

The Threefold Office of Christ

Introduction

Why is another Advent devotional necessary? I would answer that question by first saying that much like Israel, we, as the body of Christ, are, individually and collectively, a very forgetful people. The historical Church calendar primarily helps us to remember all that the Lord has done for us. We need reminders. I often find myself missing a friend's birthdays and coffee meet-ups when I neglect to set those reminders on the calendar. I'm thankful that the Church calendar helps us to not only track a historical and biblical timeline but it helps us remember who Christ is and all that God has done for us in Christ.

This particular devotional focuses on the Advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The word Advent comes from the Latin word "adventus" which means "coming". The season of Advent has prepared the church's heart for 2,000 years to remember Jesus' first coming. The season of Advent also prepares us for his glorious second coming.

We can focus on many different theological aspects of the Advent, but one that is often overlooked is the threefold office of Christ. For much of Church history, but especially in the Puritan period, the threefold office received much attention during the Advent season. The

importance of the offices of Christ, as he came to seek and save the lost, cannot be overstated.

I really enjoy the way the Heidelberg Catechism, question thirty-one, answers this question.

Why is he called “Christ,” meaning “anointed”?

The answer: Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief Prophet and Teacher who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance; our only High Priest who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal King who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism further helps us in understanding the importance of these fulfilled roles.

Q24. How is Christ a prophet?

As a prophet, Christ reveals the will of God to us for our salvation by His word and Spirit.

Q25. How is Christ a priest?

As a priest, Christ offered Himself up once as a sacrifice for us to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, and He continually intercedes for us.

Q26. How is Christ a king?

As a king, Christ brings us under His power, rules and defends us, and restrains and conquers all of His and all of our enemies.

Christ has stepped down from His throne of glory to take on the flesh of His own creation that He might save us by being the great revealer of salvation, by offering Himself as a once and for all sacrifice for our sins, by becoming our everlasting intercessor, and by reigning as our preeminent all-powerful master and King who sovereignly rules right now over all creation for our good and for His ultimate glory.

I pray that this devotional helps you to further your understanding of Jesus' threefold office, and more deeply stir your affections for our great and magnificent Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus.

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December 1

Christ the Lord!

“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Luke 2:8-14

What good and glorious words they are, **“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”** (Luke 2:11) This is good news of great joy that the angels declared in verse 10. The Savior had come, and Luke tells us who this Savior is - He is “Christ the Lord.”

“Christ” is the Greek word for messiah and messiah is the Hebrew word for “anointed one.” Over the course of biblical history, and especially leading up to the birth of our Savior, expectations arose, due to numerous Old Testament prophecies, that the Messiah was coming to fulfill all the promises and roles instituted by God once

and for all time. There were three offices in the Old Testament that were traditionally anointed with oil as a symbol of their divine appointment. They were the offices of the prophets, priests, and kings.

It became very clear in the Old Testament that the prophets, priests, and kings were unable, in their own strength, wisdom, and power, to save, sanctify, and sway the people to live righteously unto God's glory.

Who would fill this role? Who would be able to remove the scales from people's eyes to see the way of salvation? Who would be able to be the perfect mediator and sacrifice to save people from their sins? Who would be able to bring peace on earth and rule righteously with equity?

Luke answers these questions by saying that it is Jesus who is the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord. He is the one who perfectly fulfills the roles of Prophet, Priest and King. The angels in the rocky mountains of Bethlehem sang the great song of Advent to remind us that, today and for all eternity, God is to be glorified in the highest, and He alone brings peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

Reflection: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" Hebrews 1:3

Lord Jesus, you are full of glory and worthy of all honor and praise. You are God and you are the One who literally holds the world in your hands. Thank you Lord for coming to this earth and for your finished work on the cross by which we can be justified and restored to you for all of eternity.



December 2

Prophecy of The Divine Prophet

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—”

Deuteronomy 18:15

The singular pronoun “him,” here in Deuteronomy 18:15, emphasizes that Moses is talking about the ultimate Prophet who was to come. Peter’s sermon in Solomon’s Portico in Acts 3:22-25 makes it clear that this verse is referring to the Word, Jesus Christ the Lord.

