

NAMES OF GOD

Advent
Devotional

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Names of God | Advent Devotional

I remember the stress when preparing to name our first child. We felt the weight of labelling a human being with a collection of sounds; a group of syllables; a word, either common or creative, that would ground their identity. We didn't know if they were a boy or a girl, so we had a name for either. This human being was going to be forever known as either "this" or "that."

Names matter. They signal familiarity. They carry feelings and connotations. They help us navigate relationships by distinguishing one from another. It's amazing how connected we feel when we see someone whose name we know compared to those we don't. Whether strolling the mall or finding a seat in church, there's a visceral difference when we know someone's name.

Theologian, Eugene Peterson, says: *"Names are the very basic life-giving term in language. You say a person's name and it means something, because there's relationship then. Until there's a name, there's no relationship."*

In the Hebrew tradition of the Old Testament, God was virtually unnamed. Out of reverence, people steered clear of boxing God into a single word or name. The closest they'd get was to describe God as "I AM" – written as YHWH – a term without pronunciation. A sound to be heard more than a name to be uttered.

But at Christmas, that all changed. In the story of the coming saviour, the vaguely named God of the universe, gave himself a name: *Jesus*.

***"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21)**

Not only did God put skin on, God registered the birth certificate. As in: 'This is getting personal. This means relationship. We're going from stranger, way past acquaintance, all the way to friend and saviour.'

This Advent, we are invited to get to know God by name through our *Names of God* devotional. Each day includes a scripture passage, a reflection, and a name of God to deepen your relationship with him.

As we get to know God by name, may we grow together in *naming God* as the one who holds all our hope, joy, peace, and love, all in the name of Jesus.

Happy Advent!

Jeff Martens
Formation Co-Lead Pastor

Sunday, November 30 | Hope

Scripture: [Romans 15:4-13](#)

Reflection:

Advent is the season when we anticipate the coming of Christ. We celebrate that Jesus came that first Christmas. We notice ways God's Spirit is coming in our lives today. And we anticipate when Christ will come again fully and finally to make all things right, so we can live in "*complete harmony with each other.*"

It's a season of *waiting patiently* – waiting with *hope*.

On the first day (and Sunday) of Advent, we look to the God of hope. The God who is the "*source of hope*" – the God we can call Hope. That even when life is difficult or things seem hopeless, we find hope in God's presence and goodness. That not only is God with us, but this is not the end of the story.

So, as we begin this Advent season:

May God, the source of hope, fill us completely... Then we will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Question(s):

What are you most hoping for this Christmas season?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you came into our world, at a time when, for many, things seemed hopeless. We want to look to you. We want to trust you. We long to find hope in you. We give you our hopes and ask that you would fill us with hope throughout this Advent season.

Monday, December 1 | Immanuel

Scripture: [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Reflection:

For many of us, there are times in our lives when God feels far away.

For the ancient Hebrews living under oppression and exile, this was especially true. But long before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah anticipated the birth of a child who would be given the name *Immanuel*, which means “God with us.”

In the telling of the Christmas story, the gospel-writer Matthew, draws on this prophecy as a reference to Jesus. That the birth of Jesus means that God has come to be with humanity in all things.

That God knows what it’s like to have skin on. To be a helpless baby. To be a part of a family (even a dysfunctional one). To have longings and desires. To learn and grow. To be hungry. To be tempted. To have friends betray him. To face opposition and persecution – in Jesus’ case, to the point of death.

And through his suffering, to even know what life is like when God feels far away ([Matthew 27:46](#)) – paradoxically, as the ultimate revelation of God truly being with us in all things.

This Christmas, may we know the *Immanuel* God who has come to be with us!

Question(s):

Where or how do you sense God is with you these days? Where does God feel far away? Even when life is challenging, how can knowing or trusting that *God is with us* bring strength and hope?

Prayer:

Jesus, help us to know that you are with us in all things today.

