

CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25, 2008

Scripture Readings

Friday, Christmas Day **Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 2:1-12**

THEME: BECOMING LIKE JESUS

What is your favorite song? Is it an old song, or a new one? These verses form what may be one of the first hymns sung by the early Christians. Of course, it is a song about Jesus and a reminder that we need to be like him. Like him how? We need to humble ourselves to love and serve others. Do you ever have a hard time putting the needs of others before your own? Are there people you would rather not have to love or put up with? Aren't you glad Jesus isn't like that? He loves sinners and came to seek and to save people who are lost. Ask God to help you follow Jesus and be a servant just like he is.

Special Hymn:

Joy To The World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, heaven and nature sing.!

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns:
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, Rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found!

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love, And wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts, George Frederick Handel, Lowell Mason ©1997 Triune Music, CCLI#2667782



ADVENT 2009: INTRODUCTION

The word advent means “coming” or “arrival.” It is a four-week period in which the church remembers the promises of Jesus’ first coming, and looks forward to his promise to come again. Just as John the Baptist told the Jewish people to “prepare” for the Lord’s coming, we need to encourage each other to be ready for his coming again.

The Christian Church has observed some sort of Christmas season since the 4th century. There was always a period of preparation before Christmas Day, which varied from between three to seven weeks. In the 10th century the four week pattern was finally settled (so we’ve been doing this for a millennium!). European Christians used greenery and candles to enhance the season, and that practice has caught on in the United States, and around the world in recent years.

The Advent wreath itself is a tradition that is centuries old. A candle is lit during and for each week of advent, until Christmas Eve, when all five candles are lit. Four of the candles are purple, which is a penitential color: a symbol of self-examination and preparation. They remind us that, just as the prophets and John the Baptist called Israel to “get ready for the Lord”, we need to be doing the same thing! The white candle, or “Christ candle,” is lit on Christmas Eve. This reminds us that it is not all “preparation” – he really came and will really come again.

Seasons such as Advent/Christmas and Holy Week/Easter are wonderful opportunities to begin or rekindle a devotional life. The following thematic readings have been prepared with the hope that this Advent will be a time of renewal for you. These readings are designed to be applicable for all ages, so we hope this will be a resource you can use on your own, with your children, or with other family and friends.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
November 29 – December 5, 2009

Prayer for the Week:

Faithful God, your promises stand unshaken through all generations. Renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert, watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our judge and savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymns for the Week:

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come Thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the saints Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see Thee, Dayspring from on high, appear;
Come, Thou promised Rod of Jesse, Of Thy birth we long to hear!

O'er the hills the angels singing News, glad tidings of a birth:
"Go to Him, your praises bringing; Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness, He whose glories knew no end;
By His life He brings us gladness, Our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend.
Leaving riches without number, Born within a cattle stall;
This the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Public Domain

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.

Chorus: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadows put to flight.
(Chorus)

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, And cause us in her ways to go. (Chorus)

O come desire of nations, bind All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease; Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

(Chorus)

Public Domain

CHRISTMAS EVE
December 24, 2009

Scripture Readings

Thursday, Christmas Eve

Luke 2:8-20

THEME: GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE ON EARTH

Imagine how surprised those shepherds must have been when an angel choir started shouting God's praise during the night! What were they saying? That what God had done in sending Jesus was more wonderful than anyone could imagine – it was "glorious." They praised him because he had set his favor, (his love and blessings), upon sinful people who didn't deserve it, and had sent a savior so that we might know his peace. What is peace? It is a wonderful biblical word that refers to the experience of life as it is supposed to be, humans in fellowship with God and blessed in their lives. The angels told the shepherds (and us) that Jesus is the only way to know peace. Did you know that angels still praise and glorify God in heaven? They do it day and night without ceasing. Why don't you do it too!

Special Hymn:

Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Public Domain

Monday

Luke 1:26-38

THEME: THE FIRST CHRISTIAN

The ancient church used to call Mary the first Christian because she was the very first to hear and to believe that this child was indeed the promised Messiah and Savior. She was frightened when the angel first came, and wouldn't you be? But she was not frightened for long after she heard the good news about her baby. Do you know what the name Jesus means? It means 'savior' or 'deliverer.' It is the Greek language equivalent of the Hebrew word 'Joshua.' Jesus came to be our great warrior, to deliver us from the power of our great enemy, the devil, and to free us from the power of sin. He is the king of kings, and the son of King David who will reign forever. And Mary leads us in welcoming Jesus as savior. Her words should be ours: "I am the Lord's servant." As you pray, commit your life to serving the Lord just as Mary did.