God spoke through men in the Old Testament, men, whom He sovereignly and providentially appointed as prophets to reveal His warnings, His words, and His will. It was through the prophet Moses that God saved His people from the Egyptians. Through Moses, God fed the nation of Israel bread in the wilderness. And, through Moses, God delivered the 10 Commandments.

As a matter of fact, in the John MacArthur Study Bible, the commentary reminds us that Jesus was like Moses in several other ways as well. Jesus was spared death as a baby (Ex. 2; Matt. 2:13-23). He renounced a royal court (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 11:24-27). Christ had compassion on his people (Num. 27:17; Matt. 9:36). The Lord made intercession for the people (Deut. 9:18; Heb. 7:25). Jesus spoke with God the Father face to face (Ex. 34:29-30; 2

Cor. 3:7). And, the Messiah was the mediator of a covenant (Deut. 29:1; Heb. 8:6-7).

Moses was a mere man, graciously used by a great and omnipotent God. It's important to know that, without God's revelations of His warnings, His words, and His will to Moses, Moses would have been in the dark, just like the rest of the Israelites. Many other prophets came and passed, facing the same reality.

There was a great need for an ultimate Prophet to reveal the words of eternal life to the spiritually dead. They needed Christ then, just as we need Christ today! We need the Word incarnate! This is why the apostle John starts His gospel with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:1, 4-5.

Have the scales of your eyes been removed? Do you see Christ as the Holy One of God? Do you see that He alone provides salvation for your sins? Do you understand today that Christ is the ultimate Prophet who alone has the words of eternal life?

As the apostle was made aware by God's Holy Spirit, he penned the words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life," John 6:68.

Reflection: Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” Luke 7:16

Lord, help me to see you as the one who was anticipated throughout the Old Testament. Help me to know you as the Glorious One who has fulfilled all prophecy - the one who was born to set us free from sin. Lord, help me to



find my rest, my hope and my joy in you.

December 3

The Word, The Life, The Light

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:1-5

The Psalmist in **Psalm 119:10** says, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”** The Apostle John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, begins his gospel with the origin of the entire gospel—the Word! You can almost hear John shouting from the hills of Ephesus, “the Prophet has come, the Lamp has come, The Light has come!” John is not only proclaiming the coming of the Word, but he is also making a very important theological statement that the One who has come is the very Word in the flesh. This is the One, who in the beginning created all that exists out of nothing with His very word. “And God said, **“Let there be light,” and there was light.”** **Genesis 1:3.** The one who created the universe and rules and reigns over it has come! The author of Hebrews says it this way in **Hebrews 1:3,**

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” Have you considered today why the Word came to dwell among His own creation? Have you

pondered on why Jesus came to be born of a virgin in a backwater town? Have you spent enough time this month to slow down and really think through why Jesus came to earth? John tells us in the very first sentences of His gospel that Christ has come to be the life and light to all humanity. That means that humanity is blind and born in sin and, as a result, is hostile, darkened, and blinded to the truth. We remember and celebrate Advent every year as a reminder of John's closing words that provide an overview of his entire gospel, **"these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name."** John 20:31

Reflection: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Jesus, I confess that, at times, the reality of you coming to this earth has become all too familiar. Remind my heart during this Advent season of the magnificent truth that you left the glory of heaven and dwelt among sinful humans as the light of the world. Lord, I ask that you would overwhelm my heart with this truth and that you



would shine brightly through my life today.

December 4

Let It Be According to Your Word

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” Luke 1:26-38

The narrative of Jesus's birth is filled with suspense, awe, and wonder. Pause for a moment and ponder the supernatural interaction between Mary and Gabriel. Did you actually pause? If not, I exhort you to pause and ponder. Mary, greatly troubled by the appearance of the angel Gabriel, was shortly calmed by the words, **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”**

Luke 1:30 The Lord put on display His divine grace for Mary. The angel then instructs Mary that she will give birth to the long-awaited Messiah, the anointed Most High, and His name is Jesus. The angel proceeds to tell Mary that this baby, who will soon be given to her by the supernatural work of God's Spirit, is the Lord and King over all the universe who, by the way, will never step down from His throne.

