



2025 ADVENT DEVOTION

OLIVIA BAPTIST CHURCH

1817 GUY ST

DALTON, GA 30720

OLIVIABAPTISTCHURCH.COM

NOVEMBER 30TH
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2025

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE WONDERFUL WAYS OF SHARING AND SPREADING JOY.

IN ONE OF THE MOST STUDIED AND CELEBRATED BIBLE PASSAGES AT CHRISTMAS, THE PROPHET ISAIAH ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD:

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. OF THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND OF PEACE THERE WILL BE NO END, ON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND OVER HIS KINGDOM, TO ESTABLISH IT AND TO UPHOLD IT WITH JUSTICE AND WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM THIS TIME FORTH AND FOREVERMORE. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL DO THIS.

(ISAIAH 9:6-7)

HE SHALL BE CALLED

THE PROPHET ISAIAH WASN'T TRYING TO WRITE A MODERN BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT. BUT COMPARING HIS DESCRIPTION OF THIS BABY BOY TO THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS WE SEND AND RECEIVE HIGHLIGHTS THE DISTINCTIVE SPLENDOR OF THIS PARTICULAR BABY. FOUR THINGS SET ISAIAH'S ANNOUNCEMENT APART:

I. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS SENT REALLY EARLY.

SOME BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS GO OUT SOON AFTER THE BABY IS BORN, AND OTHERS A BIT LATER, DEPENDING ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY (AND SLEEP LEVELS) OF THE PARENTS. BUT EVERY SINGLE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT I'VE EVER RECEIVED WAS SENT AFTER THE BABY WAS BORN. THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT. IT'S SENT *BEFORE* THE BIRTH — SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH DELIVERED IT TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WHILE THEY WERE FACING A THREAT FROM THE GROWING SUPERPOWER OF ASSYRIA (WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY DESTROY THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL AND LEAD MANY JEWS INTO CAPTIVITY). ISAIAH ADDRESSED THIS SITUATION BY PROMISING THE COMING OF A FUTURE KING.

THE SEVEN-HUNDRED-YEAR DELAY WAS NOT BECAUSE GOD WAS UNABLE TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE SOONER, BUT BECAUSE HE WANTED TO GIVE HIS PEOPLE THE HOPE OF A FUTURE KING TO SUSTAIN THEM THROUGH DARK TIMES. THE LONG PERIOD BETWEEN PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT WAS, IN FACT, A GIFT FROM GOD TO HIS PEOPLE.

2. ISAIAH ANNOUNCES A ROYAL BIRTH.

I'VE NEVER RECEIVED A ROYAL BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT I IMAGINE IT'S FANCIER THAN MOST — ESPECIALLY WHEN IT ANNOUNCES THE BIRTH OF THE FUTURE KING. SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT MUST BEAR A SIGNIFICANCE ORDINARY ONES DO NOT.

ISAIAH ANNOUNCES A ROYAL BIRTH: “THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER” (ISAIAH 9:6); “OF THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND OF PEACE THERE WILL BE NO END, ON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND OVER HIS KINGDOM” (ISAIAH 9:7). IN LUKE’S GOSPEL, WE OVERHEAR ANOTHER ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS SAME KING: “THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE TO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID, AND HE WILL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER, AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE WILL BE NO END” (LUKE 1:32–33).

3. THE BABY HAS FOUR DIFFERENT NAMES, EACH TELLING US WHAT HE WILL DO.

MOST BABIES HAVE JUST ONE NAME ON THEIR BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT. BUT ISAIAH ANNOUNCES THE BIRTH OF A BABY WITH FOUR NAMES: “HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.” ONE NAME WASN’T SUFFICIENT TO DESCRIBE THIS SPECIAL CHILD.

MOREOVER, THESE NAMES TELL US WHAT THE BABY WILL DO. IMAGINE READING ON A BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT, “EXCEPTIONAL PIANIST, OLYMPIC ATHLETE, FUTURE CEO OF MAJOR CORPORATION.” BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS DON’T LIST ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THAT’S BECAUSE THERE ARE NONE TO LIST — APART FROM THUMB-SUCKING, BLINKING, AND DROOLING.