Tuesday, December 2 | Gift

Scripture: [John 3:1-17](#)

Reflection:

Christmas is a time of giving – a time when we tend to tap into the counterintuitive reality that, according to Jesus: *It's better to give than to receive* ([Acts 20:35](#)).

While our instincts – and ads – want us to believe that getting is better than giving, when we look at the story and life of Jesus, we discover that giving is central to God's heart and purpose for the world.

That out of God's love, God gave his Son so that we might receive the gift of new life in him. That not only is God the Giver, but God – in Christ – is the Gift.

While it's not always easy to see or understand, kind of like Nicodemus asking questions in the dark, the love of God through Jesus is a gift that has been given for the entire world.

Question(s):

How could you open your heart to receiving the gift of God's love this Christmas? Who can you give a gift to this week in order to share God's love with them?

Prayer:

God, thank you for your love and that you gave Jesus as the ultimate gift of your love for the world. Help us to look for your love. Help us to receive your love. Help us to share your love with others. May we grow in recognizing that it is truly better to give than to receive.

Wednesday, December 3 | Son of Man

Scripture: [Luke 19:1-10](#)

Reflection:

At the end of the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus declared: *For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.*

While the scriptures often refer to Jesus as the *Son of God*, Jesus' most frequent title for himself was *Son of Man*. Some commentators translate this to mean *The Human One* – that not only is Jesus the exact resemblance of what God is like, but Jesus came to show humanity exactly what being human is meant to be like.

That while Jesus is both fully God and fully human from a theological perspective, Jesus also lived his life to show the world what it means to be *fully human* from a personal and practical perspective.

And it's fitting that Jesus used this title while re-stating his mission at the end of his meal with Zacchaeus. Making it clear that to be *fully human* means to love those on the margins. To use our lives and our resources to care for those in need. To give generously. To love sacrificially.

And in doing so, to slowly but surely experience the salvation of becoming fully human – becoming like the *Son of Man*!

Question(s):

What can we learn from Jesus about what it means to be human?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you came not only to save us but to show us how life is meant to be lived. May we look to you, trust you, and follow you as the one who knows what it means to be fully human. Transform us by your Spirit to slowly but surely become more like you in how we live and how we love.

Thursday, December 4 | Son of God

Scripture: [Matthew 3:13-17](#)

Reflection:

At the baptism of Jesus, the gospel-writer Matthew, describes a mystical moment when the Spirit of God descended from heaven, and a voice from heaven was heard declaring:

“This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

Jesus is described throughout the scriptures as the *Son of God* – which is another way of saying that Jesus is the perfect resemblance of what God is like. That if you’ve heard the saying, “*Like father, like son*” – in Jesus’ case, you might say, “*Like God, like Jesus.*”

That when we look at Jesus, we know what God is like.

Or as Jesus said: *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!* ([John 14:9](#))

As the *Son of God*, one of the most profound realities of Christmas is that we no longer have to guess or wonder what God is truly like. We can simply look at Jesus, the *Son of God* and the exact resemblance of our Heavenly Father!

Question(s):

If someone were to ask you, “what is God like”, what would you say?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have revealed yourself in Jesus. Thank you, that not only have you called Jesus your Son, but you’ve called us your children. May we look to Jesus as the exact likeness and resemblance of who you are, and may we grow together in resembling your likeness as well!

Friday, December 5 | Light of the World

Scripture: [John 8:12-20](#)

Reflection:

Advent is a season when our days keep getting shorter and darker as we make our way to Christmas.

Sometimes we live through seasons like that. When we feel like everything around us is getting darker, making the path of life hard to see.

Jesus declared: *I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.*

While this is a beautiful-sounding metaphor, when Jesus says, “*if you follow me,*” he’s not just talking about metaphor. That in the same way a light in our home doesn’t just get rid of darkness but provides the vision we need to go about our day, when we look to Jesus, he sheds light on how life is truly meant to be lived. How God can be known. How rest and simplicity can actually be part of our lives. How conflicts can be navigated. How forgiveness can be offered. How resources can be shared. How love can win over evil.

