

VOICES *of* HOPE

prophecies of the coming king



20 Advent & Christmas

Wesley Memorial
1225 Ches
High Point, North

The background is a vibrant stained glass design. It features a large circular inset on the left side, which contains a detailed image of a starry night sky with a prominent bright star. The rest of the background is composed of numerous rectangular and triangular pieces of stained glass in various colors, including shades of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, arranged in a pattern that radiates from the circular inset, creating a sunburst or starburst effect.

24
Christmas Devotional

Methodist Church
Pine Street Drive
North Carolina 27262





Dear Wesley Memorial Family,

This year's Advent devotional, *Voices of Hope: Prophecies of the Coming King*, is a heartfelt offering from the Wesley Memorial staff to you, our beloved congregation. Each devotional has been prayerfully written by a member of our staff, inspired by the themes of hope, preparation, joy, and love, as we reflect on the voices of the prophets—Jeremiah, Malachi, Zephaniah, and Micah—and the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ.

Advent is a season of dual anticipation. Together, we look back to the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, rejoicing in the arrival of our Savior. At the same time, we look forward, longing for the day when Christ will return to make all things new. As we journey through these reflections, we are reminded of God's faithfulness and His hope that sustains us in every season.

Our Prayer for this Advent Season:

We pray that as you read this devotional, you will find encouragement in the voices of the prophets and the voices of our Wesley Memorial family. May you encounter God's promises anew, find unity in your community, and experience the deep peace of waiting for Christ, our King. Emmanuel—God with us—is present in our waiting and will meet us with His unfailing love.

This devotional is a tangible expression of our gratitude and love for you, our church family. We hope it blesses you, draws you closer to God, and deepens your anticipation for the coming King this Advent season.

We also invite you to worship with us during this sacred time of reflection and joy:

8:30 AM Traditional Worship (Chapel)

9:45 AM Contemporary Worship (Fellowship Hall)

11:00 AM Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

May these reflections bring the voices of hope and prophecy to life in your heart and lead you to experience the joy and peace of Emmanuel—God with us.

With love and gratitude,

The Staff of Wesley Memorial

The First Week of Advent

Voice of Jeremiah

December 1 - 7



Jeremiah's voice echoes the breaking of chains, offering hope and freedom through God's promise of restoration.

DECEMBER 1

April Maines

HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR

DECEMBER 2

David Riddle

CHURCH CAMPUS MANAGER

DECEMBER 3

Ann Marie Chilton

DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS MINISTRIES

DECEMBER 4

Tammy Magee

KITCHEN MANAGER

DECEMBER 5

Beth Rose

MANAGER OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

DECEMBER 6

A Voice of Hope

WESLEY MEMORIAL STAFF MEMBER

DECEMBER 7

Charli Mills

DIRECTOR OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC



December 1

As we enter the season of Advent, our hearts are filled with hope and anticipation. Jeremiah 33:14-16 powerfully reminds us of God's faithfulness and the promise of a Savior. This passage speaks of a time when God will fulfill His covenant, bringing forth a righteous Branch from David's line—Jesus Christ—whose coming we eagerly await.

In Jeremiah's prophecy, the people of Israel and Judah faced despair and longed for deliverance. Burdened by exile and oppression, they yearned for the restoration of their nation and their relationship with God. Jeremiah's words offered a beacon of hope, a promise that God had not forgotten them and would send a Savior to bring justice and righteousness.

This prophecy resonates deeply with us today as we prepare our hearts for Christmas. Advent is a time of waiting and expectation, mirroring the Israelites' anticipation. We reflect on the first coming of Christ with gratitude and look forward to His second coming with hope. The righteous Branch, Jesus, has come to bring salvation and will return to establish His kingdom fully.

As we light the Advent candles and reflect on God's promises, let us hold fast to the hope that Jeremiah proclaimed. In a world often filled with uncertainty and darkness, the light of Christ shines bright, reminding us that God's promises are true, and His salvation is near. May this season of Advent fill us with renewed hope and a profound sense of anticipation for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

April Maines

Hospitality Coordinator

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days, Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

December 2

In the midst of exile, when the people of Israel were far from their homeland and facing an uncertain future, God spoke words of hope and promise through the prophet Jeremiah. These verses are among the most beloved in Scripture, offering comfort to those in distress. But these words also carry a powerful message about God's preparation for His people.

First, God declares, "I know the plans I have for you." This assures us that, even in times of struggle, God is never caught off guard. His plans are not reactive but intentional. When life feels uncertain, we can find comfort in knowing that God is actively working for our good, orchestrating our circumstances for His greater purpose. His plans are not to harm us, but to prosper us; to give us a future full of hope.

However, God's promises do not end with assurance alone. There is a call to action in this passage: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Preparation is required. In the same way a farmer prepares the soil before planting, God invites us to prepare our hearts. Seeking God wholeheartedly—through prayer, worship, and obedience—opens us up to His presence, allowing us to align with His plans and discover the fullness of His hope for our lives.

The voices of hope and preparation are intertwined. God's voice speaks to us with hope, reminding us that He has a purpose for our lives. But it's our response of seeking Him with all our hearts that prepares us to truly receive His plans. In times of waiting or hardship, let us listen for God's voice of hope, and let that hope stir us to seek Him more deeply. When we do, He promises that we will find Him, and in finding Him, we find the hope and future He has prepared for us.

Margie and David Riddle
Church Campus Manager(David)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

December 3

Do you keep a planner? I like to write everything down in a physical calendar. We keep another family calendar on the refrigerator door. Most of my friends keep their plans on their phone calendars too. I like checklists too. My office is a pile of post-it note checklists, calendars filled with very important dates, and notebooks prioritizing some tasks over others.

Daily I set alarms for each meeting, place to be, person to call, time to pick up the kids, or lunch with a friend because I need the phone to buzz and remind me. Those lists, alarms, and calendars are essential because otherwise, I will forget. Did you know God never forgets? It's almost unimaginable: someone who doesn't forget. Another way of saying that is God is faithful.

Not only does our faithful God never forget, but he also has a good plan. And His plan is better than we can imagine. He has always had this plan. It is a plan to bring us close to Him.

"A new day is coming," announces the Lord."

Here in Jeremiah, 600 years before Jesus' birth, God's plan was Jesus.

Jesus would be the "*King who will rule wisely.*" Jeremiah says Jesus' name is "*Jehovah, our righteousness.*" Jehovah is one way to express the holiest name of God. This holiest one makes us right with himself.

Jesus wants to embody righteousness for us because we can't be true, blameless, right-minded and faithful in our own strength.

Have you ever misplaced your planner or left it at work? Have you ever made the ultimate checklist and then lost the paper you wrote it on? Have you ever showed up late? I do things like this every week. To be faithful like God, to always "do what is fair and right" - these are things I fail to be - and yet God gives His faithfulness and righteousness to me and to you, as our armor.