Tuesday

Luke 1:39-45

THEME: LEAPING FOR JOY

What a happy meeting between Mary and Elizabeth! They were relatives, but we don't know if Elizabeth was Mary's cousin or maybe her aunt. Have you ever gotten together with your family and celebrated something wonderful? Well, when Mary and Elizabeth got together to celebrate the good news that Jesus was coming, even little baby John the Baptist got excited! Are you getting excited about Christmas? Tell the Lord about your joy. Did you know that he is excited about you and loves you more than you will ever know? Rejoice in his love – you can even leap if you want!

Wednesday

Luke 1:46-56

THEME: MAGNIFYING THE LORD

Have you ever been so excited that you couldn't hold it in? Have you ever just had to laugh, or run, or sing, or shout? That is what happened to Mary. Our verses are the words of her song, called the magnificat, the first Latin word of the song in the old Latin translations. It is translated as "glorifies" or "magnifies." Do you ever magnify anything? That's what we do when we really enjoy or are interested in something and want to see it up closer. Mary was that way about God's plan to send Jesus. She thought about it and rejoiced. She was especially excited that God was going to end all the evil in the world someday – evil kings and politicians, the suffering of the poor, hunger – all tears will someday be wiped away. Can you take a few minutes to "magnify" the Lord? Praise Jesus for all the wonderful things he has done (e.g. forgiving our sins, giving us eternal life, his Spirit to comfort us), and all the wonderful things that will happen when he comes again.

Scripture Readings – Week 1: The Law

Sunday

Genesis 1:26-31

THEME: GOD MADE US TO LIVE IN HIS LIGHT

Do you know what God said first when he created the world (1:3)? These verses show us that God made us to be like him, and to know him. If God made us, then we can trust everything he tells us in his word, and we can trust him to take care of us. But do we trust God and are we really like him? Pray that the Lord will help us understand how much we need his light!

Monday

Genesis 3:1-13, 22-24

THEME: WE CHOSE TO LIVE IN DARKNESS

What did God say would happen if we distrust him and disobey him? What does the devil tell us about our heavenly father? Is this true? Can you think of things about our world that remind you that we no longer live in "God's garden?" Thank God for sending Jesus into the world so that we can someday return to his garden. Confess some of the ways you have failed to trust his word.

Tuesday

Genesis 3:14-15, 21

THEME: GOD PROMISES TO DELIVER US

God tells the serpent (the devil) that a descendant of the woman is coming to make right what he has done wrong. Who is this child he is promising? It is Jesus – on the cross Satan "struck his heel." But by making it possible for us to be forgiven, Jesus "crushed [Satan's] head." Look at what God does for Adam and Eve. This shows us that even though we are sinners, God loves us and wants to take care of us. Thank God for sending Jesus to set right everything that is wrong.

Wednesday

Genesis 6:9-14, 17-22

THEME: GOD JUDGES OUR SIN, BUT PROVIDES A WAY OUT

This story shows us that God is "holy" – that is, he alone is perfectly good, and punishes those who hurt others, and who disobey his word. But Noah shows us that God will save those who turn to him and trust him. Think about how the church is a sort of "ark." The church is made up of men, women, boys, and girls, who believe that God is willing to forgive us our sins and deliver us from the judgment to come. Thank God for his mercy, and pray that we would be instrumental in bringing many people onto our ark!

Thursday

Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6

THEME: GOD WANTS TO CALL MANY PEOPLE INTO HIS FAMILY

God called Abram to move all the way across his world! Have you ever moved? God wanted Abram to trust him, and come to a land just for God's people. Abraham believed God, and God gave him what he promised. Even more - he said, "I'll give you more children to share this land than you can count, more than the stars." Look at the stars; how many are there? Well, the New Testament tells us that ultimately this promise is fulfilled in Jesus. He will come back some day to the world God has promised him, and all those who believe in him will live in a new creation. Can you imagine what perfect a world would look like? Would you be willing to move to live in it, like Abraham did? Thank God for his wonderful invitation to live in the new world he is going to bring when Jesus comes back, and thank him that he wants billions and billions of people to be there with us!

Friday

Exodus 14:21-29

THEME: GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES TO DELIVER US

God promised his people a special land to live in, and promised to deliver them from sin. But their sin led them into being taken captive as slaves in Egypt. However, God was faithful, and when they were cornered against the sea, he simply parted the sea so they could escape! Then he brought the sea down on top of the evil people who wanted to hurt God's people. This shows us that God keeps his promises to deliver us. And as wonderful as this story is, it is even more wonderful to think of all the people Jesus saved when he passed through death and rose again to save us all! Do you think that we can trust Jesus to come back and deliver us from sin once and for all? Thank him for his promise to bring us safely to the promised new world he is making for us.