In a season when the world around us keeps getting darker, because Jesus came at Christmas, we have the invitation to *see the Light* like never before!

Question(s):

Where do things feel darkest for you these days? How can you look to Jesus more consistently this season to see and follow the light he provides?

Prayer:

Jesus, it's easy for things to feel dark all around us. Thank you that you meet us in the dark and have come to bring light. May we look to you more consistently as the one who sheds light on how life is truly meant to be lived. And may you lead us on the path of life today!

Saturday, December 6 | Redeemer

Scripture: [Job 19:21-27](#)

Reflection:

In life, in movies, and in sports, there's nothing like a redemption story. When against all odds and adversity – or especially on the other side of shortcomings and suffering – a person experiences life-changing renewal, restoration, and transformation.

The story of Job is a story of redemption. As a man who lost everything – in this case, through absolutely no fault of his own – Job suffered immensely. Yet, in the end, experienced incredible healing and restoration.

However, right in the middle of his suffering, in the midst of being hurt by his friends, in the moment of his darkest hour, he declared: *I know that my Redeemer lives.*

This is a surprising and profound foreshadowing of Jesus right in the middle of what's thought to be the oldest recorded book of the Bible. That even when our story seems beyond redemption, there is a *Redeemer* who lives and is writing the ultimate redemption story.

At Christmas, Jesus arrived on the scene as our *Redeemer* to redeem and restore all things!

Question(s):

In what part of your story are you most longing for redemption?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you are our Redeemer. There is so much in our lives and in our stories that still needs redeeming. Help us to look to you. Help us to trust in you. Help us to know that you are alive and are in the process of making all things new.

Sunday, December 7 | Joy

Scripture: [Psalm 43:1-4](#)

Reflection:

If there's one thing the Bible is clear about – especially the Psalms – it's that life is hard. That there are undoubtedly going to be times in our lives when it feels like trouble surrounds us. Or like people are out to get us. Or when we're overwhelmed by grief.

The Psalms are ruthlessly honest about this. And yet, in the midst of the hardship, most Psalms include a word of praise. In this case, a word of *joy*:

There I will go to the altar of God,
to God—*the source of all my joy*.
I will praise you with my harp,
O God, my God!

That the good news, especially in the hard stuff, is that *joy* does not come from our circumstances. *Joy* is not a result of how life is going. But *joy* comes from God. God who is with us in all things and who wants to let *joy* flow in and through our lives even when things are tough. Because *joy* isn't the same as happiness or ignorant bliss, but a sense of deep gratitude and contentment for the most important things in life.

So may we praise God today, the source of all our *joy*!

Question(s):

What brings you joy? How can you learn to see God as the source of the things that bring you joy?

Prayer:

God, may you be the source of our joy no matter what we go through today!

Monday, December 8 | Saviour

Scripture: [Luke 2:8-11](#)

Reflection:

When announcing the good news of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, the first name the angel announced was *Saviour*.

Throughout their history, the ancient people of Israel had been awaiting a saviour. Specifically, a saviour to rescue them from captivity and oppression under foreign rulers – the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks – and by the time of Jesus, the Romans.

While Jesus indeed came announcing freedom for captives and the oppressed ([Luke 4:18-19](#)), he also came in order to save humanity from our spiritual bondage to sin, evil, and death ([Matthew 1:21](#)).

The most common word for *sin* in the Bible literally means to “miss the mark” – essentially, missing the mark of loving God and loving others with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The good news of Christmas though is that Jesus has come as a Saviour to rescue us from any and all of the ways we miss the mark of love so that we can be transformed by his saving grace into people of love.

Question(s):

Where do you feel like you need “saving” these days?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you are our Saviour. That you have come into the world to save us from all oppression, injustice, and sin. Transform us by your love and grace, so that we aren't just rescued from sin, but are rescued for love!