THIS BABY IS DIFFERENT. “WONDERFUL COUNSELOR” INDICATES THAT JESUS WILL BE A SUPERNATURAL SOURCE OF EXTRAORDINARY WISDOM — AMAZING NEWS FOR THOSE WHO NEED GUIDANCE. “MIGHTY GOD” INDICATES THAT JESUS WILL BE DIVINELY STRONG AND POWERFUL — AMAZING NEWS FOR THOSE WHO ARE WEAK. “EVERLASTING FATHER” INDICATES THAT JESUS WILL CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE FOREVER, AS A FATHER CARES FOR HIS CHILDREN — AMAZING NEWS FOR THOSE WHO ARE ALONE AND UNAPPRECIATED. “PRINCE OF PEACE” INDICATES THAT JESUS WILL BRING DEEP WELL-BEING AND RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS — AMAZING NEWS FOR ALL OF US WHO LACK PEACE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD.

4. THESE NAMES BELONG ONLY TO GOD.

PERHAPS MOST SHOCKINGLY (AND SPECTACULARLY) IS THIS: THE NAMES OF THIS FUTURE KING ARE NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH GOD. JESUS WILL BE CALLED “WONDERFUL COUNSELOR.” LATER ON IN ISAIAH, WE’RE TOLD THAT THE LORD GOD HAS DONE “WONDERFUL THINGS” (ISAIAH 25:1) AND THAT HE IS “WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL” (ISAIAH 28:29). JESUS WILL BE CALLED “MIGHTY GOD”; ONE CHAPTER LATER, THE SAME TITLE IS USED OF GOD HIMSELF (ISAIAH 10:21). JESUS WILL BE CALLED “EVERLASTING FATHER”; GOD IS CALLED THE

FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE (ISAIAH 63:16), AND ONLY GOD HIMSELF CAN TRULY BE CALLED THE *EVERLASTING* FATHER.

ISAIAH GUARANTEES THESE THINGS WILL HAPPEN, AND THIS KING WILL BE BORN, ON THE BASIS OF GOD'S OWN PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO FULFILLING HIS PURPOSES FOR HIS PEOPLE: "THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL DO THIS" (ISAIAH 9:7).

AND ISAIAH WAS RIGHT. GOD DID DELIVER ON THIS PROMISE. JESUS WAS BORN SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS LATER AND FULFILLED EVERY PROMISE ANNOUNCED. GOD CAME AMONG US IN THE PERSON OF JESUS. HE TOOK ON FLESH IN ORDER TO GIVE US WISDOM, PROTECTION, FATHERLY CARE, AND PEACE AS WE ENTER INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.



**DECEMBER 7TH
THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2025**

“THEN THE ANGEL SAID TO HER, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, MARY, FOR YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD. AND BEHOLD, YOU WILL CONCEIVE IN YOUR WOMB AND BRING FORTH A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS.”

- LUKE 1:30-31

THERE'S A REASON ADVERTISERS USE BABIES TO SELL THINGS. MOST EVERYONE LOVES NEW BABIES. THEY'RE SO PRECIOUS—TINY AND HELPLESS, CUTE AND SMALL—THEY FILL OUR HEARTS WITH HAPPINESS. BUT THEIR ENTRY INTO THIS WORLD IS ANYTHING BUT CUTE. BIRTH IS AN INCREDIBLY PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT PROCESS!

THIS ISN'T BY ACCIDENT. WHEN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD IN GENESIS 3, GOD CURSED THE WORLD. PAUL TELLS US IN ROMANS 8:20 THAT THE ENTIRE WORLD WAS SUBJECTED TO THE CURSE.. DEATH ENTERED THE WORLD, AND EVERYTHING WAS BROKEN. ADAM WOULD BE CURSED TO LABOR FOR ALL THAT HE HAS WITH PAIN AND SWEAT. EVE WOULD ENDURE PAIN IN CHILD BIRTH AND A LONGING FOR CONTROL.

