jesus!

The family tree of our Lord does not end with His ancestors, because His descendants—you and I—have been "*washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood,*" and born again as joint heirs with Jesus into His family forever.

Do you know the full name of your great-grandfather? Or anything about his life? Chances are your own children's grandchildren will not even know your name. But what really matters is this: are you, your family, and friends' true roots in Jesus' family tree--"The Family of God?"

Prayer: *Our heavenly Father, may we be more concerned this season about being on Your list than any other Christmas list. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior! Amen!*

Don Estes



Showing Our Love

I think birds are some of God's most affirming creations of Creation. For instance, did you know that Blue Jays aren't really blue? Their feathers layer in a unique pattern that looks blue when caught by light. When I consider the thousands of bird species, their distinctive calls, feather designs and habitats, I understand that only a Master Designer could have painted such portraits with His very breath.

I happen to love chickadees. They hang out at our bird feeders and on our deck. I plant four-season potato vines in window boxes every spring, and by autumn, chickadees joyfully swing on their long tendrils. One will jump on and call until a few others join the party. Chickadees are social birds with intricate habits. God built into them a radar for danger. If they feel threatened, they will call their famous "chick chick chickadee" until up to as many as 50 arrive. They ball themselves up to look bigger and fiercely protect each other. It's also how they survive winter.

Is there some wisdom here? God breathed the Holy Spirit into us as believers to give us wisdom and discernment, to help us band together, support one another, and love each other in the face of adversity. Our community and unity in Christ should be one of the distinctive marks of the church, because that's one of the primary purposes why God made us.

The Christmas Season gives us an opportunity to show our love to the world as a community. The only covenant agreement that God requires to join is to accept, by faith, Jesus Christ as our Savior and to follow Him in discipleship. There is no Part 2, Section 3a or fine print. No requirement of blue blood heritage, former rank or privileged income. Jesus humbled Himself to be born into a disreputable town to a teenage girl, to be crucified like a common thief, and to hold out his nail scarred hands in invitation to be set free.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for humbling yourself to be laid in a feeding trough as a newborn and nailed to a cross. Thank you for your example of love while walking the earth. We pray that you will show us ways to humbly love each other, ways that draw others to ask, "What's different? How can I have what they have?" In Christ, Amen

Irene Herring



Listen to the Music

Scripture: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”*
Proverbs 3, 5-6

To encourage her young son's progress on the piano, a mother took her boy to a concert by the famous Polish artist and patriot, Jan Paderewski. As they were seated, the mother spotted a friend and walked down the aisle to greet her. When the lights dimmed, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that her child was missing. Suddenly, the curtains parted, and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Then, leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child, and he added a running obbligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience, and the audience was mesmerized.

This story, found on the Internet and sent to me by a friend, cannot be proven, but its message rings true. Whatever our situation in life, however desperate, God is whispering deep within us, "Don't quit. Keep playing. You are not alone. Together, we will mesmerize the world with our song of peace and hope."

What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't always graceful flowing music. However, with the love of God, our life's work can truly be beautiful. The next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. You may hear the voice of the Master, whispering in your ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." As we approach this Christmas season and listen to the beauty of its special music, let us remember how deeply God loves every one of us, and how we can accept and share that love with those around us.

Prayer: *Help me to hear your voice, oh Lord, to listen to your guidance and lean on your support. Do not let me give up. Help me to “keep playing.”*
Amen



Sandra Lang (Advent 2005)

Wednesday, December 8

The Things Above

Scripture: “*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*”
Colossians 3:1-2

The second verse of one of my most favorite Christmas carols, *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*, reads:

Still through the cloven skies they come, with peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds, the blessed angels sing.

What loveliness and grandeur to hear a chorus of angels and have these awe-inspiring messengers of God bend on hovering wing to sing over a weary world! That God in His mercy and grace would send such heavenly beings down from above to sing us His love song is astounding.

Though I know that Jesus is my Savior and that my eternity with him is assured, too often these days I seem to find myself amid the cacophony of babel sounds where the noise is so deafening that I strain to hear the angelic melody above the worldly tumult. My focus is drawn towards earthly cares that are ultimately transitory and have no lasting, eternal value. I grow weary.