Tuesday, December 9 | Deliverer

Scripture: [Romans 11:25-27](#)

Reflection:

We live in a world of delivery – from *Amazon* to *Skip the Dishes* to *Uber* to *pizza* – we love when things get delivered.

In Romans 11, the apostle Paul writes about God bringing insiders and outsiders together (in their context, the people of *Israel* and the *Gentiles*) all through the arrival of “*the Deliverer*.”

That when Jesus arrived on the scene, he came to *deliver* the world from sin and death. But he also came to *deliver* a new kind of life. A life where outsiders become insiders – insiders in Jesus’ new world – the kingdom of God.

In fact, the nativity scene paints the perfect picture: the Son of God being *delivered* in a messy stable within a backwater town where there was no room in the inn. Jesus, the ultimate “insider” becoming an “outsider” so that he could *deliver* God’s all-inclusive love to the world.

This Christmas, Jesus wants to be our *Deliverer*. To *deliver* us from sin and death. AND, to *deliver* a new kind of life where we’re all included and we all belong!

Question(s):

What does Jesus being a *Deliverer* mean to you?

Prayer:

Jesus, we have so many needs, and we try to meet our needs in all sorts of ways. May we look to you as our Deliverer. As the one who delivers freedom and the one who delivers a new way to live. May we receive all you have to deliver this Christmas season!

Wednesday, December 10 | Lamb of God

Scripture: [John 1:19-31](#)

Reflection:

In Jewish history, ever since Israel's escape from captivity in Egypt, the community celebrated the annual Passover festival by offering the sacrifice of a lamb, providing a celebratory meal – all as a reminder of God's loving rescue from slavery.

When John the Baptist began to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, he declared:

Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Like the lamb that provided a nourishing meal and whose blood covered the doorposts of the fleeing slaves in Egypt, Jesus had come into the world to be the *Lamb of God* that would give his life for our rescue.

That Jesus would come to conquer sin and death, not through violence or force, but through sacrificial-love demonstrated on the cross.

It's this love and this sacrifice that absorbs and forgives – *takes away* – the sin of the world!

Question(s):

How does the image of Jesus as the *Lamb of God* make you feel? How is this similar or different to how you've thought about Jesus before?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you that you've shown us the full extent of God's love by laying down your life – like a sacrificial lamb – for the sake of the world. Help us to follow you in the way of the Lamb!

Thursday, December 11 | Way, Truth & Life

Scripture: [John 14:1-7](#)

Reflection:

One of Jesus' most famous descriptions for himself is that he is the *Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

When Jesus said to his disciples he was “*going to prepare a place for you*” he was referring to his journey to the cross. That by going to the cross Jesus was about to open the doors for all people to be at home in God's love.

Essentially, when Jesus described himself as the *Way, Truth, and Life*, he was speaking about one thing repeated three times for emphasis.

That following his *way* is the *true* path to *life*.

Walking in the way of his sacrificial-love – demonstrated through his sacrifice on the cross – is what it truly means to live and make our home in God's love. A love we can be at home in right here and right now, on earth as in heaven, when we follow the way of Jesus.

At Christmas, Jesus came to show us the *Way, Truth, and Life*!

Question(s):

How can you practically look toward Jesus as the *Way, Truth, and Life* throughout your day today?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you came to show us the way. There are a lot of other paths we can follow – many that are self-serving rather than sacrificially-loving. But help us to see and trust you as the true path to life. And may we follow your way today!

Friday, December 12 | Messiah

Scripture: [John 4:1-26](#)

Reflection:

Jesus had a habit of not only connecting with some of the most unlikely people, but having his deepest and most revealing conversations with them.

This story is a great example. As Jesus sat down at the well, Jesus initiated a conversation with the woman who came to draw water. This was already counter-cultural as men avoided having public conversations with women. But even more significant was that this woman was a Samaritan, an ethnic minority seen by the Jewish community as holding wrong beliefs and being on the outside of God's "chosen" people.