We are four days into Advent, and we already have a million things lined up to do. By this point, we feel the weight and pressure of not meeting holiday deadlines and expectations. We are tired, worried, and filled with fear of not measuring up, and we are only four days in! We need this reminder today of the great Prophet who was born of a virgin. We need to remember what the angel Gabriel said to Mary, **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”** **Luke 1:30** For those who have trusted in the son of God, Paul reminds us in **Romans 5:2** that we are standing in God's grace. Before God, in Christ, we are justified, accepted, forgiven, and infinitely loved. Stressed out today? Fearful? Lacking joy? Run to Jesus, the One whose reign never ends. Wherever you find yourself in this Advent season, pause and preach to your heart, sing

to your heart, and pray to your heart as Mary prayed in verse 38, **“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”**

Reflection: “Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Psalm 119:17-18

Lord God, thank you for this reminder today of the gift we have in your word. What a privilege it is to have the very words of a mighty God! Lord, we ask, in the busyness of this season, would you allow us to pause, to hear from you in your word that we may see the wondrous love and grace you have poured out on your people. And, would you give us grace to see, “Let it be according to your word.”



The Revelation of Grace and Truth

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” John 1:14-18

The primary doctrine of Advent is the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. The term incarnation is, sadly, a term that has been lost in Christian vernacular. The term incarnation tells us that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh.

Another lost theological term, closely related to the doctrine of the incarnation, is the doctrine of the hypostatic union. While the incarnation specifically affirms and explains Christ’s humanity, the hypostatic union focuses on the two natures of Christ - his true humanity and His true divinity.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”(John 1:14a) This truth in the gospel ought to grip our hearts in the Advent of our Messiah. Why does God take on

human flesh? In two sentences, the apostle John answers this question, **“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”** John 1:16-17

The culmination of God’s everlasting grace and abounding steadfast love and faithfulness is found in the goodness, glory, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God-Man comes to earth, not only to provide truth from the Father like the prophet Moses, but to be the once and for-all divine prophet who is the very embodiment of grace and truth. The great Prophet, Jesus Christ, came to not only deliver the Word with proclamation, but He came, sent by God, so that we might know and experience the Word of God in our lives as means of transformation. Romans 12:2 says, **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed!”**

The incarnation of Christ gives us transforming truth for our heads and transforming truth for our hearts. This Advent season, the Lord desires that you might experience his all-satisfying, transforming Word in your life.

Is this season a mere tradition to you? Do you know all the facts about Advent? How are the truths of the incarnation of Christ transforming your life? Consider the magnificent truth that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. As you gaze upon the God-Man, what do you see? Do you see His glory? Don’t let the hustle and bustle of this season rob you of beholding the goodness and

glory and grace, and truth of Christ which alone is able to transform you!

Reflection: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2

Lord, we come before you today, grateful that you are the one who came in perfect grace and truth. Thank you that you are alive and working in our lives. I ask, Lord, that during this Advent season, you would allow the truth of your word to transform our minds, to penetrate our hearts and to change the way we live. May it all be for your glory!



The Word of His Power

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

Hebrews 1:3

In the gospels, we are told by real eyewitness accounts that God not only was born in a manger to Mary and Joseph by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, but the gospels also tell us that Jesus dwelled among His creation. There were real people in a real period of time who saw, heard, and interacted with Jesus. Our heavenly Father so graciously provided humanity, in spite of our rebellion against Him, His Son, who is, as the author of Hebrews informs us, **“the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.” Hebrews 1:3** The term radiance conveys a sending forth of light. The apostle Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:6, **“For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

The Lord Jesus not only reflects the glory of God, but He is also the very glory of God in the flesh, who alone has the power to deliver us from the domain of darkness by His grace and call us into His marvelous light. The prophet Isaiah, hundreds of years before Christ’s birth, prophesied in Isaiah 6:2, and I paraphrase, “people who

walk in darkness will see a great light and those who dwell in the land of deep darkness, on them a light will be shone.” What kind of power can deliver someone from the domain of darkness? What kind of power can deliver the captive from the bondage of sin and death? The answer that the author of Hebrews gives us is “ **the word of his power!**”

The Advent season reminds us that it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from any works of our own, that we are saved and delivered from sin and eternal damnation. The God who upholds the universe by the power of His Word has given us His Word in the flesh to deliver us from the power of darkness. There is nothing you have ever done, or will ever do, that can hinder Christ’s ability to forgive and save you. He alone can save you and sustain you by the word of His power. The apostle John gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of this Word at work by God’s sovereign electing power in His gospel when He says, “**The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**” John 1:9-13

Reflection: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and

discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12

Heavenly Father, we know that your Word is power and that it is living and active as it shines brightly in this dark world. Would you open my heart to receive your word more fully? And may it do the work of sanctification in my life and may it empower boldness to share its truths



with others.