Each time I come to this realization, I am reminded anew that my heart and head need to shift focus upward to the things above...to the things that are of God, to the things about which the angels sing. They sing of hope, of promise, of joy, of peace, and of eternity with the One who was, is, and is to come.

Just as God continues to speak to us through His Word and in that still small voice that beckons us to attune our ears to the timbre of His will, so too the angels bend toward the earth that all may hear more clearly the melody writ above. So too, just as I am in this world, but not of it, I am heartened to know that when I listen with mind and heart to things above, I hear the heavenly chorus and join in the refrain of glory.

Prayer: *Lord, I pray that each day you will draw me closer to the things above as I journey along this earthly path towards a heaven bound destination. Amen!*

Stacie Schultz



Thursday, December 9

God's Word

Scripture: *“For this day 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 swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”* Luke 2:11-12

This verse took on new meaning this year after doing a Bible study called *The Rock, The Road and The Rabbi*. The study explains more about Jewish traditions and the geography of the events in the Bible.

The shepherds that this message was addressed to are not your ordinary shepherds but Levitical shepherds tending the sheep for Passover sacrifices. The mangers were really caves, not wooden structures, and the lambs needed to be unblemished. The shepherds would swaddle the clumsy newborn sheep to protect them.

Jesus was to be our Passover lamb, sacrificed for all our sins so He was born in these same caves and swaddled just as the lambs would have been. Once again God has layers of details in His word which I have missed all these years.

Prayer: *Father God, thank You for Your provision of the perfect Passover lamb, Your Son, for my sins. Thank You for Your Word and all that You reveal in it. Continue to teach me and show me things that I miss and do not understand. Thank You for new insights into Christ's birth and life here on earth. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

Deidre Ricci



A Precious Gift

Scripture: *But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."* Luke 1: 30-33

You are so soft, small and breakable, yet you are strong.
Together we fought to bring you into this world.
I pushed, you squeezed, and then you breathed.

How can you be a king, a babe on a throne,
a never-ending kingdom?

I cannot see it, cannot imagine You:

My flesh, My blood

My very heart

Carrying the weight of the world.

And yet

You're not alone

We never were

What He promised came to pass.

And when I look into your eyes, I see Him.

I see Life.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to see you for who you truly are: a precious gift we do not deserve, but would be lost without. Open our eyes to Your mystery, Your power, and Your life-giving love. Amen.*

Charlotte Ricci



An Indescribable Gift

Scripture: *“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”*
Luke 2:20

When our boys, Sam and Nick, were little, Christmas Eve followed an enjoyable, if predictable, pattern. Dinner was followed by Christmas Eve service at our church, which always ended with the lights dimming and members of our congregation lighting each other’s candles while singing “Silent Night.” Back at home, the boys would prepare for bed, then leave cookies, milk and a note for Santa on the hearth. Cindy and I would help them collect a few things to pass the time before they fell asleep, including the instruments they would use to call us to their room in the morning.

We would watch TV and wait for the noise to subside so we could begin our night’s work of painstakingly transforming the living room into a place of wonder, undeterred by often understated warnings such as “batteries not included” and “some assembly required”. Sometime after 6 a.m. (and hopefully at least an hour’s rest) Cindy and I would be stirred by a cacophony of horns, drums, and various electronic noise makers. This was our cue to come get the boys and escort them to the top of the stairs to see if anything happened overnight. Each year our greatest present was the look of elation and wonder on their faces as they rounded the corner and looked downstairs into the living room at the transformation which had taken place while they slept.

Twenty years later, the memories of their joyous faces remain long after all traces of the objects which elicited those reactions have faded into obscurity. It is hard for us to comprehend the mind of our omniscient Lord. What stirred within His being during creation when He deemed it “Good”? How it must have grieved Him to knowingly watch as His creations abandoned His love for the whims of their own hearts or rejected His offering of love by scourging our Savior and nailing Him to a cross. How must He have felt in that moment when He sent the angel to appear to the shepherds and announce, *“I bring you good news of great joy which shall come to all the people, for unto you his born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”*?

