



Lord of Life Advent Devotional 2017

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
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*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

Dear Friends,

The Season of Advent is upon us. This is a time we prepare for Christmas, or more precisely, for the birth of the long-awaited Messiah. Advent is also a time for us to reconsider our own devotion to our Savior, the Lord of life, who was born on a chilly night long ago, with only a manger for a bed.

This year's Advent Devotional from Lord of Life Lutheran Church presents the names of our Lord as foretold by the prophet Isaiah more than 700 years before Jesus' birth. Each of these names—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—holds a promise which the Messiah will fulfill. During his lifetime Jesus shared his great wisdom. He exposed the sins of injustice of his time, and he exerted influence over those who tried to subvert his teachings. He gave us the love and security of a loving father. And he came with the promise of Peace on Earth, which, as a global community, we continue to seek.

Each year I am heartened by the deep faith of our writers. This year may be the finest set of writings, yet. With each devotion and prayer, I have learned more about the love of God that Jesus Christ brings for each one of us. As you read on this year's devotions with your coffee in the morning, or just before you turn off the light at night, I hope you will begin to experience the promise each prophetic name of Jesus holds—

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Advent Blessings,


Rev. Dr. Dawn Enderwood
Pastor

December 3

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

Isaiah 9:2

Isaiah was perhaps the greatest prophet of ancient Israel; as a prophet, he had at least two important roles—to call God’s people back to God and to foresee future events impacting God’s people, and it is this latter role today’s verse addresses. As Christians, we believe these words foretell Jesus’ birth and ministry; as such, this is a good way to begin our Advent reflections. As you read these words, consider how you define spiritual darkness (this is likely different for each of us and may even vary in our own lives, depending on our circumstances). As you reflect on “darkness,” you’ll likely more fully appreciate the meaning of “light”—comfort, hope, courage, affirmation and ultimately salvation through faith in God’s gift to us in Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we embark on another Advent pilgrimage, help us appreciate anew the great light you have given us in Jesus, and may this appreciation infuse our thoughts, words and actions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

December 4

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.

Mark 1:15

This is the good news of the gospel! After centuries of prophetic messages of preparation, Jesus' message shifted humankind's perspective from future to now.

Now God's kingdom was near, and that nearness invoked the immediacy of two responses: repent and believe. Is it so different for us now? When we look into our own hearts this Advent season, is there room for renewed belief in the message of our Savior Jesus? Is there need for repentance? God's good news of grace welcomes us!

Prayer

Father, thank you for the unlimited favor of your love. Help us to deepen our love and devotion to you as thanks for your goodness to us. Amen.

December 5

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

John tells us the great happening that is at the heart of Christianity, that the word of God became flesh for man's salvation. God became human! As a young child he nursed, slept, played and cried. As a man he laughed, got dirty, became tired, and got fed up with what was happening around him. Because God became human flesh, we are given the chance to know God and see ourselves as children he loves.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for giving us the truly human Jesus to bring us the Good News of our salvation. Amen.

December 6

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40

What a joy it is to be a parent/grandparent. Watching our children grow, learn, and excel is so rewarding. I can only imagine how proud Mary and Joseph were as parents watching Jesus become filled with the Holy Spirit and grow into the spiritual leader of the world then and today.

Prayer

I pray that each time I spend time with my children and grandchildren I see the Holy Spirit in them and tell them what I see. Amen.

December 7

Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52

This passage appears at the end of Luke, Chapter 2. The chapter starts with the census decree that brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and through the story of twelve-year-old Jesus teaching in the temple.

The short verse highlights Jesus dual nature. He's both mundane and holy, his early life both simple and profound. It's so normal to increase in years, and so amazing to increase in divine favor from childhood. Even common people noticed his combination of youth and insight.

Prayer

Lord, help us to slow down and contemplate your words and not just skim over them as a transition to the next chapter. Amen.

December 8

***For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,
and God's weakness is stronger than human
strength.***

1 Corinthians 1:25

When God sent Jesus, his Son, to save his people by dying for them, the Jews and Greeks thought this was a weak and foolish thing to do. Why waste your Son on this task? They wanted to see evidence of power and might, and refused to believe what God was trying to do for them. They thought they knew better what they needed God to do. How often do we fail to believe or understand when God sends things in to our lives for our betterment, and look to ourselves instead? How truly hard is it for us to trust in the phrase, "let go and let God?"