December 7

The Ongoing Work of the Prophet Through the Holy Spirit

“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:26

We can't talk about the fulfillment of Jesus' role as a prophet without mentioning the great and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. It is the Spirit of God who works through and points to the Word of God to transform the people of God.

The great Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus Christ, does not leave us to our own intellect to understand His divine Word. We cannot understand God's Word without the illumination of the third person of the Trinity. This Trinitarian scripture reminds us that the Father's plan before the foundation of the world was to send the Holy Spirit to enlighten the eyes of our hearts to the scriptures and bring to our remembrance what Christ has said and done.

It is important to pause and concretely anchor in our hearts and minds that the Godhead is always working in perfect unity. Each member of the Trinity is His own person, each has true and full divinity, and each has His own divine responsibilities, yet the Godhead is always working together to accomplish the purpose of receiving

rightful glory and praise from all people, from all time, for all eternity.

We see the great doctrine of the Trinity magnified in the birth of Christ when Luke accounts that **“The Lord God will give to him [Jesus] the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom, there will be no end.”** And Mary said to the angel, **“How will this be since I am a virgin?”** And the angel answered her, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”** Luke 1:32-35 As Jesus is closing in on his earthly ministry He reminds His disciples, that the same Spirit, who was supernaturally involved in His birth, will supernaturally be involved in working God’s Word into our hearts and minds.

The Spirit of God is promised by the Son of God here in John 14:26, and He will not let His redeemed forget His Words and His Work on our behalf. The Spirit will not only bring to mind the words of Christ but the apostle Paul in Romans, chapters five through eight, drives home that the Spirit will also concrete the assurance of those promises in our hearts.

Reflection: Today I want to encourage you to pray the apostle Paul’s prayer in **Ephesians 1:17-23** (paraphrased for the purpose of making it personal):

“God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may you give me the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ, having the eyes of my heart enlightened, that I may know what is the hope to which the Spirit has called me.

Help me, Holy Spirit, to know what are the riches of Christ’s glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of your power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that the Spirit worked in Christ when he raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Remind me in this Advent season, that Jesus Christ, my Lord, and Savior, the preeminent King of glory, has put all things under Jesus’ feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of



Him who fills all in all. Amen.”

December 8

Proclaimers of His Excellencies

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

One of the greatest joys of the Advent season is the rich hymns that are sung in the Church in the month of December. What is your favorite Advent hymn? A few of my favorite hymns are “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” “Joy to the Word”, and “Go Tell it on the Mountain.” I enjoy these particular Advent hymns so much because of their evangelistic nature. All of these songs move the Christian to not only behold the incarnate Christ, but to “Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere, that Jesus Christ is born.”

This is not a forced proclamation, but one that is filled with joy and transfixed in praise. We share freely what we love and treasure. These hymns remind us of our great and glorious treasure, Jesus Christ. What do we do with this great joy and treasure? We join with the heavens singing, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” We declare from the rooftops and summon the nations to join us in singing the song of the Advent of our King. We sing, “Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies, with angelic host proclaim “Christ is born in Bethlehem.”

This is exactly what the apostle Peter describes to us here in 1 Peter 2:9. Peter instructs us that the King has come to establish His eternal kingdom and throne. He has summoned His subjects. He has chosen His representatives. King Jesus has called out those whom He has called to proclaim His excellencies! Jesus has come to raise up the outcasts, the orphans, the overlooked, and the sidelined, to give voice to those with no voice in this world. Jesus has come to give us one hope, one agenda, one song, and one message, and that is the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Peter's words from 1 Peter 2:9 can be summed up in the great song of the psalmist in Psalm 98:1-3,

*“Oh sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
The LORD has made known his salvation;
He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the
nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.*

Use this Advent season to declare the gospel of the King. Use this season to share with everyone you know that the final and ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King has come!