Saturday

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

THEME: A PROPHET GREATER THAN MOSES IS COMING

God told Moses to lead his people out of slavery into the Promised Land. When God appeared to them on Mt. Sinai (also called Mt. Horeb) his voice was so loud it hurt peoples' ears! They wanted Moses to listen to God to tell them what God had to say. Moses gave them a wonderful promise from God: that someday another prophet was coming who would tell the people exactly what God has to say. Do you know who that prophet was? It was Jesus - who was God, and who came down from heaven to earth. Pray that God would help us to listen to Jesus (his words in the Bible), so that we can know exactly what God thinks, and what he wants to tell us so that we can know him and his plan for our lives.

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

December 20 - 23, 2009

Prayer for the Week:

We ask you, Almighty God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, we may with great confidence look to him when he shall come to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn for the Week:

O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the King of angels;

Chorus: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels; Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God, all glory in the highest (Chorus)

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning:
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing (Chorus)

Public Domain

Scripture Readings - Week 4

Sunday

Luke 11:33-36; Ephesians 5:8-14

THEME: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

As we read in Genesis, God is the creator of all light, both physical and spiritual. Yet spiritual darkness fell upon man when sin came between him and God. God then chose the nation of Israel to be a light to the nations, yet time and again, Israel's heart toward God grew cold. Even so, God always preserved a remnant for Himself. By sending his only son Jesus into the world, God reached out to span the sin barrier that alienated all men from Himself. Jesus was the "light of the world." As you read the scripture for today, meditate on how Christ's first coming transformed countless lives, including your own, from darkness to light.

Friday

John 1:6-13

THEME: JESUS IS THE LIGHT

We've been focusing a lot on John the Baptist. Another John, the disciple of Jesus who wrote the gospel we are reading from, makes it clear that John the Baptizer came only to bear witness to Jesus. John the Baptizer became very well known in his lifetime. Many people wanted to learn from him and follow him. But he did not let all the attention go to his head. He knew that Jesus alone was the "lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus alone was the "one and only Son of God" who could also give us the rights to become God's sons and daughters through faith. Thank God for all the people he has brought into your life to help you know him better – you Mom, Dad, Grandparents, teachers, and Christian friends. Above all, thank him for Jesus, who alone can give us eternal life as God's children.

Saturday

John 1:14-18

THEME: JESUS SHOWS US WHAT GOD IS LIKE

Have you ever wanted to go to a foreign country? Has anyone ever told you about a wonderful place they've seen or been to, and it was so amazing that you really wanted to go there yourself? These verses tell us God came to us in Jesus to show us what it is like where he lives in all his glory and love. No one from earth could ever go there themselves (there are no buses or trains to heaven). God had to come to us! And in Jesus he came and made his love known. Jesus is like a window into heaven. By reading the gospels, by getting to know him through prayer, by eating at his table at holy communion, and in serving others we can really see what God is like and experience his love for us. Pray that God would help us to get to know Jesus more and more, so that we might really know how wonderful and glorious he is.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

December 6 - 12, 2009

Prayer for the Week:

Merciful God, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation. Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymns for the Week:

What Child Is This?

What Child is this who, laid to rest On Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,

While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;

Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate, Where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christians, fear, for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.

Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you.

Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, Come peasant, king to own Him;

The King of kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Raise, raise a song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby.

Joy, joy for Christ is born, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Public Domain

Thou Who Wast Rich Beyond All Splendor

Thou who was rich beyond all splendor, All for love's sake becamest poor;

Thrones for a manger did surrender,

Sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.

Thou who was rich beyond all splendor, All for love's sake becomest poor.

Thou who art God beyond all praising, All for love's sake becamest man;

Stooping so low, but sinners raising Heavenwards by thine eternal plan.

Thou who art God beyond all praising, All for love's sake becamest man.

Thou who art love beyond all telling, Savior and King, we worship thee.

Emmanuel, within us dwelling, Make us what thou would have us be.

Thou who art love beyond all telling, Savior and King, we worship thee.