And yet, Jesus sees her for who she is. Jesus acknowledges and has compassion for her story. And then Jesus shares with her about the time that is coming for all people to know and encounter God's Spirit – because he has come as the *Messiah*.

The word *Messiah* means God's *chosen* or *anointed one* and is the Hebrew word that translates to *Christ* in Greek. When Jesus said, "*I AM the Messiah!*", he declared that he had come to reveal God's life and love to the world, and to usher in God's kingdom – a kingdom available to all.

What we see in this story, and through the coming of Jesus at Christmas, is that the *Messiah* – God's chosen and anointed one – is for all people. Meaning all people are chosen and loved by God!

Question(s):

What normally comes to mind for you when you hear the word, *Messiah*?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that as God's chosen one, you came to reveal how God has chosen us. May we worship you in spirit and in truth today!

Saturday, December 13 | Holy One

Scripture: [Mark 1:21-28](#)

Reflection:

In this story of Jesus casting out an evil spirit, the man possessed by the spirit cries out: *I know who you are—the Holy One of God!*

The word *holy* can create some confusing ideas. From “holy rollers” to feeling “holier than thee/thou” to putting “holy” in front of your favourite swear word. Meaning, the word *holy* can often make us feel more separate than connected.

Yet, while the word “holy” literally means “set apart”, when we look at the life of Jesus, we see that it certainly does not mean “separated.”

That Jesus being the *Holy One* doesn’t mean he came to avoid or demonize the “unholy.” Exactly the opposite. That he came to be with the “unholy.” To re-connect and re-unite heaven and earth, God and people. To bring healing, love, and justice, the likes of which the world had never seen.

Jesus is so *Holy* – so set apart – that his love, power, and authority are unlike any other, and exactly what our world needs!

Question(s):

What do you find most unique and compelling – *set apart* – about Jesus?

Prayer:

Jesus, the way you loved and cared for people is so unlike how we live most of the time. And the way you held your power and authority is so different than how power and authority are held in our world. Help us to look to you as the Holy One to show us an altogether different way to love and to lead. And may our world be healed in the process!

Sunday, December 14 | Prince of Peace

Scripture: [Isaiah 9:1-7](#)

Reflection:

This passage in Isaiah is one of the most profound prophecies of how the world will be transformed – from darkness to light – with the arrival of God’s Messiah.

It also describes some of the most profound names of God – *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.

Prince of Peace stands out uniquely in this passage though, as the prophetic poem goes on to say that the peace of the Messiah *will never end*, bringing fairness and justice *for all eternity*.

In the scriptures, the word *peace* comes from the Jewish word *shalom*. *Shalom-peace* is about more than an absence of conflict or a sense of calm. It’s about wholeness, flourishing, provision, and abundance. It’s about everything everywhere being made right, so the world is as it’s meant to be.

At Christmas, the *Prince of Peace* has come to establish a new kind of peace in the world. A peace that is available now in our hearts. And a peace that we can participate in bringing when we follow the way of the Prince of Peace, bringing wholeness – shalom – to the world around us.

Question(s):

Where are you longing to experience peace and wholeness this Christmas?

Prayer:

Jesus, we often celebrate Christmas as a time of “peace on earth.” And yet, there are so many things that aren’t as they should be. Thank you that you have come as the Prince of Peace to establish shalom in the world. We need more of it and we want to be part of bringing it. Help us to know and share your peace with others today!

Monday, December 15 | The Vine

Scripture: [John 15:1-8](#)

Reflection:

We live in a world of connection. We're connected to our phones. We're connected to social media. We're connected to our email. We're connected to school and work responsibilities. We're connected to calendars and to-do lists. We're connected to friends and family.

And whatever we're most connected to shapes our lives. What we scroll becomes what we think about. What we work on becomes what we value. Who we hang out with shapes our interests, hobbies, and how we talk or behave.