Reflection: “So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Romans 1:15-16

Lord, it is a joy in the Christmas season that, even in this dark world, we still hear the good news of the Advent season proclaimed through carols in our public spaces.

Would you help us, by your Spirit, to proclaim your excellencies to a lost and dying world? Would you help us to be eager to preach the good news of the glorious Gospel? Help us to not be ashamed but to speak boldly



about you to all those whom you bring into our lives.

The Long Awaited Priest

“But as it is, he [Jesus] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Hebrews 9:26-28

In Eden, the God of Scripture created mankind in His image to reflect His glory. God crowned man with glory and honor, as mentioned in Psalm 8:5. He not only crowned man with glory and honor, but He authorized man to subdue and rule the earth (Genesis 2:15).

This design of God lays the foundation of a royal priesthood from which all other priests in Scripture will be developed. We don't have to wait to arrive at Exodus or Leviticus to realize there is a major problem in the narrative of Scripture. In Genesis 3, it is clear that sin entered the world and has completely and utterly destroyed man's ability to glorify God and adequately rule the earth according to God's standard of perfection. So what now? Is humanity doomed for destruction? Do we have any expectancy of subduing the earth? Do we have any hope of putting away our sins? No! We have no way of governing the earth with righteousness and equity on

our own. We have no way to put away our sins on our own.

But wait, there is truly glorious news that the Advent season brings! There is a Priest who is like no other priests who have come before. This is no mere human mediator. This Priest is truly God and truly Man. This priest has come **“once for all...to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 9:26** How exactly does Jesus put away our sin in Himself? 2 Corinthians 5:21 answers the question this way, **“For our sake he [God the Father] made him [God the Son] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.”**

First and foremost, Christ upheld the requirement of the law for us. Jesus obeyed the law perfectly. The apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:8 that Jesus was **“obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”** Secondly, Jesus removes the sin of those who trust in Him by passive obedience. Passive obedience means that the guilt and sin of those who trust in Him were counted to Jesus. The Lord Jesus suffered the penalty that was due to us who believe, and Christ’s righteousness was counted to us. As I have heard pastor John MacArthur say numerous times, and I paraphrase, *“For those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, God treats Jesus as if He lived your life, and He treats you as if you lived Christ’s perfect life.”* What an undeserved glorious and divine exchange!

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23 This gift of eternal life was only made possible because Christ came to earth. We join with saints of old, singing the glorious hymn “Come Thou Long expected Jesus”,

“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.”

Reflection: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

Lord, it is overwhelming to think of the sacrifice you made to be our High Priest and it is humbling to consider your willingness to live as a man and to be tempted yet never sin. Jesus, I know that I continually fall short of your glory in thought, word and deed. Help me to draw

*near to you in my brokenness so that I may receive the
mercy and grace you so willingly give.*



December 10

The Perfect Gift

“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.” Hebrews 7:26-28

What is the greatest gift you have ever received? Why is it the greatest? Typically we determine the quality of a gift based on its value to us. The value is, of course, relative. Typically the more rare something is, the more valuable it is and becomes. In today’s reading, Hebrews reminds us of the perfect gift that came from above. The most valuable gift of God to humanity is His son Jesus.

The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 7:26-28 makes it clear to the reader that Jesus is like no one who has ever lived. He makes it unmistakable that the priest he is referring to is not your mere human priest. This priest is an elevated priest who supersedes any other priest who has ever come before him. This Priest is **“holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the**

heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.” Hebrews 7:26-27

Why is this important to us this Advent season? First and foremost, we need a priest who has the authority and clearance to forgive us of our sins and put away God’s righteous and holy wrath against us. We don’t want to fool around with the Creator and Judge of the heavens and the earth, do we?

Jesus, our High priest, has received confirmation from the Father and the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matthew 3:16-17) that He alone is the God-Man who will, by His once and for all sacrifice, atone for the sins of those who trust in Him. The author of Hebrews knows very well that whenever the Levitical high priests sinned, they were required to offer sacrifices for themselves. The high priest would also have to sacrifice for the people whenever they sinned. This happened on a daily basis. Sounds exhausting, doesn't it? It is! The people and the priests were overloaded with burdens and yokes that were neither easy nor light. It doesn't stop there! Annually, on the day of atonement, the high priest would have to offer sacrifices yet again for himself and others.