Galatians 3:26 says “*all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. You have put him on as if he were your clothes.*”

God’s character is our covering, our safeguard and our protection. I may not be consistent, but I am covered by the One who is. He is making us more like Him. We have to trust Him to work.

God is not affected by outside forces. God’s faithfulness was our hope in the past, and the fulfillment of His promises is sure. He will always be true to His word. His faithfulness will never fail.

“But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.”

Psalm 39:7 (NIV)

This Christmas season, amidst the full planners and buzzing alarms, **am I resting in His unchanging grace?**

As I dutifully complete checklist items, am I trusting in His name and in His righteousness alone?

As I speak to others, work, create, and move through this world, **am I being faithful to Jesus in all things, placing my hope and identity wholly in Him?**

He is the “godly branch”, the “King who rules wisely.” He was promised long ago, and He has come to save us. The Lord “makes us right with Himself.”

Even if the alarm doesn’t go off or the calendar gets erased, we can trust in the Faithful One. He may have a task he wants you to do that isn’t on your list.

Ann Marie Chilton

Director of Childrens Ministries

“A new day is coming,” announces the Lord. “At that time I will raise up for David’s royal line a godly Branch. He will be a King who will rule wisely. He will do what is fair and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved. Israel will live in safety. And the Branch will be called The Lord Who Makes Us Right With Himself...”

December 4

Greetings to each of you as we continue the journey of Advent this year. I must say this is the first time I have ever written a devotional and I have been excited and nervous about it. This holiday season is different for me with Kaylee, My daughter leaving before Thanksgiving to go serve our country in the Navy. I'm a super proud mom and what helps me get through is Jeremiah 31:3 that describes an everlasting love. I have an everlasting love for my children and my mom, but first and foremost, God and how he sent his son to show us this type of love. The scripture is quoted "long ago the Lord said to Israel,; I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself." (NLT)

Each day working in the kitchen as the chef at Wesley Memorial, I have such a feeling of love. God has proven through each of you and your relationships with me and my family, the continuation of this type of love. God has loved us from the very start of time and continues to love us each and every day. The best hope that we have is the future that God is leading each of us towards a steadfast love by believing in Him.

I wouldn't be able to make it through this holiday season without each and everyone of you showing love for me and how inspiring it is that each of you let God shine through you. There was a time that I wasn't sure about everlasting love until my relationship with God was strengthened through all of your support. It is a heartfelt love that I have for each of you this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your loving chef,

Tammy Magee
Kitchen Manager

*Long ago the Lord said to Israel:
"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.
With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."*

December 5

In this passage, Jeremiah speaks of God's promises to the people of Israel while they are still in captivity, in exile, steeped in loss and grief that have broken their hearts and their spirits. Sharing in their suffering, God promises to be a presence with the people, abiding with them, and promises that they will even belong to each other. God says, I will be your God, and you will be my people. God doesn't do this out of some kind of stubborn faithfulness but out of deep, wounded love and profound grief that moves Him beyond anger to tender caring and forgiveness.

Recently, my mother unexpectedly passed away after a stroke. The loss and grief my family and I experienced truly broke our hearts. It is God's abiding presence, a promise written on our hearts and fulfilled in our care for each other, that heals our brokenness and transforms our feelings of grief into prayers of thanksgiving for the gift of mom's life.

As we continue our Advent journey, as we wander through uncertain times, as we experience loss, as grief weakens our spirits, be comforted that God is at work as God has always been, in our very midst. God is transforming our lives and our life together. God promises us a future filled with hope. This is good news!

Prayer: The life of my mother was a gift from you, Lord. While no longer with us in this life, she will live forever with you. Thank you, God, for the birth, life and death of our Savior, and for the hope and assurance that comes from the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

Beth Rose

Manager of Finance & Administration

"The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord. "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the Lord. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."

December 6

A Covenant That Cannot Be Broken

From the beginning, God's heart has been set on relationship—with His people and with all creation. In Jeremiah's time, God's covenant people had turned away, yet His promise remained steadfast: *"I will be their God, and they shall be My people."* This everlasting covenant points directly to Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill what was broken by sin. Through Him, we are invited into a restored relationship with God, sealed not by laws or sacrifices but by grace.

This prophecy is a reminder that God's covenant is unbreakable. He has chosen us, given us a new heart, and offered us a new way through Jesus. His promise is for generations, spanning from the cries of Bethlehem's stable to the triumph of His eternal reign. Today, as we reflect on this passage, let it remind us that His heart remains turned toward us, even in our brokenness.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the promise that You are our God, and we are Your people. Help us to walk in the new way You have given us through Jesus, and let our hearts always be drawn to You in love and reverence. Amen.

A Voice of Hope

Wesley Memorial Staff Member

They will be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one purpose: to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good for them. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me. I will find joy doing good for them and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant them in this land.

December 7

The book of Jeremiah records the prophet Jeremiah's warnings about the siege of Jerusalem in 597 BC and the Babylonian exile—God's judgment on Israel for their apostasy and injustice to the poor and vulnerable. The text of Jeremiah is mostly dark and distressing, save for a section in chapters 30-33 called the "Book of Consolation." In these chapters, Jeremiah paints a picture of an Israel returned and restored, and of a God who offers undeserved forgiveness and compassion.

In Jeremiah 33:10-11, God proclaims that though the land is desolate, it will once again be inhabited by people and animals and filled with sounds of joy. While a remnant of Israel did eventually return to the land, the fullness of this vision is yet to be fulfilled. The longing for restoration, wholeness, joy is universal; and as Christians, we look towards a future in which Christ is "making all things new" (Rev. 21:5). We anticipate the grand reversal of all things – from exile to home, from oppression to justice, from sorrow to rejoicing. Christ comes as the one who restores the fortunes of Zion, filling our mouths with laughter and our tongues with songs of joy (Ps. 121:1-2)

This Advent season, as in every Advent, we look and long for the one who restores our fortunes. Today, may you meditate on these words of comfort by Frances Haverga (1836-1879):

*Light after darkness, gain after loss,
Strength after weakness, crown after cross;
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears,
Home after wandering, praise after tears.*

*Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain,
Sight after mystery, peace after pain;
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast,
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last.*

*Near after distant, gleam after gloom,
Love after loneliness, life after tomb;
After long agony rapture of bliss—
Right was the pathway leading to this.*

Charli Mills

Director of Traditional Music

This is what the Lord says: 'You say about this place, "It is a desolate waste, without people or animals." Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord, saying, "Give thanks to the Lord Almighty, for the Lord is good; his love endures forever." For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,' says the Lord.

The Second Week of Advent

Voice of Malachi

December 8 - 14



Malachi's voice shines like a guiding star, proclaiming the coming King who will bring light and refinement to His people.