Envision the look of wonder on the faces of the shepherds that first Christmas. Imagine the reverence and awe which surely filled their hearts as they embarked without hesitation on a journey to “see this thing which has happened, which the Lord has made known to us”, and the excitement and joy they must have felt as they faithfully bore witness to all of those things “which had been told them concerning this child.” They responded joyfully as children might, without understanding the magnitude of all our Lord had set in motion that night. The love that Cindy and I felt each Christmas morning as our boys’ faces lit up from the top of the stairs was a faint reflection of the love our Lord feels for each of us in the moment we realize, with the same awe and wonder of those first shepherds, the truth of His eternal gift to us in Jesus Christ, the singular gift which shall never fade into obscurity.

The One Who Never Changes

Scripture: *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.”* James 1:17-18

When I have my quiet time, I sit at a desk by my bedroom window, which overlooks the Sakonnet River. I often find myself thinking that the view is different every day and even from hour to hour depending on time of day, season, and light. I am sure that if I took a photograph even at the same time of day every day for a year none of the pictures would look exactly alike.

We all know that change is happening constantly in all areas of our lives, in our families, in the workplace in school, wherever we are. Sometimes we strive for change and it cannot happen quickly enough for us but at other times change is not pleasing and we have to try and adapt.

God, however, never changes: not his love for us or His word, which teaches us about Him. He loves us now as He did over 2,000 years ago when he sent His Son. A baby born in a manger, fully human and yet fully divine, who would shed His blood that we might be worthy to one day go and live with Him for Eternity and while everything else around us changes that truth never will.

Prayer: *God, thank you that you are a God who never changes, for the gift of your word and most of all for your Son. In this Advent Season we pray that our lives may continue to be changed in Him that we might draw closer to you. Amen.*

Jan Jones (Advent 2003)



Jesus Was Homeless Too

Scripture: *“Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”* Matthew 8:20

The Boston Common is a beautiful city park. It is visited by thousands of people each December for the purposes of enjoying Christmas lights strung in the trees, to fulfill childhood dreams of a first skate on Frog Pond, or simply as a place for couples to stroll along lovely, winding paths. The Boston Common is also the symbolic home for the 6,001* homeless people in Boston.

Matthew, who has been homeless for five years, said to me with enthusiasm one day, “Paul, did you know Jesus was homeless?” What a bizarre thought! All the years I have reflected on my Lord’s life on earth, I had never thought of Jesus as homeless. Yet, Jesus was the one who said, “the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” And if I remember correctly, wasn’t He born in a stable “because there was no room for them in the inn?”

There is a special connection, a shared experience, between Jesus and those who are homeless. It may be one that many of us cannot fully understand. Jesus was born to bring salvation and hope. He has an extraordinary concern for those who are naked, hungry, thirsty, and strangers. In the midst of this beautiful season, may we not pass by those in need.

May our hearts be stretched, tugged, and pulled to the extreme. A woman died last night in an outdoor bin filled with clothes for the homeless. At that moment, I am sure Jesus wept.

Prayer: *Lord, we pray this day for all the men, women, teenagers and children who are homeless. We ask that during this holy season, they may experience your love and life in tangible ways. Quicken us to follow in Jesus’ steps with concern for the physical and spiritual needs of all who cross our path in life. We need you Jesus. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel. Come. Amen*

Paul Walkames (Advent 2003)

(* Number from the 2001 census count of those homeless taken by the City of Boston.)

Trusting Him Throughout the Year

Scripture: “⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. . . .¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” (Luke 2:7, 14)

This Christmas will be very special for our family. Our daughter Christine is expecting our first grandson, already named Charlie, who is due on Christmas Day! Naturally, the whole family and our friends are very excited, and can't wait!

We can confidently anticipate what will happen. Christine has scheduled a C-section for December 20, so that is D-Day unless God surprises us with an early arrival. This is Christine's second child, so she knows what to expect. The baby has had good pre-natal care, is healthy, and we anticipate no complications. Little Charlie will make his appearance – safely in the germ-free operating room at Frederick Health Hospital, attended by Dr. Simmonds and the staff, and we fully trust their ability to handle anything. Charlie's birth will quickly be proclaimed in emails and on social media, and everyone will marvel at this little bundle of joy. Even so, it will be a stressful time.

How different it was 2000 years ago. Even though foretold by prophets hundreds of years prior, only the Magi knew when and where Jesus' birth would happen. Young Mary and Joseph, no doubt scared, in a dirty stable with no doctor or even a midwife, were about to have the most wonderful child ever known – the child who would change the world forever. Mary and Joseph put their complete faith in the Lord, and their faith was rewarded.