Prayer

Dear Lord, please come into my life, and not only show me what you want for it, but also open my mind and heart to accept your will in it. Amen.

December 9

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

1 Corinthians 1:27

This is a difficult verse to both understand and practice in our daily lives. While we all seek and pray for God's forgiveness, it is often difficult to forgive others' sins. Yet isn't that the message—to forgive others as we have been forgiven through Christ? We may more easily understand Christ giving authority for forgiveness to His disciples, but to us? Perhaps through forgiveness of others' sins, we come to better understand the gift of our own forgiveness through Christ Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray that the blessings and hope you have given us through the birth of our Lord and Savior be extended by each of us to others for whom hope is missing and Christ's blessing is yet to be accepted.

December 10

Jesus said, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.

Luke 7:22

Have you ever waited so long for something that when it actually arrived, you couldn't believe it? I imagine that's how John the Baptist felt when told of all that Jesus was doing. John began his ministry long before Jesus began his. John's message was, "He's coming." But to actually be alive, to hear, "He's arrived" probably was a little unnerving.

I sometimes think we get Advent a bit wrong. Advent, when used with a capital A, means "the coming of Christ." But Christ is, in a real and very important sense, already here. He came once to set the standard, to raise a challenge, and to allow each of us the opportunity to continue what he started. To take on the mantle of "Christian" means to act as Christ acted. Follow in his continuing footsteps – care for the less fortunate, lend a hand, an ear. We're further challenged to act as he acted – without malice, with kindness and compassion and, perhaps most importantly, with forgiveness towards others.

As we move closer to the day we celebrate Christ's birth, may our acceptance of others, our tolerance for those who believe differently, lead our actions. And, as we emulate John's efforts to spread the message through our actions, may we too be amazed at all God has done in our lives, and will continue to do if we but let him.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you. Through your grace we have been given the opportunity to serve. As we wait with eager anticipation your return, may we not wait to live a life of charity towards others. Amen.

December 11

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Luke 1:51-53

God uses his formidable powers to improve our world, to change our hearts, and to better the human condition. During this Advent season, we need to open our minds to receive, assimilate, and spread his message of peace and good will. I can help make the world better by living my life according to God's wishes.

Prayer

Oh Heavenly Father, protect me with your great strength and help me bring the spirit of Christmas to my life throughout the year. In Jesus' name, Amen.

December 12

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

Psalm 72:2

This verse is part of a prayer where the psalmist asks that God would help the king (leader of the nation) to uphold justice, live a righteous life, and always judge people fairly.

This type of prayer, or request, is often found in the Old Testament. There are also prayers imploring God to send the Messiah. More than two thousand years ago, God did fulfill God's promise and sent the Messiah (Anointed One), and we Christians believe that this was Jesus.

Prayer

During this time of Advent, as we await the celebration of the birth of Jesus, please continue to pray, that God, for Jesus sake, will change the behavior of our nation's leader. We pray that our leader will uphold justice, live a righteous life, and judge people fairly.
Amen...Amen (let it be so).

December 13

***May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy, and crush the
oppressor.***

Psalm 72:4

David is prayerfully bringing his son Solomon before the Lord. His prayer is that Solomon would lead the kingdom with God's wisdom instilled in his heart. He desires that his actions as king would be filled with mercy and love towards the needy.

Wherever government is weak, wherever society allows criminality, women and children are the first victims. This psalm prompts us to ask God to bless us with such leaders, who will govern with justice and compassion for all.

We are certainly not a king (or queen), but this same request of loving God's justice and compassion should be on our hearts as well.

Prayer

Dear God, Bless us with leaders who promote justice and compassion for all. We also pray that we as disciples of God would all be instrumental in helping and caring for those suffering from poverty, slavery, sexual violence, oppression and other kinds of corruption. Amen

December 14

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Psalm 72:12-14

These verses bring thoughts to me of how we all feel low and helpless at times and that Christ assures us that he hears our prayers and tears and comes to our aid. The hard part is waiting to see how it all plays out in Christ's time and way, not ours. Christ wants us to know that the hardships we face will not be overwhelming. This spiritual trust can seem that we must be doing something too, and I have to continually practice stepping back and looking towards Christ for peace and guidance. These verses help me feel at peace that I will have salvation, that I am precious to the Lord, and that I am a part of Christ's kingdom.