DECEMBER 8

Diane Harper

ON-SITE COUNSELING

DECEMBER 9

Chase Harris

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES

DECEMBER 10

Kaide Sledge

STUDENT MINISTRY ADMIN ASSISTANT

DECEMBER 11

Glenn Myers

PASTOR OF VISITATION

DECEMBER 12

Chris Massey

FACILITIES & AUDIO VISUAL

DECEMBER 13

Clark Chilton

PASTOR OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP &
EVANGELISM

DECEMBER 14

Chaun Marsh Doak

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF WESLEY
MEMORIAL SCHOOL

December 8

Each year I attend Handel's Messiah because it fills my heart with joy and anticipation. Handel speaks through the voices of the prophets in his musical oratorio that brilliantly reveals the life of Jesus. Luke brings the voices of the prophets forward and allows us a peep into the wombs of Elizabeth and Mary:

Now at this time Mary set out and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1: 39-44).

The sound of Mary's voice caused a joyful reaction in Elizabeth and John. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and blessed and affirmed Mary because she carried the Messiah. We see the young Mary in need of a confidant and a friend. She found both in her aged and wise cousin Elizabeth. Their meeting was an epic event of prophecies fulfilled. Both women carried the promises of God. John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah. They were both nestled safely in their mother's wombs.

I invite you to reflect on the joy that fills your life because of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus fill us with you Holy Spirit so that others will sense your presence alive in us as Elizabeth and John knew you were present in Mary's womb. Let your eternal light shine through us. Amen

Diane Harper, M.Div., MA, LCMHC, NCC

Divine Water Counseling @ Wesley Memorial Methodist Church

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

December 9

Christmas comes each year, but we often slip back into the memories created in this particular season. Some good memories: that of loved ones, of gifts, of the food you so loved as a child. Some maybe not so good: the stress, the loss, the “I don’t think I can make it through another holiday” type of thoughts. And typically, our Christmas season passes by before we know it and we are left pondering how another Christmas has escaped our grasp, another year completed and over, how time so quickly dissipates right before our very eyes.

No matter how joyful a Christmas morning could be or how deeply broken it comes, I have often gone through a stage of immobility after the holiday season – a short period of deep sadness and this feeling of wanting to be more than I am. A time that leads to reflection of who I am and where should I go from here? My family traditions slowly disappear, new challenges arise, transitions from what I’m accustomed to, becoming something entirely different. For some moments of time I’m lost without any words to describe. THERE IS GOOD NEWS!

We serve the LORD of hosts, the one who promises us from the very beginning (the rising of the sun) until the very end (to its setting), it is his name that will be great among the nations. Hallelujah! The pressure of life surpassing, of the wanting for more, this idea that I could never reach the potential I strive for all comes crashing down in the wake of the LORD of hosts! It is our God who will be known great throughout the nations. It is this Jesus we celebrate as we anticipate the coming day of Christmas.

So I pray that in this season we would offer ourselves up as a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable” (Romans 12:1), that our “spiritual worship” would be actively lived out during this season of Christmas. That we would become the sweet incense and pure offering to him whose name is great! That the God of the Nations may pour out more of his spirit among us and that we may honor Jesus with our traditions, our dreams and our abilities. May he whose name is great among the nations be great among your household, among your activities and in your communities. May you be the hands and feet of Jesus, to your brother and sister, but also to those who have not known his great name.

May his name be great among us this Christmas.

Chase Harris

Director of Student Ministries

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

December 10

Recently, in one of our midweek motivation youth nights, we played a simple game where the group of students stood in the middle of the room. We put on the screen if you like sweets you go to the right, if you like sours you go to the left. The group divided in unpredictable ways with each choice we displayed. When reading the final verses of Malachi, this game crossed my mind. Verse 5 describes the day the Lord will come as great and dreadful. It made me reflect on which side I stand. Will I stand with the side that views the day of the Lord as great and glorious? Will I be with the righteous and obedient? Or will I dread the day of the Lord and fear the consequences of my wicked ways?

Verse 6 highlights the importance of preparing our hearts and our children for the Coming King. Mark 13:32-33 explains that the day and hour of the coming King is unknown, it is our responsibility to live righteously and prepare the future generations against wickedness. To display the armor of God and build them up to follow Jesus. To turn to each other in guidance and understanding. To display grace and love as God has and will show us through Jesus.

Malachi ends the Old Testament with a warning of total destruction. The promise of receiving the prophet Elijah gave hope to the Israelites that destruction would not be their ending. This was a final plea to return to the ways of the Lord because Jesus is soon to come. This season should be a reminder that through Jesus, God offers each of us grace and salvation. An opportunity to choose to be on the righteous side and bring those around us.

Prayer: Father, I come to you during this season with a grateful and full heart. Though I am broken and with fault, you lead me to a life filled with love and righteousness. You died for my sins, to save me from destruction. I will declare your grace for all my days.

Raide Sledge

Student Ministries Administrative Assistant

See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.



December 11

The Refiner's Fire

The word “advent” is from the Latin word meaning “to come.” During this season that begins the Christian Year, we focus on the coming of Christ as the baby born in Bethlehem, the Second Coming of Christ and the coming of Christ into our hearts anew. It is a time of spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ.

Malachi speaks of the coming of the Lord and the preparation that precedes the His coming.

There was a group of women in a Bible study of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three, they came across verse three, which says: “He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study. That week this woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest, so as to burn away all the impurities. The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot—then she thought again about the verse, that he sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left even for a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed. The woman was silent for a moment. The she asked the silversmith, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?” He smiled at her and answered, “Oh, that's easy—when I see my image in it” This story is especially meaningful to those of us who may be in the hottest part of the flame right now. To know that God has his eyes fixed on those he is refining and cannot be distracted is

most comforting! Nothing that happens in your life goes unnoticed by the Father. He is aware of all and He promises to be with you through the fiery trials.

Let us pray.

Lord, help us trust you in the trials of life to burn off the impurities and help us become refined like silver, mature, complete and lacking nothing in You. Help us as we prepare for your coming.

For reflection:

How is the Lord refining you now? How is He seeking to make you holy? How can you cooperate with the Lord this Advent in His desire to make you more like Him?

Dr. Glenn Myers
Pastor of Visitation



But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.

December 12

As we enter the season of Advent, a time of anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ, Malachi 2:7 offers us a reminder of our role as the voices of God's message. This verse highlights the importance of knowledge and instruction, particularly in the context of spiritual leadership. However, it also calls each of us to reflect on how we can embody this message in our daily lives.

Advent is a season filled with hope and expectation. It invites us to deepen our understanding of God's promises and to share that hope with others. Just as priests were tasked with preserving knowledge, we too are called to seek wisdom in Scripture and to share it with those around us. This could mean engaging in personal study, participating in community worship, or simply sharing a word of encouragement with a friend. I'm lucky enough to have people to help me expand my knowledge of God's promise and remind me how important it is to share it with others.