HUNDREDS OF GENERATIONS LATER, ONE OF THOSE DAUGHTERS OF EVE, MARY, RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM THE ANGEL GABRIEL. THE MESSAGE WAS THAT SHE WOULD MIRACULOUSLY CONCEIVE A CHILD, AND WOULD BEAR A SON. SHE WAS GOING TO GIVE BIRTH, AND THAT CHILD WOULD COME FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD. SHE WAS TO NAME HIM JESUS WHICH MEANS “GOD WILL SAVE” OR “SALVATION”.

NOW, BABIES ARE PRECIOUS, BUT BRINGING THEM INTO THE WORLD IS TOUGH, BY DESIGN. THIS YOUNG WOMAN, IN A LITTLE VILLAGE IN ISRAEL WITH EFFECTIVELY NO MEDICAL CARE, MUST HAVE BEEN FAIRLY NERVOUS ABOUT

THIS EVENT. SHE HAD CERTAINLY BEEN PRESENT AT OTHER BIRTHS BY HER AGE, AND EACH BIRTH WAS A DANGEROUS EVENT. SO, WHEN THE ANGEL TOLD HER THAT SHE WAS GOING TO GIVE BIRTH, IT MUST HAVE FELT MORE LIKE A CURSE THAN A BLESSING.

HOWEVER, WHEN GABRIEL MAKES THIS ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY, HE USES AN INTERESTING WORD - THE WORD IS SOMETIMES TRANSLATED 'FAVOR'. IN GREEK, THE WORD MEANS 'GRACE'.

WHILE THE BIRTH WAS PART OF THE CURSE, GOD'S GRACE WAS ON MARY AT THIS MOMENT. HOW COULD THAT BE? HOW COULD GRACE AND FAVOR COME WITH THE CURSE?

THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT THIS WASN'T JUST ANY PREGNANCY, AND JESUS WASN'T JUST ANY BABY. THE GRACE OF GOD, AND HIS FAVOR HAD COME TO MARY IN A PERSON, JESUS OUR SAVIOUR. AND THAT GRACE WASN'T JUST FOR MARY - IT WAS FOR EVERYONE!

HE SHALL BE CALLED

AND SO, GOD'S GRACE HAD COME TO REVERSE THE CURSE—THE CURSE OF CHILDBIRTH WOULD BRING THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD INTO THE WORLD. AND, SOME YEARS LATER THE CURSE OF DEATH WOULD BE OVERCOME BY LIFE—ONCE AGAIN THROUGH JESUS WHO WOULD TAKE THE CURSE ON HIMSELF.

THIS IS THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS, ISN'T IT? THAT JESUS HAS COME, AND HAS BEGUN THE PROCESS OF PUSHING BACK THE CURSE OF SIN AND DEATH, ONE SOUL AT A TIME THUS SAVING US!

GOD'S GRACE WASN'T JUST FOR MARY THAT DAY—IT WAS FOR ME, AND FOR YOU, IF YOU KNOW JESUS..."GOD WILL SAVE"!

DECEMBER 14TH THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2025

THINK BACK OVER THE PAST YEAR. BY THE TIME WE REACH 11:59:59 P.M. ON DECEMBER 31ST, YOU WILL HAVE LIVED ALMOST 9,000 HOURS THIS YEAR, OVER HALF A MILLION MINUTES. FOR MANY OF US, THIS PAST YEAR WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR JUST A FEW SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS: A BIRTH, A LOSS, A MILESTONE EVENT, OR A KEY MEMORY. THAT'S HOW IT IS. YOU AND I HAVE COLLECTIVELY LIVED A LOT OF YEARS NOW, BUT A FEW MOMENTS REALLY MATTER. A FEW MOMENTS BUBBLE TO THE TOP AS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN ALL THE REST.