In our passage, the author of Hebrews so masterfully, by the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, contrasts Jesus, the God-Man, with the earthly High priests. What a vast and infinite difference there is! The writer makes it clear

that Christ Jesus had absolutely no sin, unlike the earthly priests, and He, therefore, needed no sacrifice for Himself. Only one sacrifice needed to be made for all time, for all men, once and for all. The only one who can fulfill this office, and bring a perfect sacrifice, was Jesus, the Son of God. Those who trust in this eternal Priest will never need another sacrifice made on their behalf. The work of Christ is sufficient and effective for all eternity for those who trust in Him. That is why Jesus said on the cross at Calvary, **“It is Finished.”** John 19:30. Weary pilgrim, it really is finished. Trust in Christ and rest in His all-sufficient grace this Advent.

Reflection: “This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”
Hebrews 7:22-25

Lord, we praise you as the perfect, long-awaited and eternal High Priest. Remind our hearts that you are mighty to save and that your salvation is guaranteed for all who, by grace through faith, trust in You. Help us to live in constant awareness that we are saved

*because of your righteousness, not by anything that we
have done and humble our hearts with the knowledge that
you are interceding for your people.*



The Sacrificial Priest

“For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:2-6

When you think about Christianity, what images come to mind? The cross? The manger? As I was pondering this week on the priestly office of Christ I could not help but see a connection between the manger where Jesus was born and the cross where He was crucified. Have you ever considered the sacrifice Jesus made in leaving his throne in heaven for a manger in Bethlehem? Even worse, there was no room in any inn for the King who left His glorious throne above. It is evident that Christ’s sacrifice did not begin at the cross but in a makeshift cradle in a cave.

Isaiah reminds us that Jesus humbled himself to the point where no one would even think to look to the Savior for anything, let alone salvation. St. Augustine once said, “that the cross was a pulpit in which Christ preached His love to the world.” I would add to St. Augustine’s quote and say that the manger is also Christ’s pulpit in which He preached His love to the world. Jesus was brought into His creation in sacrifice, and He departed His creation in sacrifice.

Our High priest was not only rejected by men in his adult life, but he was also rejected by men at His birth. Luke 2:7 says, **“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”** No place for Jesus, really? Rejected. Jesus was also despised at His birth. In Matthew 2:16, the disciple Matthew tells us that Herod had all the male children killed who were two years and under in an attempt to kill the long-awaited King.

The God-Man in the manger faced sorrow and grief from the start of His life. The manger reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ, but it also points to the culmination of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Jesus was pierced for our sins and crushed for our iniquities, and the full weight of the wrath we deserve was placed upon the sinless Prophet, Priest, and King. The only way to bring peace was through the sacrificial Priest. When John the Baptist got a glimpse of Jesus, he knew right away that He was **“the Lamb of**

God, who [alone] takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29 When you see the manger set up in a department store or when you pass by a nativity set in your home this Advent, may the Lord work in you by His Spirit to see that the baby in the manger is that perfect sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Reflection: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
Philippians 2:5-11

Lord, our words of thanksgiving and praise are so inadequate to express our gratitude and honor for you. You are worthy of all honor and glory and yet your entire existence on this earth was lived in submission and sacrifice. Jesus, we look forward to the day when all will bow the knee and all will acknowledge you as Lord of all.

Until that day, we ask for your grace to live boldly for your glory.



The God Who is for Us

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” Romans 8:31-34

The Advent narrative aims to show us two things: The transcendence and immanence of God. In other words, in the Christmas story, God puts on display how big He is and how near He is. In Christ's birth, we see the all-powerful God step down into his creation, but why? Why would the creator of all things come to earth to dwell among us? And more than that, be for us? The long-awaited Messiah came to earth on a rescue mission to save sinners! We did not deserve His coming. We didn't merit or woo Jesus to take on flesh. As a matter of fact, God would be absolutely just to wipe us off of the face of the planet for rebelling against him and transgressing His law. How amazing is this Advent narrative!