Public Domain

Scripture Readings – Week 2: The Prophets

Sunday

2 Samuel 7:11b-17

THEME: A GREAT KING IS PROMISED

King David is the greatest king in the Old Testament. What's your favorite story about David? The prophet Nathan came to him share a special promise from God: his dynasty would last forever! Even though his son Solomon would make lots of mistakes, the descendants of David would continue to become the king. This promise was kept in a way that was amazing – even after there were no more kings, and people wondered if God had forgotten his promise, God brought Jesus into the world as a descendant of King David and made Jesus King. Jesus was not just “King of Israel” though; he became “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

Monday

Isaiah 11:1-4

THEME: THE GREATEST KING EVER IS COMING

The prophet Isaiah lived long after King David, during the times when it looked very bad for Judah (the Southern kingdom) and her kings. He tells us in this prophecy that the GREAT king to come will be a descendant of David. “Jesse” was David's father, and Isaiah's prophecy likens the kings from Jesse's family to a dead tree stump. Have you ever seen a dead stump? Not a likely place to see a healthy tree growing! But nothing is impossible with God. Jesus came into the world when things were looking their worst, God's gift coming in the midst of our mess, a beautiful green shoot growing out of the dead stump of Israel's kings. And these verses tell us that no one is more righteous, wise, just, or wonderful than Jesus. Praise him!

Tuesday

Luke 1:18–25

THEME: BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS

If a mighty angel came and told you a message from God, would you believe him? Well, when the old priest Zechariah was told that he and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a son, and that his son was part of God's wonderful plan, Zechariah didn't believe God. The result was that God made Zechariah unable to speak – he was struck dumb. Soon afterwards, Elizabeth found out she was going to have a baby. Imagine Zechariah's surprise and shame. Do we really believe all that God has promised us about Jesus is true? That his peace and justice are going to fill the earth and that he is going to get rid of all sin and sadness? Use your tongues to praise him and to tell him that you believe his promises.

Wednesday

Luke 1:57-66

THEME: GOD IS MERCIFUL

Who gave you your name? Did it come from the Bible, or were you named after a relative or friend? When God's promise of John's birth came to pass, his relatives wanted to name him after his father, Zechariah. But Zechariah knew that the Lord had already given this baby a name. He asked for a writing tablet, and when he wrote John's name, God unloosed his tongue so that he could praise God for his faithfulness and mercy. Zechariah had been praying for years that God would deliver Israel from her enemies and from her sins. When his prayer was answered, he just couldn't believe it. But God is merciful and will answer our prayers. Pray that God would surprise you by answering your prayers too.

Thursday

Mark 1:1-8

THEME: GET READY FOR JESUS

Has anyone ever told you that you needed a bath? God sent John the baptizer to tell people that they needed a bath - a spiritual bath. They thought they were spiritually clean (after all, they were God's chosen people). But they needed to be perfectly clean if they were going to live forever with the Lord. Only Jesus, the true lamb of God, would be able to offer the sacrifice that could remove the sin of all his people once and for all. John poured water on people as a sign that God was sending one soon who would wash away sin once and for all. Now when we were baptized, God was saying that he will wash away our sin too. But for us, that washing comes after Jesus came to die on the cross for us. Our baptism in water means even more than John's – a promise that God will make us clean and new now if we believe in Jesus, and we'll never need a bath again! Ask God to help us live our lives as those who have been washed and made ready for him.

‘Fear not then,’ said the angel, ‘Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Savior Of a pure virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in him From Satan’s power and might.’ (Chorus)

Now to the Lord sing praises All you within this place
And with true love and brotherhood Each other now embrace
This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface. (Chorus)
Public Domain

Scripture Readings – Week 3: Gospels

Sunday

John 3:16-21

THEME: GOD LOVES THE WORLD

John 3:16 may be the most famous verse in all the Bible. Did you ever think about it in relation to Christmas? These verses tell us of God’s love that comes into the world like light into darkness. Have you ever had a bright light shine in your eyes after you’ve been in the dark? It can be pretty uncomfortable. But what if the person turning on the light is coming with a wonderful surprise? That’s what God’s love is like. Even though we like our sin, God came to us in Jesus because he did not want to see sin destroy his creation. We are told Jesus is God’s “one and only son.” This means that Jesus has from eternity been in relationship with God. Imagine how much God must love us that he would send his one and only son to come into the world to save us! Thank God for his love for us, and pray that we welcome his light into our lives.