It is easy for us to put our trust in human doctors and medical technology – both are blessings of our age, but do we put our trust in God in all things? At Christmas we focus on the baby Jesus, but we must never lose sight of the grand scheme of God, and His glory and majesty and grace and love, and remember them every day of the year.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, in this joy-filled season, help us to trust you completely all year round. Fill us with your love every day. Amen!*

Don Fennessey



The First Christmas Eve

Scripture: “[6] *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. [7] And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*”
Luke 2:6-7 ESV

I enjoy the history behind the lyrics of music, especially music during this time of year that often reveal interesting and touching stories. One such story occurred in 1818, when a roving band of actors was performing in towns throughout the Austrian Alps. Their performance on a starry December night in Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria, impacted local pastor Joseph Mohr as the words of the Christ story remained in his heart. On his walk home, Mohr traveled up a longer path home, which took him up a hill overlooking the village.

From that vista, Mohr gazed at the peaceful, snow-covered village. Moved by the muffled silence of the wintry night, Mohr remembered a poem he had written a couple of years before. That poem was about the night when angels announced the birth of the Messiah to shepherds on a hillside. Mohr decided those words might make a good carol for his congregation at their Christmas Eve service. The one problem was that he didn't have any music. The next day, Christmas Eve, Mohr went to see the church organist, Franz Gruber. In only a few hours, Gruber composed a melody to be sung with a guitar. The beloved Christmas carol "Silent Night" was born.

That night, the little Oberndorf congregation heard Gruber and Mohr sing the newly created carol to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar. The rest is history. Believers and nonbelievers alike have sung the now iconic song on Christmas Eve in languages and settings all around the world.

On this eve of Christmas, I suggest that you gather your family together in your home or attend a candlelight service at church and reflect on the silent holiness of this night. And consider those words, recorded so very long ago in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:6-7).

Prayer: *Father, we pray that hearts will be opened this Advent to make room in all our heart for the Christ child, Your Son and our Savior, this Christmas? Amen!*

Don Estes

A Wonderful Christmas

Scripture: *“Declare his glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.”* Psalm 96:3

May we all truly have a wonderful Christmas. How can it be wonderful in these days of pandemics and political divisions? It can be, by meditating on and focusing on God’s wonders! Let’s look at a definition of wonder. It is a feeling of surprise, mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable.

I know of a circumstance that meets all these definitions; a true wonder of God, perhaps a miracle. My husband, Richard, was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia in January 2018. He was given a 2% chance to live. Through prayers and the work of doctors, two transplants and many stays and trips to Boston (Dana-Farber Cancer Institute) and most importantly, God’s grace and healing, he lives!

He now has a 98% chance to live. Life is beautiful. The prayers and support of the church have been beautiful. The ongoing faithfulness of the praying saints (you) was unexpected. The procedures, hospitalizations and driving all around Boston were unfamiliar. My husband’s exact statistical turnaround was inexplicable. All to say the wonders of God make this Christmas a very special one. We are so grateful and pray you also will ponder in your heart the wonders of God this Christmas season.

Prayer: *Lord, we thank you for your many wonders. Please give us the gift of seeing your wonders in our lives this Christmas season, and the heart to be grateful for them.*

Cindy Price



Bethlehem

Scripture: *“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”* Micah 5:2 ESV

If we were asked to name Jesus’ hometown, most of us would probably respond “Nazareth” because it was there that Jesus grew up and spent his entire adult life until he began his ministry.

And yet it is to Bethlehem that the honor goes of being the place of Jesus’ birth. A small, insignificant town in the Judean countryside, a settlement of one of the little clans of Judah. In this day of post-modernity, we often have the attitude that bigger is better. But is that the case here? Is Bethlehem really so insignificant? After all, hundreds of years previously, the prophet Micah had predicted that from Bethlehem would come forth the “ruler of Israel.”

It has been said by some that Jesus was simply a prophet born in a lowly stable in an insignificant town. No, He was more than that, He was the Son of God. Through the simplicity of birth in Bethlehem, God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, Lord and Savior of the world. And so we recognize that God reveals to us the greatness of His Son through the lowliness of a small, pre-chosen town in Judea.

Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, may we realize we are never insignificant when we place ourselves in the center of Your will. We pray in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen!*

Diana Lantz (Advent 1996)



The Forgotten Man

Scripture: *"But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Matthew 1:20*

Joseph is the one person in the Christmas drama seldom mentioned and never quoted, yet the entire narrative hinges on his faithfulness. Mary is quoted, as are Elizabeth, Zacharias, the shepherds, the wise men Herod, Simeon, and even the angels. But there is no record of anything Joseph ever said.

We hear a lot of carols at Christmastime. There are songs about Mary, the wise men, the shepherds, the angels, and the star. Everyone has a carol about them, except Joseph. Hardly anyone sings of him at Christmas.

But there is a reason God chose Joseph to mentor and raise His own son. He was faithful. Each time God sent him a message through an angel, he obeyed immediately (Mt. 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 2:20-22). What faith it took on Joseph's part to believe that message and to trust! He believed God and was married to Mary. Like Mary, he said, "Yes, Lord, regardless!" Our legacy from this forgotten man at the manger is not in what he said but in what he did. The entire story hinges on his obedience to God.

What is the insight for us? Maybe no one takes notes of what you say. Perhaps you have never written a book. Like me, you are just an "ordinary" person. Learn a lesson from another one of us, Joseph, a common carpenter. God uses ordinary people. He chooses people like you and me to do as he commands.

Prayer: *Lord, help us to see today that what we do speaks louder than anything we might say. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!*

Don Estes



Water of Life

Scripture: *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”* John 4:13-14

I just heard a message by a missionary about a nomadic people group who are predominately Muslim. A man from this particular group said that “when church can be found on the back of a camel” then he would know that Christianity would be for him. Because these people are nomadic camel herders, it would not make sense to build a building for them to worship in as they would not be there for long. It is a good reminder that a church building does not make a church. Church is the gathering of fellow believers for teaching doctrine, fellowship, observing the Lord’s Supper and prayer.

My heart is so moved to think of these people who do not have the opportunity to hear God’s word but ‘this new nomadic pattern of the church is already taking shape. The Christians of a particular nomadic people meet together at a well, without any church building, and read and pray whenever they travel. The result is that these few Christians have spread the witness not only to their families, but also to many more people than would have been possible if they had been based in one place.’ There is an Arab Proverb that I have on my fridge which says:

What is the greatest crime in the desert?
Finding water and keeping silent.

When I read this, it makes me think of the living water that Jesus promises us. Water is often a symbol for life. ‘Just as physical water is necessary to sustain physical life on earth, living water is necessary to sustain eternal life with Him.’

So, what is the greatest crime as a Christian?
Finding salvation and keeping silent.

As Christmas approaches, we remember when worship came on the back of camels as the wise men came to worship baby Jesus. I am sure Proverbs 25:25 resonated in Mary and Joseph’s heart, “*Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.*”

Prayer: Lord, please help us to see your good news as lifesaving and share this with the people you bring us into contact with. Amen.

Terri Estes Boshka



Our Legacy

Scripture: *Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*
Psalm 34:11

Many centuries ago, a baby was born into very poor and humble circumstances. To most of the world, his birth went unnoticed and his parents were nobodies. Yet, because of the faithfulness and promises of God, as well as the legacy of two faithful earthly parents, today we know that child to be the savior of the world.

God didn't need Joseph and Mary. He could have sent his son to anyone or in any manner he chose. But he let them be part of the miracle; part of the miracle of the virgin birth and part of the miracle of God showing up on earth in the form of a lowly human being. Their part was their obedience and the legacy they set up and left for that special child. They believed and did everything God told them. Though we know little about Jesus' childhood, we know his earthly parents taught him obedience, faithfulness, and truth.

While our children are not the saviors of the world (though often we parents seem to treat them as such) we are just as responsible to them as Jesus' parents were to him. Our children are watching, as Jesus watched his young mother and his hard-working father. They will live as we live. They will learn obedience, faithfulness, and truth, or a lack thereof. Most importantly, they will learn about that other legacy that was left for us so many years ago.

Prayer: *Our Father, guide us as we teach our children to fear you – through our words and actions. Amen.*

Paulla Estes (Advent 2010)



Tuesday, December 21

Last Minute Gift

Scripture: “¹*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*” (1 Thess. 5:1-2 ESV).