As I work through the Advent season at Wesley Memorial, I'm reminded of all the things we do as a church family to spread the word of God. The Worship services we offer, the events that are held to celebrate and educate people, and the outreach we have in our community. All to help people gain knowledge of God's promise.

During your Advent journey, consider how you can be a messenger of hope this season of anticipation. Are there ways you can uplift others during this busy season? Perhaps you can volunteer, reach out to someone in need, or share a meaningful verse that speaks to the joy of Christ's coming.

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christmas, let us commit to being diligent in our pursuit of knowledge and faithful in sharing it. Our words and actions reflect the love of Christ, guiding others toward the light of His presence.

Prayer: Lord, during this Advent season, help me to seek Your wisdom and share it with others. May my life be a reflection of Your hope and love. Amen.

Chris Massey

Facilities & Audio Visual

For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

December 13

At the close of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi points the eyes of his reader towards “the day of the Lord”, this eschatological theme that appears throughout the Scriptures (Isaiah 13:6, Jeremiah 46:10, Joel 2:31, Zephaniah 1:14-2:3). Additionally, this prophetic pronouncement reoccurs in the New Testament (Matthew 24:3, Romans 2:5, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 16:14).

Throughout world history, any time God enters into space and time and does something directly, it is a day of the Lord. The first Christmas was a day of the Lord: angels being sent as messengers harkening Christ’s birth, Mary receiving this news with faithfulness, King Herod being confounded at every turn and Joseph steadfastly supporting the journey. Along with the faith and action of God’s people, God was orchestrating it all. At that first Christmas “day of the Lord” God was beginning His plan of salvation that would also lead to the eventual judgement of all humanity.

Here at the close of Malachi’s book, and the close of the Old Testament, the author reminds us of the certain and ultimate “day of the Lord”. The day of days. When one era ends, and another begins. That “great and dreadful day” when the curtain will drop on world history, and the same Lord who came the first time as Savior, Redeemer and Friend shall return as King and Judge. A time when true justice shall be administered to all creation.

Noah survived a day of the Lord that utilized water as the method of judgement. Malachi points us toward a day of judgement when fire shall purify, and the hearts of evil doers and righteous will be laid bare for all to see. Despite the foreboding tone, Malachi gives this promise: those “who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings”. Truly, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs 9:10). Those on that day who revere and honor the holy name of God shall experience light, righteousness, and healing from God.

Clark Chilton

Pastor of Contemporary Worship & Evangelism

For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evil-doers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

December 14

Tis the season... for waiting! Waiting for Santa, waiting on hold, waiting in traffic, waiting in line, waiting for results, or waiting for an answer just to name a few. And bottom line, let's face it - Nobody likes waiting!

So I pose this question to you, "What do you do as you wait?" Do you stress, pace, make lists, contemplate, cry, or worry? I'd like to offer another suggestion? Pray and prepare for what it is you may be waiting for, that you will have the strength to accept the outcome as it is God's plan for you – regardless of what it may be!

The advent season is definitely about waiting in anticipation! Lo, those many years ago when Joseph and Mary began their own period of waiting for what lay before them; preparing for their journey to Bethlehem and the birthplace of our Savior. A journey that touches our lives to this very day. Assuredly, there were a multitude of prayers taking place – asking for strength for what lay ahead.

James 5:7-8 tells us, "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

In this advent season, as we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus, let us set our hearts right through our prayers, our thoughts and our actions. Be ready, remember and pray for those that are most important in your own life, for in Isaiah 40:31, "*They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*"

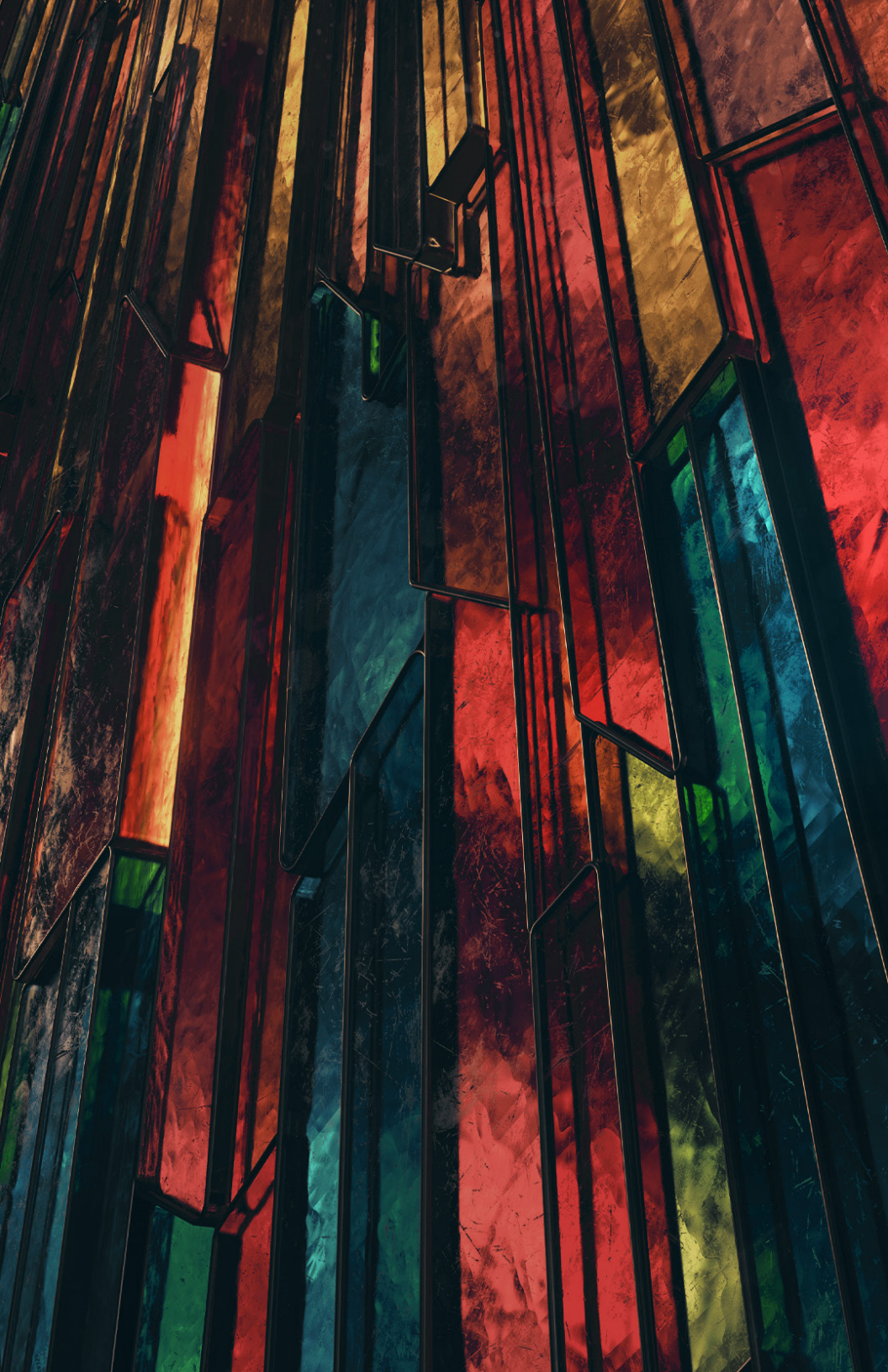
Prayer: Most gracious heavenly Father, still our hearts and minds as we wait and prepare for the coming of Jesus. Free us from doubt and worry, filling us with the peace and joy we receive from knowing you as our Father and Jesus as your son, later dying for our salvation so that we may have a place in Heaven with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I pray that you be blessed this season and be a blessing to others!