Prayer

Lord, grant us the ability to model your mercy for us to others who are feeling lost, hopeless, and hurt. Give us the strength to share with others how their hardships will not go unheard and they will not be forgotten. In God's goodness and understanding, we pray. Amen.

December 15

The Lord forgives all your iniquity, heals all your diseases, redeems your life from the Pit, crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalms 103:3-5

Of all the songs of the Psalms this one, 103, is the greatest to proclaim God's love and blessings. This Psalm is inspired by the spirit of God. In this praising Psalm the promises and blessings of God are given.

First, FORGIVENESS. It is given to all people who seek forgiveness.

Second, HEALING. God gives us healing of all our human frailties and God gives us healing over all our diseases. Healing for our bodies but healing for our human souls.

Next, REDEMPTION. Redemption for our human acts for anything that God does not approve.

Fourth, CROWNED. For his crown of love and blessings. Also, for his crown in glory which is a major part of our Christian belief.

Last, SATISFACTION. Satisfaction for the blessings so happily given us in our lives and for living a godly life.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, in this special season and every season, your love and blessing gives us the life we pray for. And the knowledge of hope and eternal life. Thank you, God. Amen.

December 16

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Isaiah 52:7

As a physical therapist, I have often found how vital our feet are in our daily lives. When our feet become dysfunctional due to injury or disease, walking can become difficult, laborious and slow. These patients may limit where they go and what they do. We call upon our feet to do the work of trekking over mountains, wading through waters or just walking into church. If our feet fail us, then the voice of the messenger may never be heard. Oh, how beautiful are the feet!

Prayer

Good Lord, please help us to use our feet to bring the message of peace, love and joy of Jesus into the world. Amen.

December 17

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Jeremiah 29:7

Now, I have never lived in exile, not really. Few of us do anymore. In a way though, I have lived through many little exiles. Some a result of my own choices and some not. New jobs, new cities, new neighborhoods. Isolated from family and friends by distance and other barriers. Through it all, I can attest that the teaching above still holds true to this day.

When we reach out to those around us and seek their welfare, we build a community that in turn supports and nurtures us. I have come to believe that one of the greatest gifts that God has given us is each other.

Prayer

Thank you, God for the gift of community, for those that you have placed around me. Protect and nurture them. Please guide me and use me in supporting my community. Amen.

December 18

Surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

So many times in life we want things to happen quickly. Maybe we've been working toward achieving a goal for a short period. Other times we have been working towards this goal for what seems like a long time. Unfortunately (in our eyes) or fortunately (in God's eyes) things in our lives happen in God's time. When the plans God has for us happen, it may or may not be what we have been hoping for but it is always in our best interest. Therefore, hold on to the belief that God knows what is best for you and have hope in your future.

Prayer

Dear Lord, please stay with me through my daily living and know that I believe in the future you have planned for me. Amen.

December 19

***May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.***

Psalm 72:3

Scholars stated that David was praying for his son, Solomon, to reign with moral law and righteousness. Ruling with righteousness would bring peace and prosperity to all the people of Israel. But the belief is that this prayer is speaking of Christ's reign. These are the words of God wanting the best for His children and His Son. Giving us, through Christ, the wisdom and grace to know and do our duty to love and work toward peace.

God's Son was sent to us to teach us not to judge, but to love and support the needy with our daily actions—working for peace. If we attain peace, prosperity will surely follow. Prosperity being everyone would have comfort, security and well-being.