On this day (Dec. 21, 1988), thirty-three years ago, Barbara, our daughter Terri, Nikki, a British teaching colleague of Barbara, Sarah, the sister of our son Todd’s classmate in college, and I gathered around the TV in our flat in London just before 7 p.m. to watch a BBC Christmas Music Special. A few minutes into the program a BBC spokesperson interrupted with an announcement that Pan Am Flight 103, en route to New York City, had crashed near the Scottish village of Lockerbie, 38 minutes after departing London’s Heathrow Airport. As the announcement continued, I received a phone call from my intelligence watch officer at our US Navy headquarters in London, confirming the BBC report. He added that it was believed that a terrorist bomb had caused the crash. The catastrophe claimed the lives of 270: 243 passengers, 16 crew, and 11 Lockerbie residents killed when the airliner’s fiery wing cratered in the middle of their town. One hundred and ninety of the dead were American, including a group of 35 Syracuse University students headed home for Christmas after a European semester abroad.

As we heard the news we initially sat in almost stunned silence because Sarah, who had been in school in England and was going home, had a ticket for that very flight, but had rescheduled her return for a flight that would occur a few days later.

With terrifying suddenness, all those aboard that Boeing 747 and 11 in the village of Lockerbie, were gone. Family and friends of those lost would have unopened Christmas presents under trees that Christmas in 1988, and thousands of family and friends who knew and loved these people would never forget the moment they discovered the nearly unbearable truth. They would forever carry with them in their mind the picture of where they were, who brought the news, on whose shoulders they cried. Even today as I reflect on that day, I know there were regrets by some of things said in haste, with no opportunity to ask forgiveness, and perhaps more regrettably, things left unsaid. How many would mourn the lost opportunity to tell those who were now gone about our Savior and the meaning of Advent and how knowing Him could change their lives?

Looking for the perfect Christmas gift? Share Jesus with someone this Advent Season. It’s a gift that they will cherish forever.

Prayer: Father, help us give ourselves to a world that has long since lost its way, and help us become part of the light on the shore by sharing Your Word, providing people a place of harbor, refuge, hope, relief, and eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Don Estes

What Child Is This

Scripture: *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6)

William Chatterton Dix was born in England in 1837. Unlike most hymn writers of the nineteenth century who were clergymen, Dix worked in insurance. Though not his profession, he used his poetic gift to pen the lyrics to over 200 hymns and carols, including “The Manger Throne,” “As with Gladness Men of Old,” and “What Child Is This.” The text of “What Child Is This” would later be paired with the traditional English melody “Greensleeves” and is perhaps his most popular hymn in the United States today.

The first two lines of the carol ask us to consider exactly who this baby is sleeping in Mary’s lap. The third line gives us the answer: “This, this is Christ the King.” The second verse also begins with a question, “Why lies he in such mean estate?” It then looks ahead to the purpose of this baby’s birth, with a play on the word “born/borne”: “Nails, spear, shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you.” Finally, the third verse exhorts us to “raise, raise the song on high” and to have “joy, joy for Christ is born.”

What then should we do in response to this hymn? We should continue to ponder this greatest of all mysteries: the Incarnation, God becoming man. The maker of the world came humbly into His world to save His people from their sins. We should lovingly enthrone our king and raise the song on high to worship Him who brings our salvation from the sin that had separated us from God. Be joyful! Christ is born!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, guide our hearts and minds to worship you as we consider this greatest of all mysteries.*



Meg & Dan Smith

Gift from the Heart

My grandparents came from pioneer stock, no exaggeration. I love to tell the story of a grandfather who was born in a sod house on the northern plains of Kansas to homesteaders. His parents moved there by covered wagon. Think Little House on the Prairie. It's real. These people possessed resourcefulness and stubborn hardiness. When homesteaders moved to the Central Plains, it was known as the Great American Desert, not a tree in sight except near water sources, only the dip and sway of tall prairie grass. That independent hardiness passed through generations. When the Depression and the Dust Bowl plagued the region simultaneously, the twin giants of adversity could have swallowed them up had they not held fast to a quiet and abiding faith. A faith that permeated their very beings as much as air to breath and the dust that settled in hair and clothes and every crack of home and on the wet sheets they hung in doorways to try to catch it.