Chaun Marsh Doak

Assistant Director of Wesley Memorial School

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.



The Third Week of Advent

Voice of Zephaniah

December 15 - 21



Zephaniah's voice points to redemption and joy, reminding us of God's love and His promise to renew and save His people.



DECEMBER 15

Susannah Pittman

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE &
ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

DECEMBER 16

Terry Towe

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

DECEMBER 17

Caleb Janney

DIRECTOR OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

DECEMBER 18

A Voice of Hope

WESLEY MEMORIAL STAFF MEMBER

DECEMBER 19

Paty Tapia

WESLEY MEMORIAL SCHOOL TEACHER

DECEMBER 20

A Voice of Hope

WESLEY MEMORIAL STAFF MEMBER

DECEMBER 21

A Voice of Hope

WESLEY MEMORIAL STAFF MEMBER

December 15

Rejoice! That is the invitation of the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday (Gaudete means “rejoice” in Latin). Advent is a season of anticipation, preparation, and examination. Lest we become weary from waiting, Gaudete Sunday serves as a mid-point refreshment and encouragement. It reorients us to the reason for our preparation—to fully receive the joyous truth of Christ. We light the pink candle on the Advent wreath today to symbolize the joy and anticipation of Christmas.

Today’s passage from Zephaniah proclaims our joy. Considered one of the 12 minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Zephaniah’s prophecy serves as a “wake-up call” to Judah during the 7th century BC. Much of the prophecy focuses on the judgement the nation faces for its neglect of God’s law and its indifference towards God. Yet, Zephaniah’s prophecy ends with a message of joy. Evil, suffering, and mourning are not the final words. “The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst,” Zephaniah proclaims, “you shall never again fear evil.” Zephaniah goes on to describe our God as the One who loves, saves, restores, and redeems us. In verse 18, he beautifully and poignantly declares, “[The Lord] will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love.” What a joyful and comforting promise!

In this season of Advent, our hearts may be heavy with longing, weariness, or grief. We may be navigating how we can prepare and realign our hearts and wills with His. As we journey, may we be reminded today that the Lord is in our midst. He rejoices over us, He quiets us with His love. His light shines in the darkness and can never be overcome. Rejoice!

O Lord, we rejoice in you. May the joy of Christ renew and revive us in our Advent journeys, giving us comfort and hope. Help us to see the ways that we can share your joy with those around us today. In all that we do, may we be attentive to your presence in our midst. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Susannah Pittman

Pastor of Congregational Care & Adult Spiritual Formation

People of Zion, sing! Israel, shout loudly! People of Jerusalem, be glad! Let your hearts be full of joy. The Lord has stopped punishing you. He has made your enemies turn away from you. The Lord is the King of Israel. He is with you. You will never again be afraid that others will harm you. The time is coming when people will say to Jerusalem, “Zion, don’t be afraid. Don’t give up. The Lord your God is with you. He is the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you. In his love he will no longer punish you. Instead, he will sing for joy because of you.” The Lord says to his people, “You used to celebrate my appointed feasts in Jerusalem. You are sad because you can’t do that anymore. Other people make fun of you because of that. That sadness was a heavy load for you to carry; but I will remove that load from you. At that time I will punish all those who crushed you. I will save those among you who are disabled. I will gather those who have been taken away. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time I will gather you together. And I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the nations on earth. I will bless you with great success again,” says the Lord.

December 16

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13

Hope. Such a simple word, but not really simple at all. All of us have the Hope of a new day, of the promise of what that day will bring. The Hope for future days. Some of us have the Hope that a new job brings. We can have the hope of what a new Grandchild will be like and the joy we feel when that new child is born. Knowing that the child is a Blessing from God himself!

We also have the Hope that God brings us with each new day. He has a plan for each of us for all the days of our Lives. Some days will be not so good and some days will be the best day that we've ever had.

But God gives us bad days & good days to teach us that his promise is to Always take care of us and show us the way. We just need to look for the good in every situation that comes. I know that this is not always easy to do. Some things just try our patience and we may not understand at the time why things are happening the way that they are, but God has a plan.

We just need to keep believing that God is with us everyday and will lead us in the direction that he needs us to go. With his help, we will get through!

In this Christmas Season, my Hope for everyone is that we do not forget that Jesus was born for a reason. To forgive us our sins and show us Hope for all the world and for all of us. May the Joy, Peace and Love that is shown during the Holidayseason sustain us all throughout the year with the Hope that things can only get better.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Please forgive us all for the sins that we commit every day. Even though try our best to be more like you, we all fail on a daily basis because none of us are sinless, no matter how hard we try to be. Please bless all of us each day and walk with us daily. Please Bless our families and loved ones and protect them always. Lord, in this season and every day, remind us of your love, mercy, kindness and grace. In Jesus Holy name, Amen!

Terry Towe

Financial Assistant

*Be silent in front of him. He is the Lord and King.
The day of the Lord is near. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice.
He has set apart for himself the people he has invited.*

December 17

Hearts Awakened

During this season of Advent, we are called to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Zephaniah's words remind us that preparation begins with a renewed awareness of God's presence and a wholehearted devotion to Him. Advent is a season of waiting and expectation, but it is also a time to heed the voices of hope calling us out of spiritual complacency and into purposeful preparation.

This passage resounds in our world today as it did in Zephaniah's time. The people of Jerusalem had grown apathetic, saying in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill." They were stagnant, like wine left on its dregs, indifferent to God's movement. Advent reminds us that Christ's coming is both a time of grace and a call to accountability. Just as God promised to "search Jerusalem with lamps," He now searches our hearts. He invites us to let His light expose areas of indifference or misplaced trust—in wealth, status, politics, or other worldly pursuits—that hinder our devotion to Him.