And here, Jesus invites his followers to, more than anything, stay connected to him as *The Vine*. In the same way grapes only become what they are by remaining connected to a grapevine, Jesus, as *The Vine*, invites his followers to stay connected to him so they can produce his fruit.

Jesus invites us to remain in him so that his Spirit and his life can shape our lives, turning us into people of love, joy, and peace ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

So, may we stay connected to Jesus this Advent to become people who produce more of the love, joy, and peace of Advent in all the connections of our lives!

Question:

What activity or practice could help you stay connected to Jesus these days?

Prayer:

Jesus, help us to pay attention to what we're most connected to and how it's shaping us. Thank you that your Spirit and life are available to us – that we can remain connected to you as The Vine so you can produce good fruit in our lives. Help us to become people of your love, joy, and peace this season!

Tuesday, December 16 | Bread of Life

Scripture: [John 6:22-35](#)

Reflection:

The Christmas season is appropriately a time of celebration. A time of parties. A time of presents. And a time to eat, drink, and be merry. All things that Jesus was known to enjoy!

In John 6, after one of the biggest parties in the gospels, where Jesus miraculously fed over 5,000 people where everyone “*ate as much as they wanted*” ([John 6:11](#)), people then found themselves coming back to Jesus looking for more food.

But Jesus invites them to not be “*so concerned about perishable things like food*” and then describes himself as the *Bread of Life* – as the one who can provide everything our lives and souls truly need.

While we obviously need food and material provision in our daily lives – which God is eager to provide for us – we also have deeper, soul-level, spiritual needs and longings that Jesus came to nourish.

So, in the midst of our celebrations, may we also feast on and enjoy the *Bread of Life* who came at Christmas!

Question(s):

How much energy, attention, and concern are you giving to perishable things these days? In addition to all the festivities and celebrations of the season, how can you look to Jesus to nourish your soul?

Prayer:

Jesus, deep down, we all know we have needs and longings beyond the material stuff of our lives. Help us to pay attention to those longings and to experience the nourishment that comes from you. Thank you for your goodness and provision in our lives!

Wednesday, December 17 | Teacher

Scripture: [John 3:1-5](#)

Reflection:

There are many characteristics we often associate with Jesus. That he was good, loving, kind, gentle.

But have you ever thought of Jesus as *smart*? Or even *brilliant*?

In this passage, one the revered teachers of the day – a man named Nicodemus – comes to Jesus with some of his own questions and curiosities, referring to Jesus as *Rabbi* and *Teacher* (“Rabbi” being the Hebrew word for “Teacher”).

That based on what he had seen and heard from Jesus so far, he saw Jesus as someone who had something to teach him – even as a teacher himself.

When we see Jesus as *Teacher*, we come to discover that Jesus was (and is) brilliant, especially when it comes to the deepest truths of life and what it means to be human. And in his brilliance (like in his interaction with Nicodemus), so often Jesus doesn’t just spell out his teaching, but invites his followers into questioning, wrestling, and experiential learning-by-doing, so that his teaching actually transforms our lives.

This is the invitation of Jesus: to see him as our *Teacher* and to spend our lives learning from him together, so that we can truly live.

Question(s):

Who are you most learning from these days?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that we can look to you as Lord and Saviour. But let us also learn to look to you as Teacher. To listen to you. To learn from you. To wrestle with our questions. To learn from one another. And to ultimately let you guide us on the path of life.

Thursday, December 18 | Good Shepherd

Scripture: [John 10:1-16](#)

Reflection:

Shepherding was a common trade in the ancient world, but those who made their livelihood as shepherds were seen as low-class day-laborers doing the kind of dirty work anyone would avoid in favour of other employment.

In John 10, Jesus describes himself as the *Good Shepherd* who cares for his flock and guides them with his voice. A shepherd willing to do the “dirty work” of gathering the sheep, of pursuing the lost, of protecting from danger, and of leading toward life. Even to the point of sacrificing his own life.