My maternal grandparents lived on a picturesque old Indian hill that overlooked the Kansas River. Archeologists discovered the location was once a campsite for Plains Indians following the buffalo herds. We spent most Christmases there in the country in the rambling stone house my grandfather built, playing in the treehouse, riding in Daddy John's red tractor to pick out a Christmas tree in the wheat pasture, and delighting in Mimi's baking. She inherited the resourcefulness of her heritage to the point where she couldn't tell you what she put in her pies, which were so famous that Betty Crocker Cookbooks once offered to pay her for a recipe. She turned them down.

Mimi was not an elaborate gift giver. She recycled decades before the rest of us caught up. However, one particular Christmas when my brothers and I were young adults, my 70-year-old grandmother stayed up all night. We could hear her in the kitchen. As we meandered into the living room with the windows that looked out over the river, we saw, in front of the presents spilling out from under the tree, pies. Twelve pies. Cherry, apple, pumpkin, pecan, lemon meringue, and banana cream. Everyone's favorite made lovingly from scratch by a grandmother who knew how to give handmade gifts from the heart.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for The Gift, Jesus, your gift from Your Heart. In His Name, Amen*

Irene Herring

A Christmas Carol

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is one of my top reads each year during the Christmas Season. For some it is a wonderful ghost story, for others it is viewed as a sentimental story of a time past or even a harsh social commentary. However, for me, it is about change. I do not believe Charles Dickens wrote this wonderful story just to entertain his readers, which it does. As we read about Scrooge, the ghost of Christmas Present, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim, we are transported outside of ourselves to be challenged in an uncomfortable way.

In a way, I believe Dickens wants us to address the Ghosts that dwell deep within us and our understanding of how we look at the Christmas Season generally and the people around us specifically. The story is designed to bring feelings and understanding together and spark a change in those who read it. It gives us a chance to change how we look at our world, our friends and neighbors, strangers, and how we respond to all. In a sense, the story acts as a “change agent,” encouraging regeneration and revival of our feelings towards our “fellow men.” Dickens is not trying to change our view of Christmas but to challenge, even transform our souls into something better, something more meaningful.

I do not believe Dickens was seeking to turn his readers into a sobbing Scrooge who vows to change his ways but an awakened Scrooge with a renewed spirit and a changed heart. As Christians, we of all people should understand our need for change and transformation.

In **2 Corinthians 3:18** the apostle Paul writes these encouraging words, “*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is Spirit.*”

The world we live in can be very difficult, even harsh. So let us continue to seek change and transformation together as we seek to conform our lives into God’s image and for his glory. Let us grasp and understand that this season, the Christmas Season, is not about our wants but about God’s great gift of salvation and redemption and how we as his witnesses represent and offer it to others. Merry Christmas and blessings to you and yours!

Pastor Mike



Saturday, December 25 – Christmas Day

The Birth of Jesus

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things, which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

Luke 2:1-20 (KJV)



THE ADVENT WREATH

There is much meaning and symbolism attached to the Advent Wreath, with its four candles, lit one at a time, on the four Sundays preceding Christmas. The wreath itself is a circle made of evergreen, both symbolizing eternal life. The light from the candles symbolize God's light coming into a world of darkness.

The First Candle, lit on the fourth Sunday preceding Christmas, is called the **Prophecy Candle**. It indicates the beginning of the waiting period before Christmas, with the hope of the prophets in mind regarding the coming of the Christ.

The Second Candle, lit on the third Sunday before Christmas, is called the **Bethlehem Candle**. It points to the preparation period preceding the birth of Jesus. It reminds us to keep in our hearts and minds a sense of expectancy as we look forward to His birth and now, His coming again.

The Third Candle, lit on the second Sunday before Christmas, is the **Shepherds' Candle**. It symbolize the sharing of the good news of Jesus birth with the humble shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem first, and then with all.

The Fourth Candle, lit on the Sunday before Christmas, is called the **Angels' Candle**. This candle points to the glorious song of the angels over the hills of Bethlehem, proclaiming the birth of the Savior, and all to the glory of God.

The Fifth Candle is lit on Christmas Eve. This white candle is called the **Christ Candle** and it symbolize Christ, the Light of the world, who has come in fulfillment of all the hopes, dreams, prophecies and expectations of so many.





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