Advent invites us to reawaken our hearts to the voices of hope and the priorities of Christ's kingdom. Are we making space for God in our lives, aligning ourselves with His kingdom's vision of peace, justice, and love? Or have we allowed distractions to obscure His call? We are invited to examine our hearts, repent of apathy, and live with expectancy, knowing our Savior is near. God's promise is not passive; His love is active, calling us into a vibrant and transformative relationship with Him.

As we lean into this season of Advent, let us remember that Christ is the light of the world—a light that pierces the darkness of our complacency and awakens us to hope. May we open our hearts fully to His coming, surrendering to His transforming love and preparing to be bearers of His hope in the world.

Prayer:

*Holy God, as we wait in this season of Advent,
awaken our hearts and attune us to the voices of hope calling us to You.*

*Shape us not for gain or recognition,
but for the joy of Your presence and the beauty of Your truth.*

*In this time of waiting, let our lives reflect Christ,
not for applause, but as a witness to His humility and love.*

*Prepare us for Your coming, O Lord,
not by what we achieve,
but by surrendering to Your Spirit,
that we may carry Your hope into the world
and live for Your glory alone.*

Amen.

Caleb Janney

Director of Contemporary Music

At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.

Z E P H A N I A H 1 : 1 2 - 1 3

December 18

Seeking the Lord in Humility

The call of Zephaniah is both urgent and timeless: “Seek the Lord.” These words remind us that while God is merciful and patient, His justice is real. We are invited to pursue Him with humility and righteousness, not as a means to avoid judgment, but because His presence is life-giving.

This verse reflects the heart of Advent—a season of seeking. We prepare our hearts to receive the peace and salvation that Christ brings, knowing He came not to the proud and powerful but to the humble and faithful. The shepherds sought Him, leaving their flocks to find the Savior in a manger. The wise men sought Him, traveling far to worship the King of Kings. Today, we are called to seek Him still.

As we pursue righteousness and humility, let us be reminded that the journey to the manger is one of faith and surrender. Christ’s birth was a gift to the humble, and His return will be the fulfillment of every promise for those who seek Him.

Prayer: Lord, teach us to seek You with humble hearts. Let our lives reflect Your righteousness, and may we always remember that You are near to those who call on You in faith. Amen.

A Voice of Hope

Wesley Memorial Staff Member

*So look to him, all you people in the land who worship him faithfully.
You always do what he commands you to do.
Continue to do what is right. Don't be proud.
Then perhaps the Lord will keep you safe
on the day he pours out his anger on the world.*

December 19

This Christmas season, we're reminded of God's profound promise of hope. Centuries before Jesus' birth, God assured His people of a Savior, who would bring redemption and light. After hundreds of years of eager anticipation, that promise beautifully came to life in Jesus.

This prophecy of hope is captured in Isaiah 9:2-7, where Jesus' birth is described as a light shining in darkness. The hope that Jesus brought wasn't just for the people of His time; it's for us, too. No matter what challenges we face, Christmas reminds us that God keeps His promises. Jesus is that hope.

As we journey through Advent, we prepare our hearts for Jesus joyful arrival, embracing a season of hope. With each passing day, our spirits are lifted by His promise of love and eternal life. May this sacred time ignite deeper faith, stronger purpose and hearts overflowing with joy, peace and love.

Christmas reminds us of the hope we have in Christ Jesus, a light in the darkness. As we light the Advent candles, we symbolize the hope found in Jesus' birth a powerful reminder of God's enduring love. May the warm glow of these candles illuminate our hearts, guiding us toward unconditional love, profound peace and boundless joy.

Paty Tapia

Wesley Memorial School Teacher

*In spite of that, the Lord is good to Jerusalem.
He never does anything that is wrong.
Every morning he does what is fair.
Each new day he does the right thing.
But those who do what is wrong
aren't even ashamed of it.*

ZEPHANIAH 3:5

December 20

The Humble King and the Coming Conqueror

The story of Christmas begins in humility. Jesus, the King of Kings, wasn't born in a palace but in a stable, surrounded by hay and animals, including donkeys. This humble beginning foreshadowed His life and ministry. Donkeys, a symbol of peace in ancient times, reflect the character of His arrival—not as a conqueror but as a Savior bringing peace to the world.

In Zechariah 9:9, the prophet foretold, “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey.” This prophecy was fulfilled in the triumphal entry when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, declaring peace and salvation for all who believe. Yet, the story doesn't end there. Revelation 19:11 paints a picture of His return—this time riding a white horse, a symbol of victory and conquest. At His second coming, Jesus will come not in peace but for war - to establish His eternal reign after defeating all evil.

This contrast between the donkey and the white horse reminds us of the twofold nature of Jesus' mission. His first coming, celebrated at Christmas, brought us the gift of salvation, hope, and peace. His second coming will fulfill the promise of ultimate restoration and justice. As we get ready to celebrate the birth of the Savior, let us remember the humility of His first coming and the hope of His return.

Prayer: Prince of Peace, as we reflect on the miracle of Your birth, remind us of the humility You displayed in coming to us. You came to bring peace to a broken world, and we eagerly await the day You will return to make all things new. In Your holy name, Amen.

A Voice of Hope

Wesley Memorial Staff Member

*The Lord will be awesome against them;
for He will famish all the gods of the earth,
and to Him shall bow down,
each in its place,
all the lands of the nations.*

December 21

God's promise in this passage is both powerful and convicting. It reveals His heart for a faithful remnant—a people marked by humility, truth, and trust. These individuals are marked not by perfection, but by their refusal to embrace pride, deceit, or wrongdoing. It is a reminder that God cherishes integrity and will one day establish a peaceful kingdom where His people live free from fear and falsehood.

This passage reminds us that trust in the Lord is incompatible with lies, half-truths, or manipulation. The world often views small lies or calculated deception as harmless or even necessary. Lying, no matter how small, is never justified in God's eyes. Scripture teaches us that all lies come from the evil one (John 8:44) and that deceit separates us from God's truth. Whether it's a casual half-truth or deliberate manipulation, every lie sows distrust and harm. As Pastor Jeff has reminded us, God does not condone premeditated deceit; for He is a God of truth and righteousness. In contrast, those who walk with the Lord seek honesty and integrity in all they do. They reflect His light by speaking the truth and resisting the temptation to use falsehoods for gain.

This prophecy points to a future where God's faithful people live in complete peace and security, free from fear and deceit. God wants the same for us as his people just the same as he did for the Israelites. As we approach Christmas, let us reflect on the character of Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Trusting in Him means aligning our lives with His truth, speaking with honesty, acting with integrity, and obeying his commandments. In doing so, we reflect His light and find the peace that comes from living in step with His will.