The season is here that we prepare for Christ's birth. A season to love our neighbors and work daily toward peace for all people.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for our many blessings. Our blessings come to us through you. Teach us not to judge, but to have open minds and hearts. Make us active in working for the comfort, security and well-being of others. Prepare us for your Son's birth and to celebrate his teachings of love and acceptance. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

December 20

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

Psalm 72:7

As I struggled with this verse and its meaning for Christmas, my thoughts went to all the tragic events that occurred in 2017 and our intense need for peace that endures. I'll share this prayer from former Pastor Rob Neubauer when I first came to Lord of Life in 1996: "God of all life, in every age you have shown us what is good. Through the lives and the words of your prophets and faithful people in every time and, most perfectly, in the life of your son, Jesus, you have revealed that justice is a treasure greater than gold, and that kindness, born of a loving and humble spirit, is a sacred gift and sign of your holy presence. We praise and thank you, our hearts and hands overflowing with all the gifts of your goodness. Grant that we always find ourselves at your side, walking in your way, channels of your grace and love to all the world, through Jesus the Christ. Amen."

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we wait in hopeful anticipation for the coming of the Christ child. In the midst of the busyness of this season, give us days of peace, love and family. Amen.

December 21

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

Isaiah 2:2

So much societal grief, fear and anger creep into our lives daily through the various media sources. Add to that our own personal afflictions, and the world can seem to be a very dark place. But this verse gives us a flash of hope for a brighter future where our Lord, who loves ALL people, will be held in highest esteem by every nation. All will ultimately flow toward our Lord's bright light.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, let us all come together to strengthen and support one another so that we may all walk in your light. In Jesus' name, Amen.

December 22

Many nations shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."

Micah 4:1-5

Our souls yearn for God. It is encoded in our DNA and set as a seal on our hearts (Song of Solomon 8:6). Just as the Israelites yearned for the Messiah, so we long for God's presence in our lives. Thus, the prophet's invitation to "go to the mountain of the Lord," is both a siren's call and a sacred reveille. Our response is a pilgrimage that is circuitous, difficult, and miraculous...we are wonderfully changed! So much so, that when we are changed in Christ, the world is changed as well. The unimaginable happens. Micah 4:4-5 promises peace in the land, peace in each home, and a world without fear. Shalom. This Shalom, our Shalom, has a starting point. It begins with our "going to the mountain of the Lord," and taking our sole (and soul!) journey to and with the Christ. Our destination? God's Kingdom on earth. Shalom.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you today with hearts that hunger for your presence and love. We pray for your Shalom and await your glorious return. Amen.

December 23

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore.

Ezekiel 37:26

Earlier in this chapter, Ezekiel had a vision from the Lord of a valley full of dried-up human bones, representing the spiritual condition of Israel. Yet, Ezekiel's vision reveals the promise of the future. God will raise their nation to life and restore them to Himself.

God had also made a covenant with David to be king over Israel, with Abraham to make him a father of many nations, and with Moses on Mt. Sinai to make Israel a holy nation, in sacred relationship with Him. Now, God is making a covenant of everlasting peace. The Messiah will be the final and forever King, for both Jews and Gentiles.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord God, for sending your Son, our Messiah and King, to be our Savior. Honor and glory to Jesus, whose birth we celebrate again this year. Amen.

December 24

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:7

In our world today we have seen violence, conflict between nations, and natural disasters. There is much to make us fearful and become suspicious and even unkind to one another. The season of Advent speaks to the time we are in and brings the promises of God to us. From Isaiah 29, we hear God tell us that we are promised welfare and not evil, to give us a future and hope. There is the coming of his kingdom ruled with justice, righteousness, and peace. So, this Advent, we and all the world wait and prepare our hearts for the child in the manger, the Prince of Peace. We can be confident and joyful knowing that the zeal of the Lord will do this!

Prayer

God of Mercy and Love, help us hold tight to the Advent Promise of the coming of your Son, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

December 25

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

According to our Christian understanding, Jesus, the baby born to humble parents in a manger, fulfills the ancient prophecies of the long-awaited Messiah.

We call our Lord by many names, including Jesus, Christ, Good Shepherd, Emmanuel. The verse from Isaiah most clearly fulfills God's desire for his Son. He brought forth this baby to lead the people as their counselor, their God and Father, and most importantly for all time, one who we follow into God's expectation of Peace on Earth.

Prayer

Holy One, in these days of trouble in our world, strengthen our resolve to faithfully turn to Jesus Christ to counsel us and lead us in the way of everlasting peace. Amen.

Joy to the World! The Lord has come!