HISTORY WORKS THE SAME WAY. SOME EVENTS, SOME MILESTONES MATTER MORE THAN OTHERS. SO WHEN AN ANGEL APPEARS TO MARY AND SAYS THE FOLLOWING, IT'S A BIG DEAL:

HE SHALL BE CALLED

HE WILL BE GREAT, AND WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST; AND THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID. AND HE WILL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER, AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE WILL BE NO END.” - LUKE 1:32-33

YOU KNOW THE GENEALOGY — THE PART THAT WE THINK IS BORING, “THE SON OF SO-AND-SO, THE SON OF SO-AND-SO....” IT’S THERE AS PART OF JESUS’ CREDENTIALS: HE COMES FROM THE LINE OF DAVID. WHEN THE ANGEL SAYS THAT JESUS IS GOING TO REIGN ON THE THRONE OF DAVID FOREVER, HE’S SAYING THAT JESUS IS THE KING THAT EVERYONE’S BEEN WAITING FOR. WHEN THE ANGELS ANNOUNCE IN LUKE 2, “FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD,” THEY’RE SIGNALING WHO JESUS IS: BORN IN DAVID’S CITY, AND CHRIST — WHICH MEANS ANOINTED KING — AND LORD.

BUT THIS KING IS DIFFERENT — NOT A KING WHO IS CORRUPT, A KING WHO'S A TYRANT. HE'S A KING WHO KNOWS EVERYTHING, A KING WHO'S PERFECTLY JUST, A KING WHO CAN NEVER BE DECEIVED, A KING WHO TRANSFORMS MEN AND WOMEN BY HIS GRACE, A KING WHO LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE BEFORE BEING RAISED IN VICTORY.

THIS HAS GOT TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST HYPERLINKS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY: THE PROMISED KING HAS COME. THE NEXT PART OF GOD'S PROMISE TO SET THIS WORLD RIGHT IS BEING FULFILLED. JESUS IS KING.

SO WHAT? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US? WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT JESUS IS THE LONG-PROMISED KING?

THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS WE COULD SAY, BUT LET'S STICK TO THREE.

WE CAN BE CONFIDENT.

I KNOW SOMEONE WHO SAYS A PHRASE I LOVE: "GOD IS ON HIS THRONE, EVERYTHING IS GOING HIS WAY, AND HE LOVES ME."

THINK ABOUT THIS. AS DAVID MCLEMORE WRITES:

- **"GOD IS ON HIS THRONE"** MEANS A KING IS RULING AND REIGNING. HE IS IMMOVABLE AND IRREPLACEABLE WITH GLORY AND HONOR. WE ARE NOT LEFT ALONE. DESPITE WHAT WE MAY BE TEMPTED TO THINK, THIS WORLD HAS ORDER AND MEANING. EVERYTHING MATTERS—EVEN WHAT YOU'RE ENDURING RIGHT NOW.
- **"EVERYTHING IS GOING HIS WAY"** MEANS NOTHING IS SURPRISING TO GOD. NOTHING IS OUTSIDE OF HIS CONTROL. HISTORY MAY BE LONG AND BLOODY, YOUR LIFE MAY BE FILLED WITH SUFFERING AND TEARS, BUT IT ALL BENDS TOWARD RESTORATION AND REDEMPTION. WE CAN TRUST HIS HAND BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN HIS HEART.
- **"AND HE LOVES ME"** MEANS OUR KING CARES. HE WILL NEVER LEAVE US NOR FORSAKE US. HE WILL BE WITH US ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE

AGE. WHEN WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF WHAT WE'RE FACING,
THIS TRUTH RE-CENTERS US ON THE GOSPEL. JESUS DIED TO HAVE US.
GOD LOVES YOU...

I LOVE THIS. THERE'S NO OTHER KING LIKE HIM — A KING WHO DIES, A KING
WHO COMES TO SERVE, AND YET MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, A KING WHO
REIGNS.

IN A WORLD THAT SEEMS OUT OF CONTROL, WE CAN HAVE GREAT
CONFIDENCE BECAUSE THERE IS A KING ON THE THRONE, EVERYTHING IS
GOING HIS WAY, AND HE LOVES ME.

BUT HERE'S THE SECOND APPLICATION.

WE MUST SUBMIT AND OBEY.

WE TEND TO THINK OF CHRISTIANITY AS A LIFESTYLE CHOICE. IT'S NOT. IF
JESUS IS KING, CHRISTIANITY IS ABOUT BOWING BEFORE OUR KING IN
UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.

IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN ON YOUR OWN TERMS, YOU MAY NOT BE A
CHRISTIAN. IF YOU TRY CHRISTIANITY, BUT YOU HAVE SOME
NON-NEGOTIABLE, SOME AREAS IN WHICH YOU WON'T SUBMIT, YOU HAVEN'T
REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS ALL ABOUT.