Prayer: Lord of truth, help me to walk with integrity and live in honesty. Guard my heart against pride and deceit, and teach me to trust in You completely. Give me the strength to overcome my limited capacities and obey your commands for my life, for this is how I can demonstrate to you and others the trust that I have in your plan and purpose. May my words and actions reflect Your character, and may I live in a way that brings peace to those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Voice of Hope

Wesley Memorial Staff Member

*But inside your city I will leave those who are not proud at all.
Those who are still left alive will trust in the Lord.
They will not do anything wrong. They will not tell any lies.
They will not say anything to fool other people.
They will eat and lie down in peace. And no one will make them afraid.*

The Fourth Week of Advent

Voice of Micah

December 22-24



Micah's voice calls us to God's care, reminding us of His promise to shepherd us in peace and lead us with justice.



DECEMBER 22

Ken Lyon

PASTOR OF CHURCH VITALITY &
GENEROSITY

DECEMBER 23

Isabel Cruz

PASTORAL MINISTRY MANAGER

DECEMBER 24

Melody Emerson

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND
CONNECTIONS

December 22

This passage is incredibly rich and layered with meaning. It was referenced by the chief priests and scribes when King Herod, unsettled by the Wiseman asking where they could find the newborn king, sent for them to determine where the potential rival could be found.

Those chief priests and scribes referenced Micah 5:2-5 as described in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 2:5-6.

It's clear Matthew believed Micah, 5:2-5 was fulfilled in Jesus and for a good reason.

Bethlehem was the home city of King David. The very name Bethlehem means house of bread or fruitful. Though seemingly insignificant compared to the great tribes of Israel. It was nonetheless important, useful and worthy in God's kingdom plan. Jesus was born in the town identified with King David. The prophecies of the Messiah proclaimed he would be of David's line.


In both David and Bethlehem we see the irony of God's way. David was not seen as the first choice to be anointed king. He had several older brothers who were seen as better candidates for the role by their father. In fact David was not even brought into the house for consideration when the prophet first arrived to anoint the new king. David, the youngest, was out tending sheep.

God though his prophet asked for David to be brought. It was David who was selected by God in contrast to what earthly wisdom and convention could see.

Throughout the scriptures we see this dynamic at work. God confounds the "way things work" in the world turning upside down the expectations of the status quo. Where are kings expected to be born? Palaces.

Even the Wisemen knew that.

But God is the God of surprise.



The Holy One often takes what we regard with low expectations and makes it “fruitful”. Bethlehem, the least of the tribes was to be the “house of bread” where the Bread of Life, Jesus would be born.

Surprise.. a babe in a manger born to at least temporarily homeless parents in a backwater town, low class shepherds straggling by. What is this world coming to some might have thought. But for some, those with eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to perceive... there is Angel song, starlight new, awe struck shepherds worshipping a new born king.

The Wisemen had to adjust their expectations in order to receive what they truest sought.

Perhaps we do too.

Prayer: O God of surprise, goodness and hope. Help us recognize the Bethlehem’s you have for us filled with the promise of “fruitfulness” and the sustaining presence of Jesus, the Bread of Life”.

Ken Lyon

Pastor of Church Vitality & Generosity

*Therefore I will look to the Lord;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
My God will hear me.*

December 23

In the Waiting


In earlier passages of Micah, we see the announcing of the coming of the messiah. In Micah 7:7 it quotes “Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.”

As we apply this to our lives during this advent season, we are reminded of Jesus’s second coming. As we await this second coming, there are two things the prophet reminds us to do: Look to the Lord and believe our God will hear us. Preparation and sanctification happen during the waiting; it’s a long-life journey. “How” we wait on the Lord matters!

The deeper we dive into our relationship with Christ, the more aware we become of our sins. He transforms us from the inside out during sanctification. As Jesus said, we are to be born again. Our whole life we await the Lord, but while we wait, we must let him transform us. This doesn’t mean the world stops for us while we let the Lord do his work. This means that during difficult times whether it’s sickness, grief, loss, economic hardship, divorce or anything that puts us under pressure, the Lord still uses those circumstances to mold us and prepare us for that second coming.

I’m going to share a moment of vulnerability with you. As my children and I navigate the challenges of divorce, we haven’t had any option BUT to look to the Lord every step of the way. I don’t remember how many times I asked God why this was happening to my family and what was His end goal. I don’t remember how many times I wrestled with Jesus and told him how much I didn’t want this life that was unfolding for my children and me. I can’t tell you the countless times I laid on my carpet weeping for all the loss, for all the feelings of inadequacy, for the emotional battle my children were facing, for the financial hardships, and for the efforts I had to make to still work and provide for my children despite everything going on around me.

The Holy Spirit began to reveal to me the purpose of these moments where I felt so unsafe and unloved. He taught me to be still; this meant I would step down from my role as one of the worship leaders at my church and remember that my worth in the Lord doesn’t come from how much I do for the church. He reminded me that



my worth was established at the cross when Jesus died and shed his blood for me. He taught me to depend solely on him. I don't need validation from people, and I need to have the Lord as the forefront of every aspect of my life. In these moments I learned what it meant to look to the Lord.

For a little over a year now, there has been more uncertainty in my life than I have had to deal with in the past and I've learned to be at peace with this uncertainty. Why? I choose peace daily because there are a few things for certain. Jesus is King and Jesus is still alive. I see him and hear him every day during scripture time, or during prayer, or even as I drive down the road and I'm admiring his creation. I'm certain that I'm just passing through this world and my end goal is to share the love of Christ and the plan of salvation with as many people as I can before my time ends. I'm certain that Jesus is coming again and in that waiting period, I will let him use me to expand his kingdom.

My hope this advent season is that some of my testimony and the lessons I've learned this past year, can help you reflect on what it means to wait on the Lord. It doesn't mean the storms aren't coming. It just means we prepare for the storms while knowing for certain that Jesus will hear us and provide our needs. Continue to look to the Lord every day of your life even in the moments you think it's insignificant. Trust me when I tell you, the Lord cares about everything in your life no matter how minute it may seem. Remember to look to Him, wait for Him, and believe wholeheartedly that He will hear you.

Prayer: Heavenly and Gracious Father. As we await your coming, help our faith and belief in you grow stronger daily. That even in moments of despair, grief, loss, and hardship, we can look up to you and trust your provision. That we can learn HOW to wait on you. That we may be open to receiving your correction and the lessons you teach us in these said moments. I pray that your desires for our life become the desires of our heart. That your will be done in our life all for Honor and Glory to you, Almighty God. In Jesus's precious name. Amen"

Isabel Cruz

Pastoral Ministry Manager

*Therefore I will look to the Lord;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
My God will hear me.*


December 24

On this holy night, as we prepare our hearts for the arrival of the King, Micah's words challenge us with tender simplicity. What does the Lord require? It's not sacrifices, offerings, or grand gestures—it's a life shaped by justice, kindness, and humility.

