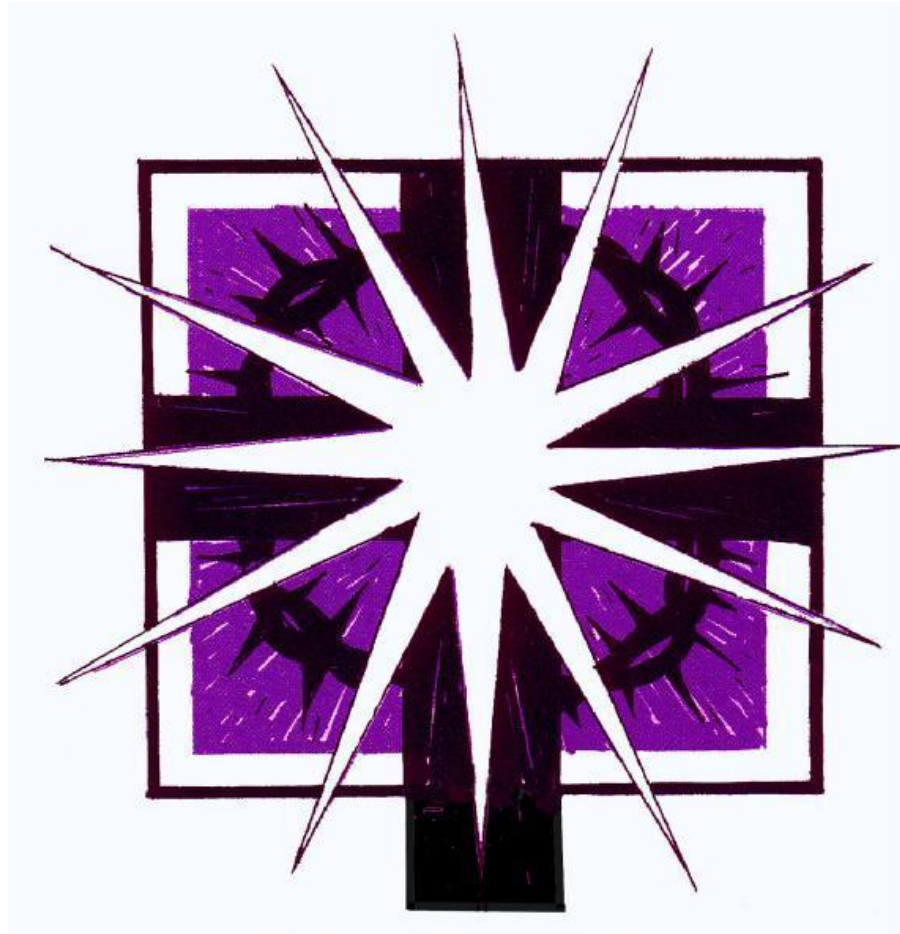


When God Breaks In

Daily Scripture Readings and Prayer

By: Pastor Paul DeVries Dec. 3 – Dec. 25, 2006



When God Breaks In...

When God Breaks In

The season of Advent and Christmas is ripe with opportunity to see, hear, and experience God "breaking in" to our limited existence with his limitless grace and mission for us his people. Throughout Scripture God constantly breaks into people's lives with his grace, challenge and call for discipleship. From Moses to Hannah and Samuel, from Zechariah and Elizabeth to the Virgin Mary God reveals himself. His revealed Word comes to us today too. But we need to look and listen for it. Let's focus our eyes on, and tune our ears into, the very Word of God.

This booklet contains daily Scripture readings, prayers, and reflection questions that correspond to the December sermon series here at Brookside. The hope is that by beginning or ending the day with prayer, Scripture reading and reflection we will each experience the reality of our God in a fresh way this year. Each day the opening prayer is written in the singular and the closing prayer is written in the plural. I trust that this will enable you to hear God's Word both personally and communally.

The pages at the end of this booklet contain suggested passages for weekly Scripture memorization. Memorizing these passages will enrich your Christmas experience. My hope is that all of us here at Brookside will live and breathe the truth and grace of Scripture ... this Advent and always.