This is what it means for Jesus to be the *Good Shepherd*.

So, perhaps it's fitting that some of the first to learn of the birth of Jesus were the night-shift day-laboring shepherds on the outskirts of Bethlehem ([Luke 2:8-20](#)).

Just as Jesus would lead his followers on the path of life, the angels appeared to the shepherds to lead them to the source of life – the *Good Shepherd*.

Question(s):

How can you listen more closely for the voice of Jesus in your life?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that you have come to bring life to the full. May we listen to your voice and follow where you lead. Thank you, that as the Good Shepherd, you gave your life for us. May we trust you and follow you each step of the way!

Friday, December 19 | King of Kings

Scripture: [1 Timothy 6:15-16](#)

Reflection:

When Jesus was born, eastern astrologers travelled to Jerusalem because they had seen a star they believed indicated the birth of a new king ([Matthew 2:1-2](#)).

In response, the reigning king of Judea, King Herod, was so gripped with fear and threatened by the news that he commanded infanticide throughout Bethlehem, a threat narrowly escaped by Jesus and his family.

Later, when Jesus was hung on the cross, a mocking sign was nailed above his head, saying: “*King of the Jews*” ([Matthew 27:37](#)), humiliatingly suggesting that any kingly claim he or his followers had made was dying right there with him.

But from his humble birth in a manger to his humiliating crucifixion on a cross, what we see in Jesus is the inauguration of a new kind of kingdom – a kingdom built on humility and sacrifice – in which he is *King of Kings*.

While so much “power” in our world is expressed through arrogance and force, Jesus, as the *King of Kings* is ushering in his eternal kingdom of servant-hearted sacrificial-love.

And so may we give *all honor and power* to the *King of Kings*, living as his faithful subjects in his kingdom of humble sacrificial-love!

Question(s):

What do you find most compelling about Jesus’ approach to power?

Prayer:

Jesus, it seems like our world is built on striving and vying for power. Yet, as the King of Kings, you came into the world to lay your life and your power down. Help us to follow your lead. Thank you that you are in charge and that your kingdom is coming and will one day come forever!

Saturday, December 20 | Friend

Scripture: [John 15:9-17](#)

Reflection:

We use the term “friend” pretty broadly in our culture, at times, even to describe distant acquaintances we maintain a loose connection with.

In John 15, Jesus establishes the deepest meaning of the word “friend” by saying: *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

In fact, he said this on the very night before he would lay down his life for the sake of the world. For the sake of forgiveness. For the sake of his friends.

For our sake.

And Jesus didn’t just call us “friends” but put his life on the line to make undeniably clear that he is our *Friend*.

Especially if you’re feeling loneliness or lacking friends this Christmas, Jesus wants you to know that he has called you *Friend*. That he’s with you. That he’s for you. That you can know him. And that he loves you.

Jesus loves you with the greatest love a *Friend* can give.

Question(s):

How does seeing Jesus as *Friend* make you feel? How can you be a friend more like Jesus to your friends?

Prayer:

Jesus, we are made for friendship and we long for friendship. Thank you that you showed the world what true love and friendship is. And thank you that you have demonstrated that love for us. May we know your love and presence as our Friend this Christmas.

Sunday, December 21 | Love

Scripture: [1 John 4:7-12](#)

Reflection:

There is likely no more profound a theological reflection in all of scripture than this: *God is love.*

Love isn't just what God does, it's who God is. The name at the centre of God's very existence is *Love*.

This love isn't just *fuzzy-wuzzy* "love" but a *come to earth in the form of a person to give up your life* kind of love.

Love is who God is and *Love* is how we experience and express God together. In fact, John says that when we love, it's living proof of our connection to God. That our love for God is primarily revealed in how we love others.

So may we know God as *Love* this Christmas. And may we share *God's love* this Christmas and all year long.