To do justice (or act justly) means making choices that align with God's truth and fairness. It is standing for truth, even when it costs us something. Justice begins with the small, unseen decisions of our daily lives. It requires discernment and courage, trusting that God will reveal what needs to be seen. Living justly calls us to evaluate not only our actions but also the intentions of our hearts. It requires truthfulness, fairness, and kindness, even when no one else is watching.

To love kindness is to embrace the heart of God in our relationships. Kindness is more than a surface-level act; it's a genuine reflection of God's love. Some translations use 'mercy' instead of 'kindness,' highlighting the depth of compassion God calls us to show. Mercy demands that we keep our hearts soft, even when the world tempts us toward bitterness. It's choosing forgiveness over revenge, kindness over cruelty. When we love mercy, we reflect the very essence of Christ, who came to reconcile and redeem. Kindness is offering grace when it's undeserved, choosing compassion over judgment, and reflecting the sweetness of Christ's love to others. Kindness softens hearts, heals wounds, and points others to the Savior.

To walk humbly with your God is to acknowledge that every breath, every step, and every blessing comes from Him. It is relinquishing control and trusting Him completely. It's a daily surrender, a recognition that He is God, and we are not. It's seeking His presence in both the fight and the rest, remembering that we walk not by our own strength but by His grace. Walking humbly means being faithful in both the little things and the big things, knowing that God values integrity in every aspect of our lives. True humility is recognizing that our lives are not our own—they are for His glory and His purpose.



I'll admit, I don't always get this right. Actually, I mess up every day, and there is rarely a day where I feel like I've got it all "right." I overload my schedule and forget to be still. There are moments when I fail at extending kindness or walking humbly, and my pride or impatience gets in the way. There are also moments when my pride takes over—I overthink why someone treated me a certain way instead of taking the time to pray for them while remembering it's often a reflection of their inner wounds. But I'm reminded that this sweet invitation from Micah isn't about perfection; it's about continually seeking Jesus to teach me how to love others while also learning to love myself as He does. It's a journey of grace and growth, trusting in His faithfulness every step of the way.

Tonight, as we remember the humble birth of Jesus—the Savior who chose a manger over a throne—may we reflect on the simplicity and beauty of what God asks of us. Justice, kindness, and humility are not only requirements; they are the path to knowing and walking with Him.

Prayer: Sweet Savior, as we await the celebration of Your birth, teach us what it means to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with You. Keep our anger from hurting others and keep it turned toward justice, not cruelty. Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking. Keep our hearts tender, our words truthful, and our spirits aligned with Your will. Teach us to speak against injustice without becoming bullies. Thank You for showing us the ultimate example of humility in the manger. May we honor You by living out Your love in all we do. Remind us that all of this, every little bit of it, is for love. Keep us fiercely kind and steadfast in love. In Your precious name, Amen.

Melody Emerson

Director of Communication & Connections

*He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Christmas Day

When The Voices Stopped

December 25



The New Testament proclaims the fulfillment of hope, crowning the promise of salvation in the coming King, Jesus Christ.



DECEMBER 25

Jeff Patterson
SENIOR PASTOR

December 25

When The Voices Stopped


For centuries the voices had been speaking about the coming great Deliverer. Even in the Garden, God made the first prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. Speaking to the serpent that had beguiled Eve, God prophesied, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”* (Gen. 3:15).

Throughout the centuries, the voices of the prophets spoke. Jacob prophesied that the One to come would be from the Tribe of Judah and would wield a royal scepter (Gen. 49:10). Micah declared that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Isaiah said that the Coming One would rise from the root of Jesse (Isa. 11:1) and would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

Daniel declared this great Deliverer would have an everlasting throne (Dan. 7:13-14). The great Ruler would ride into Jerusalem on a humble donkey according to the voice of Zechariah (Zech. 9:9). Malachi declared that this Coming One, the Messiah, would be preceded by a great preacher like Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6), so John the Baptist appeared. Many voices over 1000 years have joined the prophetic chorus. The climax was the chorus of the angels who sang to the shepherds,

*“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those
with whom he is pleased!”* (Lk. 2:14)

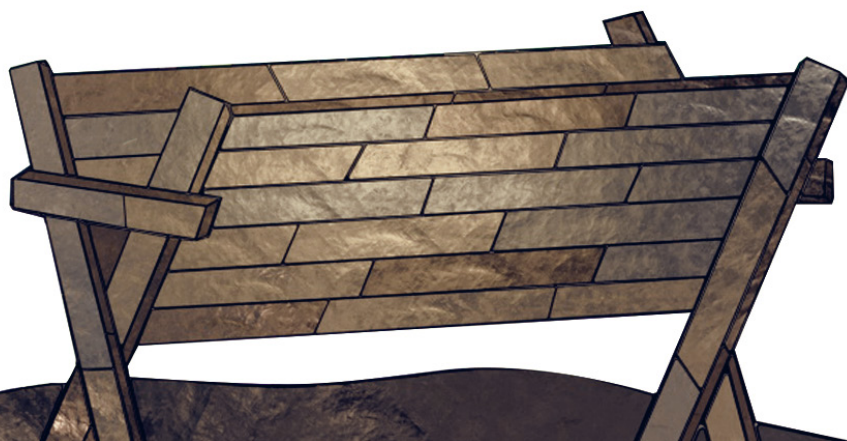
But then the time came when all the earth stood silent to witness the arrival of the God-Man, God incarnated in human flesh. There is a Christian tradition that even the birds stopped singing as the Divine One was birthed into human history (The Infancy Gospel of James, c. AD 150).



Now that the One to come has arrived, it is time to join our voices again! “O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise!” (Charles Wesley, 1739)


Prayer: God, by your grace, through the work of your great kindness, may my voice join with the eternal chorus of prophets, priests, martyrs, and people who declare your goodness in sending an unimaginable, breathtaking Gift to the world. Amen.

Dr. Jeff Patterson
Senior Pastor



*Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those
with whom he is pleased!*

L u k e 2 : 1 4



A stained glass window with a circular opening. The window is composed of many small, irregular pieces of glass in various colors including red, blue, green, yellow, and brown. The circular opening shows a bright, textured scene, possibly a landscape or a celestial body, with a dark, swirling pattern. The text is overlaid on the right side of the window.

Merry O

from the Staff of Y

The background is a vibrant stained glass design. It features a large circular inset on the left side, containing a detailed image of a celestial body, likely the moon, with its characteristic craters and surface texture. The rest of the image is composed of numerous rectangular and triangular pieces of stained glass in various colors, including deep reds, oranges, yellows, greens, and blues, arranged in a radial pattern that suggests a sunburst or a starburst effect. The overall composition is rich in color and texture, with a warm, festive atmosphere.

Christmas

Wesley Memorial