Monday

Luke 1:5-17

THEME: SOMEONE IS COMING TO GET US READY FOR JESUS

This story tells us how the angel of the LORD came to tell the priest Zechariah that he and his wife were going to have a baby, John, who would later be called “the baptizer” or “baptist” as some older versions have it. John is a name that means ‘the Lord is gracious.’ John was going to have an effect in Israel much like the great prophet Elijah (he’s the one who prayed fire down from heaven!). John was going to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” This could mean that John’s preaching would make families grow closer together as they got ready for Jesus. It could also refer to “THE Fathers,” Israel’s ancestors in heaven who would see how John led their descendants to turn from sin and to accept the Messiah God was sending: Jesus. This would cause them to rejoice in their hearts. Either way, John was sent to help us understand how important Jesus is; God wanted to make sure people got ready for his Son. Pray that God would help us to welcome Jesus into our lives every day, and especially to make us ready for his coming again.

Tuesday

Isaiah 7:10-14

THEME: A VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE A CHILD

How would you like it if somebody offered you a miracle? Well that is what God offered King Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah – a sign to prove that God would keep his promises to deliver Israel from her enemies if she would trust and obey him. But Ahaz wanted to get out of trouble on his own (by his army) rather than trust God. Isaiah told him about a miracle anyway! The miracle, or “sign,” was that a child was going to be born and named “Immanuel,” a word that means “God with us.” This should have made the king trust God, but it did not. Seven hundred years later this promise was fulfilled when Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. And one of Jesus’ names is “Immanuel,” God with us. Are we like Ahaz, not wanting God’s help and blessing? Thank God that he has come to us in Jesus, and commit yourself to trusting in his word.

Wednesday

Isaiah 9:6-7

THEME: A SON IS GIVEN

These verses help us understand just how glorious Jesus is. He is a “Wonderful-Counselor.” People who heard Jesus teach often marveled because he was so wise and understood everything. He is also called “Mighty God” – even though Jesus was fully human, was born and grew up just like you and me, he was also fully God! So Jesus is greater than we can ever even imagine! He is also called the “Prince of Peace.” Peace is a word in the Bible that refers to everything being the way it is supposed to be. Jesus makes things right between God and us by dying for our sins and rising again from the dead, and he promises to make everything right when he comes again a second time – to bring peace. Can you think of some things that are not good in the world, or in your life, or in the lives of people you know (e.g. people who are suffering, grieving, sick, or who do not believe in Jesus)? Pray to Jesus and ask him to work to change those things, and remember: he is the Wonderful-Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Thursday

Isaiah 40:9-11

THEME: THE LORD HIMSELF WILL COME WITH POWER

Did you ever try to talk about happy things when people around you are sad or grumpy? That's what happened to Isaiah. Things were looking very bad for the people of Judah; they were going to be carried away from their homes by their enemies to live in another land. This made them very sad. But at this low point, Isaiah told them "glad tidings." He said, "shout from the mountaintops that God is going to gather all his people together someday. He is going to be our shepherd, come to us, and gather us into his arms." This tells us that when Jesus came, he came to draw us close to his heart, to care for us and take care of us forever. Thank God for sending Jesus as our good shepherd, and for all the ways he takes care of you.

Friday

Isaiah 42:1-4

THEME: GOD IS SENDING A SERVANT

We've been reading about how Isaiah said that the coming Messiah would be a great King. Isaiah also describes him as a "servant," one who comes to serve. This tells us that Jesus came to help us. No matter how sinful we are, or how badly we hurt because of the effects of sin, he is gentle, loving, and able to save us. Have you ever known someone who was so gentle and thoughtful that you could trust them to do anything, like removing a splinter, or looking at a bad cut, and not be afraid? Well Jesus is like that, and more. Ask God to help you to get to know how gentle and loving Jesus is.

Saturday

Isaiah 53:1-5

THEME: A SERVANT WHO SUFFERS

Jesus is more than just a super-hero. He doesn't just save us from bad guys – he saves us from the power of our sin. To do that Jesus had to become a human being (what we celebrate at Christmas), but he also had to go to the cross and die, and overcome death through his resurrection (what we celebrate at Easter). Don't forget about Easter during Christmas! Thank God for all that he has done for us in Jesus – Christmas and Easter.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

December 13 – 19, 2009

Prayer for the Week:

Who are we, Lord God, that you should come to us? Yet you have visited your people and redeemed us in your Son. As we prepare to celebrate his birth, make our hearts leap for joy at the sound of your word, and move us by your Spirit to bless your wonderful works. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near, your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymns for the Week:

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Chorus: Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. (Chorus)

Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. (Chorus)

Public Domain

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

God rest you merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior Was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's power When we were gone astray;

Chorus: O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy! O tidings of comfort
and joy!

From God our heav'nly Father, A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born The son of God by name. (Chorus)