Question(s):

How have you experienced God's love? Who can you share God's love with today?

Prayer:

God, thank you that you are Love. That the most defining thing about you is love. We want to receive your love today and love you back by loving others. May your Spirit of love flow through our lives this Christmas season.

Monday, December 22 | The Word

Scripture: [John 1:1-14](#)

Reflection:

“The word” is a phrase that gets thrown around a lot in church. But what does it mean? We preach “the word,” study “the word,” spread “the word.”

Here, John opens his gospel writing about the capital-W *Word*. But notice what John writes when he gets to verse 2. After introducing *The Word*, John writes:

*He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.*

The Word becomes a person. A *he* and a *him*. And then the crescendo of the passage:

So the Word became flesh and made his home among us.

This is the message of Christmas in a sentence. *The Word* becoming flesh. *The Word* becoming a *him*. *The Word* being Jesus.

Or another way to think about it: Jesus is what God has to say!

Question(s):

What are you hearing Jesus say to you today in this passage?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you that your life speaks louder than words ever could – that you are the Word of God. Speak to us this Christmas, we pray.

Tuesday, December 23 | Wonderful Counselor

Scripture: [Isaiah 9:6](#)

Reflection:

We live in an age where we're bombarded with opinions and perspectives, yet wisdom often seems hard to find.

Among the names of God listed in this passage, Isaiah writes that Jesus will be called *Wonderful Counselor*.

And while Jesus came bringing teaching and wise counsel during his time on earth, he also promised to give his Holy Spirit as a source of wisdom, truth, comfort, and guidance in our lives today ([John 16:12-13](#)).

When we think of Advent and the Christmas season, we think of Jesus coming to earth some 2,000 years ago. But we can also reflect on and embrace the coming of God's Holy Spirit in our lives today.

So may we know and receive the *Wonderful Counselor* of God's Spirit this Christmas!

Question(s):

Where do you need wisdom or counsel in your life these days? How can you grow in paying attention to the voice of God's Holy Spirit?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, lead and guide us. Speak to us. Comfort us. And may we know the wonder of your power and presence in our lives!

Wednesday, December 24 | Morning Light

Scripture: [Luke 1:68-79](#)

Reflection:

This passage is a poetic prophecy from Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, a few months before the birth of Jesus.

As Zechariah celebrates the birth of his own son, he also anticipates everything God will do through the birth of Jesus, riffing on many of the names and promises of God we've reflected on throughout Advent.

Then right at the end of his prophecy, he sums up what all of this means:

*Because of God's tender mercy,
the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide us to the path of peace.*

He describes Jesus as the *Morning Light* that is about to break. Meaning, a new day is about to dawn. That everything is changing from here. That everything that has felt like darkness or death is about to be undone in the light of Jesus.

This is the good news of Advent. The good news of Christmas.

That the *Morning Light* is about to break...

Question(s):

What are you most looking forward to in the days ahead?

Prayer:

Jesus, we need your light. Thank you that at Christmas your Morning Light has come to signal a new day that is dawning. May we look for it, celebrate it, and participate in it together, shining your light to the world around us!

Thursday, December 25 | Jesus

Scripture: [Matthew 1:20-21](#)

Reflection:

After a long season of waiting, and getting to know God by name throughout Advent, on Christmas we receive the ultimate name of God: *Jesus*.

The name *Jesus* was not uncommon at that time. The name literally means that *God Saves*. It's a reminder that God hasn't just been revealed in writing, or in stories, or in ideas, or in names, but in a person. In a life. In a flesh and blood human being. Arriving into the world like all of us. Living in a time and place in history as we all do.

All to give us God's gift of life and love in person.

Celebrated this day through the birth of Christ – the birth of *Jesus*.

Merry Christmas!

Question(s):

What are you most grateful for this Christmas?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for coming at Christmas. We celebrate your birth. We receive your life. And may we share your love!

She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21