EVERYBODY SERVES SOMETHING. OUR NATURAL INCLINATION IS TO STAY ON
THE THRONE OF OUR LIVES. THE HARDEST THING IS TO BOW THE KNEE BEFORE
JESUS. IF HE'S THE KING, HE CALLS FOR OUR UNCONDITIONAL OBEDIENCE. HE'S
NOT KING OVER PART OF OUR LIVES; HE IS KING OVER EVERYTHING, AND HE
DEMANDS OUR ALL.

FINALLY, LONG FOR HIS KINGDOM.

REVELATION 11:15 SAYS, "THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD HAS BECOME THE
KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND OF HIS CHRIST, AND HE SHALL REIGN FOREVER
AND EVER." AND IF THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH, REVELATION 22:5 SAYS THAT

BELIEVERS WILL PARTICIPATE IN HIS ETERNAL REIGN. “THEY WILL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER.” STAGGERING. WE’LL GET TO REIGN WITH HIM. THAT’S WHY JESUS TAUGHT US TO PRAY, “YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN” (MATTHEW 6:10). I CAN’T WAIT FOR THAT DAY!

JESUS IS THE PROMISED KING WHO IS THE CULMINATION OF GOD’S PLAN TO SET THIS WORLD RIGHT. SO BE CONFIDENT: GOD IS ON HIS THRONE, EVERYTHING IS GOING HIS WAY, AND HE LOVES ME. OBEY HIM. AND LONG FOR HIS KINGDOM.



DECEMBER 21ST
THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2025

ADVENT DRAWS US INTO THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S NEARNESS, AND LUKE 1:35 STANDS AT THE CENTER OF THAT MYSTERY. IN ONE ASTONISHING SENTENCE, THE ANGEL GABRIEL REVEALS THE TWO DIVINE MOVEMENTS THAT MAKE THE INCARNATION POSSIBLE.

AND THE ANGEL ANSWERED AND SAID TO HER, "THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON YOU, AND THE POWER OF THE HIGHEST WILL OVERSHADOW YOU; THEREFORE, ALSO, THAT HOLY ONE WHO IS TO BE BORN WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD. - LUKE 1:35

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON MARY

THIS IS THE LANGUAGE OF GOD'S CREATIVE POWER. THE SAME SPIRIT WHO HOVERED OVER THE WATERS IN GENESIS NOW HOVERS OVER MARY. ADVENT REMINDS US THAT GOD'S NEW CREATION BEGINS QUIETLY—IN A HUMBLE ROOM, IN A MOMENT OF SURRENDER, IN THE YIELDING HEART OF A FAITHFUL YOUNG WOMAN.

MARY IS NOT CHOSEN BECAUSE OF HER SOCIAL STATUS, BUT FOR HER WILLINGNESS. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING UPON HER SHOWS THAT GOD WORKS THROUGH OUR OPENNESS, NOT ACHIEVEMENT. ADVENT INVITES US TO DO THE SAME: BE READY TO RECEIVE THE WORK OF GOD IN US, EVEN WHEN WE DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.

2. THE CHILD WILL BE HOLY—THE SON OF GOD

BUT THE MIRACLE IS NOT ONLY IN HOW JESUS IS CONCEIVED; IT IS IN WHO HE IS.

THE ANGEL DECLARES THAT THE CHILD IS *HOLY*—SET APART IN PURITY AND PURPOSE—AND MORE THAN THAT, HE IS **THE SON OF GOD**. CHRISTMAS IS NOT SIMPLY THE STORY OF A MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION; IT IS THE STORY OF **GOD JOINING HIS CREATION**.

JESUS IS NOT A PROPHET MERELY INSPIRED BY GOD.
HE IS NOT A RIGHTEOUS MAN UNIQUELY CHOSEN BY GOD.
HE IS **GOD HIMSELF IN HUMAN FLESH**, THE ETERNAL SON TAKING ON TIME, FRAGILITY, AND NEED.