In God's Truth and Grace,

Pastor Paul

Sunday, December 3

“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Exodus 1:1-14

¹ These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. ⁵ The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

⁶ Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, ⁷ but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.

⁸ Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

¹¹ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

Reflection Questions: Why do you think God's people so often prosper during times of oppression? Have you prospered during difficult times?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great "I Am." In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Monday, December 4

“So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Exodus 1:15-22

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." ¹⁷ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. ¹⁸ Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"

¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

²⁰ So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²² Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

Reflection Questions: Would you have the bravery of Shiphrah and Puah? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great “I Am.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Tuesday, December 5

“When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Exodus 2:1-10

¹ Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, ² and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. ⁶ She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

⁸ "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Reflection Question: God worked through Pharaoh's family to save Moses, counteracting Pharaoh's own murderous intent. Do you think that God still works in such ironic ways today?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great “I Am.” In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Wednesday, December 6

“When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Exodus 2:11-15

¹¹ One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

¹⁴ The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.

Reflection Questions: Why would God let this happen to Moses? Have you ever sat down in utter distress? Why would God let this happen to you?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great “I Am.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Thursday, December 7

“God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Exodus 2:16-25

¹⁶ Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

¹⁸ When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?"

¹⁹ They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock."

²⁰ "And where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

²³ During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.

²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Reflection Questions: Does Gershom’s name meaning, “I have become an alien in a foreign land,” display any hope? Where does your hope come from?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great “I Am.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Friday, December 8

“And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land . . . flowing with milk and honey.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Exodus 3:16-22

¹⁶ "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-- appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--a land flowing with milk and honey.'

"The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

²¹ "And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. ²² Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

Reflection Question: This is the core of God’s Old Testament “salvation” plan. What outrageous and incredible plan does God have for his people today?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great “I Am.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Saturday, December 9

"But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, open my eyes and unstop my ears so that I see and hear your truth today. May I experience growth in times of oppression and overflowing blessings in times of hardship. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Exodus 4:1, 10, 13, 14-17

¹ Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" ...

¹⁰ Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."
...

¹³ But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

¹⁴ Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. ¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. ¹⁷ But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it."

Reflection Questions: Are you ever slow or argumentative with God when he calls you to do something? Notice that God provides reassurance for Moses in the form of miracles and in the presence of his brother. How does God reassure you?

Closing Prayer: *As the Israelites of old, may we hear and see and experience your in-breaking blessings in our lives today. May we know you as the great "I Am." In Jesus' name, Amen*

Sunday, December 10

“...but Hannah had none ... the Lord had closed her womb.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:1-5

¹ There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb.

Reflection Question: Hannah is loved, but unfulfilled and empty. Have you ever been there?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth, and embrace your blessings as your servants. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Monday, December 11

*“Why are you downhearted?
Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?”*

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:6-8

⁶ And because the LORD had closed her (Hannah's) womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

⁸ Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

Reflection Question: Why would God place an ornery, mean-spirited woman like Pininnah in Hannah's life? Elkanah loves Hannah but he offers her hollow comfort. Has anyone ever offered you hollow comfort?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth and embrace your blessings as your servants. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Tuesday, December 12

“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:9-11

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. ¹⁰ In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD.

¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

Reflection Question: Hannah is loved, but unfulfilled and empty. Have you ever been there?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth, and embrace your blessings as your servants. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Wednesday, December 13

“Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:12-20

¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

¹⁸ She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

Reflection Questions: After Eli’s initial misunderstanding and harsh words, he speaks words of peace and hope that are fulfilled first in Samuel and ultimately in Christ. Who is the ultimate fulfillment of all prophetic words of peace and hope in our lives today? Do you trust him?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth and embrace your blessings as your servants. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Thursday, December 14

“So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:21-28

²¹ When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, ²² Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always."