THIS MEANS THE HOPE WE CELEBRATE IS NOT A DISTANT HOPE. IT IS GOD-WITH-US. GOD-NEAR. GOD-MADE-KNOWN. THE HOLINESS OF JESUS IS

NOT A BARRIER TO RELATIONSHIP—IT IS THE VERY REASON HE CAN SAVE, HEAL, AND RESTORE.

AS WE MARINATE IN THIS VERSE I WONDER:

- **WHERE DO I NEED TO YIELD TO THE SPIRIT AS MARY DID?**
THIS IS A SEASON OF MAKING ROOM—NOT THROUGH DOING MORE, BUT SURRENDER.
- **DO I RECOGNIZE JESUS AS MORE THAN A COMFORTING PRESENCE?**
WE'RE CALLED US TO SEE HIM AS THE **SON OF GOD**, THE ONE WITH THE AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE, REDEEM, AND REIGN.
- **HOW MIGHT THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST RESHAPE MY HOPES THIS SEASON?**
TRUE HOPE IS NOT WISHFUL THINKING—IT IS ANCHORED IN THE NATURE OF THE ONE WHO CAME. JESUS!



DECEMBER 25TH CHRISTMAS DAY 2025

WHAT IF GOD GAVE YOU A GIFT TODAY. I MEAN, OUTSIDE OF THE CHRISTIANITY CLICHE OF “HE ALREADY HAS! ISN’T THAT WHAT WE’RE CELEBRATING?”.

I MEAN, WHAT IF THE GOD OF ALL CREATION VISITED YOU TODAY AND SIMPLY SAID “YES”.

YES TO WHAT?

TO ALL OF YOUR PRAYERS. EVERYTHING YOU’VE PRAYED FOR AND ASKED ABOUT THIS PAST WEEK OR EVEN THIS PAST YEAR. YES!

WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN TO YOU?
HOW WOULD THIS WORLD BE DIFFERENT?

WOULD POVERTY BE ENDED? WOULD RACISM BE ERADICATED? WOULD FRIENDS OR FAMILY BE SAVED? WOULD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS BE RECONCILED?

OR, WOULD YOUR FOOD BE BLESSED TO NOURISH YOUR BODY. MAYBE YOU’D GET A CLOSE PARKING SPOT AT THE GROCERY STORY OR MAKE IT TO WORK ON TIME. AND YOU’D BE GRATEFUL FOR TODAY.

OUR SCRIPTURE TODAY REMINDS US THAT THIS ADVENT\CHRISTMAS SEASON WAS GOD’S “YES” TO US ALL.

“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” WHICH IS TRANSLATED, “GOD WITH US.” - MATTHEW 1:23

“GOD WITH US”

WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?

IT MEANS A FEW THINGS.

1. YOU AND I ARE NOT ALONE: THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE PULLED UP A SEAT RIGHT NEXT TO US. HE’S AS CLOSE AS A PRAYER. HE HEARS. HE SEES. HE KNOWS. HE CARES.
2. WE DON’T HAVE TO SUGAR COAT OUR PRAYERS OR SOFTEN UP OUR REQUESTS. HE ALREADY KNOWS!
3. IF MY PRAYERS DON’T INTIMIDATE ME, THEY MAY ACTUALLY INSULT HIM.

IMMANUEL MEANS THAT AS A CHILD OF GOD I HAVE WITH ME FULL ACCESS TO THE CREATOR, SUSTAINER, AND GIVER OF ALL THINGS. SO WHY THIS CHRISTMAS AM I LIMITING HIS ABILITY TO THINGS I CAN ACCOMPLISH ON MY OWN?

ADVENT IS A REMINDER THAT THE BABY BORN IN THE MANGER AND GIVEN THESE AWE INSPIRING NAMES IS COMING AGAIN! WHEN HE DOES, WILL I BE COUNTED AS ONE WHO LIVED LIKE GOD WAS "WITH" ME? WILL I HAVE PRAYED BIG PRAYERS, EXPECTED MIRACULOUS RESULTS, WORSHIPED AS IF I BELIEVED WHAT I TOLD OTHERS?

HIS "YES" IS ON THE TABLE.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

WITH LOVE FROM JOHN, JENNIFER, AND ALL THE EXTENDED EVERETT CLAN