^{1SA 1:23} "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

^{1SA 1:24} After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. ²⁵ When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, ²⁶ and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Reflection Questions: How does Hannah’s giving of her child to the service of the Lord, change the course of covenant history? What have you given to the Lord?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth and your blessings as your servants. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Friday, December 15

“My heart rejoices in the LORD, in the LORD my horn is lifted high.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

I Samuel 2:1-5

- ¹ Then Hannah prayed and said:
"My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.
- ² "There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
- ³ "Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.
- ⁴ "The bows of the warriors are broken,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.
- ⁵ Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry hunger no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

Reflection Question: Why do you think that God so often lifts up the humble, poor and lowly? Does he lift up you? How does your heart rejoice in him?

Closing Prayer: *As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth, and embrace your blessings as your servants. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Saturday, December 16

“He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

Opening Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, you are the giver of all good things. Take away all emptiness and fill my heart and mind with your Word of truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

I Samuel 1:1-5

- ⁶ "The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
- ⁷ The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.
- ⁸ He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes
and has them inherit a throne of honor.
"For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
upon them he has set the world.
- ⁹ He will guard the feet of his saints,
but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.
- "It is not by strength that one prevails;
- ¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be shattered.
He will thunder against them from heaven;
the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.
- "He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Reflection Questions: Whom does Hannah’s son, Samuel, later anoint as the greatest King of Israel? Who is the ultimate “strength” that comes from David’s line? Do you find your strength in him?

Closing Prayer: As Hannah and Samuel of old, we ask to be filled and fulfilled by your Word and truth. May we listen to your words, receive your truth and your blessings as your servants. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Sunday, December 17

“Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:35-45

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing is impossible with God."

LK 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Reflection Questions: Mary is called “blessed” because of what she believes. What do you believe? Do you believe God’s Word?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Monday, December 18

“...for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:46-50

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me--
holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

Reflection Questions: Does our culture exalt those who are humble? Why would anyone want to be humble?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Tuesday, December 19

“He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:51-56

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

LK 1:53 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

LK 1:54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

LK 1:55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers."

LK 1:56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Reflection Questions: Is God likely to feed you, or send you away empty? Why?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 20

“Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, ‘What then is this child going to be?’ For the Lord's hand was with him.’”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:57-66

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, ⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

⁶¹ They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

Reflection Question: This child, named John, becomes the forerunner and baptizer of Jesus Christ. How have you seen the hand of the Lord through the ministry of John and Jesus?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Thursday, December 21

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people ... (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago)”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:67-75

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his people.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us--

⁷² to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

^{LK 1:75} in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Reflection Question: Christ fulfills the prophecy from long ago. Do you see and hear God's fulfilled prophecy in your life today?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary and Elizabeth of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Friday, December 22

“... to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins...”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 1:76-80

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Reflection Questions: Do you have the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sin? How will you increase your knowledge?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary and Elizabeth of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Saturday, December 23

“...she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

^{LK 2:4} So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Reflection Question: God works through Caesar, the Roman world, Nazareth, Bethlehem, David, and Mary and Joseph to bring his Son into the world. Does God ever choose to work his greatness through you?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary and Joseph of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Sunday, December 24

“...and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

^{LK 2:13} Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

^{LK 2:14} "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Reflection Question: Do you consider yourself part of the people “on whom his favor rests?” Why or why not?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary and the shepherds of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Monday, December 25

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Opening Prayer: *Lord Almighty, you fill the world with your great deeds. Fill my life with your great deeds, not so that I am great, but so that your greatness shines to those around me. I know that this is possible through Christ. In his name I pray, Amen.*

Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

^{LK 2:16} So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Reflection Questions: After Christmas, will you return to work, school, home, church, etc. in the same manner as the shepherds? That is, will you glorify and praise God?

Closing Prayer: *As Mary and Joseph of old, we ask for the faith to believe your truth. May your Word of Truth inspire us to faithful action and praise of your greatness in Christ. Amen.*

Scripture Memory

One of the most powerful ways to strengthen your understanding and knowledge of Scripture is through memorization. During our December preaching series, the following texts could come alive through memorization. Why not give it a try and see how God speaks to you?

December 3-9: Exodus 3:13-15

¹³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

December 10-17: I Samuel 3:1-10

¹ The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

^{1SA 3:7} Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

December 17-25: Luke 2:1-12

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.