Advent reminds us that God does not give us what we deserve, which is His wrath. Instead, God sends His own Son to shed his blood for those who will trust in Him. Interestingly enough, Romans 8:31-34 paints this picture of a High Priest who, on one hand, is holy and separated

from sinners while, on the other hand, is dwelling among sinners and standing for them. Incredible! I have always been in awe of verse 34, when the apostle Paul says, **‘Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.’** More than Christ dying for us? More than being raised for us? Really?! Paul reminds us in verse 34 that Christ is our eternal High Priest, who continues to present the merit of His blood to the Father for us; He is our High Priest who answers all charges of indictment brought against us. And, He is our High Priest, who by His intercession, continues to call for acquittal for those hidden in Him. Our High Priest ever lives to advocate for us in the heavenlies. Beloved, He is for you. You have a friend in Jesus. As the old hymn goes,

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

*“Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He’ll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there”*

Reflection: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”
John 15:13-15

Lord, our finite minds cannot truly understand the depths of all that you have done and continue to do for us. You are the Sovereign King of the universe holding all things together by the power of your Word and yet, you are also near as you are Emmanuel, God with us. You lived a perfect life, died and rose again to save wretched sinners who you now call friends and You intercede for us. May our hearts grow to understand your love and may it



inspire us to greater obedience to your word.

Hold Fast to Your Confession

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”

Hebrews 4:14

This time of year, Christmas music is playing everywhere you go. There are Advent Scriptures hung up on walls at restaurants and nativity sets everywhere! And I mean everywhere! It is the American Christmas tradition. I have always found it so interesting that so many people, all around the world, who have no confession of Christ, have Christian imagery and Scripture decorating their homes during Christmas. I would venture to say that many of these families not only have no profession of faith, but also believe in other religions and gods or have no belief in God at all.

The author of Hebrews is exhorting Christians in Hebrews 4:14 to hold fast to their confession! What confession? Confession in what? Confession in Who? The focus of the epistle to the Hebrews is to answer these questions by surveying the Old Testament and, more specifically, showing the reader that Christ has come to fulfill the office of the High Priest once and for all. By the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, the author begins this verse by reminding the reader that our great High Priest has resurrected and ascended into heaven. He wants to

leave no room for doubt that Christ has come to complete the task as High Priest. In other words, the work of Christ is done! The Lord does not want you to doubt His finished work but rest in it. No more striving. I know there is so much to do this time of year but this Scripture reminds us to slow down and rest in Christ's finished work. More than that, we are called to hold fast to our confession. Advent is not about rushing. It's about resting. This season is not about gingerbread houses, presents, trees, and Christmas lights, it's about the coming of our Prophet, Priest, and King. Fix your gaze on Jesus today. Hold fast to your confession. After all, HE is the reason for the season.

Reflection: **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17**

Lord God, in this season we are surrounded by images and songs proclaiming the incarnation of Christ. And, yet, we are a forgetful people who see the reminders without being mindful of the great work you have done in coming to earth, in living a perfect life and

dying so that we can be counted righteous. Jesus, would you allow us to be gripped by the good news of your coming and may we unabashedly share your Gospel with



those around us.

December 14

Draw Near To The Throne of Grace

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16

The High Priest in the manger reminds us that Jesus, really is able to sympathize with us. The long-awaited Messiah was not born in royalty but in poverty. The Lord was born into a family that had to work for everything they owned. Jesus was the carpenter's son as mentioned in Matthew 13:55.

It shouldn't surprise us that as Jesus approaches his final three years of ministry on earth He begins to formulate a team of humble hard-working “misfits.” Why fisherman? Why a tax collector? Just a glimpse into Jesus’ closest disciples, we see a humble, servant Savior who can sympathize with the weak. Not only can Jesus sympathize with the spiritually bankrupt but He shows us that these are the people He desires to save and use to make His glory and power known.

Our High Priest desires to give the weary pilgrim confidence to draw near to the throne of grace for mercy and strength in time of need. The prerequisite of drawing

near to God's throne of grace is acknowledging one's own weakness. Jesus understands temptation. He was tested in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. The evil one tempted our High Priest in every possible way yet He never sinned.

Advent reminds us that Jesus is not calling for the strong to draw near but for the weak. The Lord desires that we not place our confidence in ourselves, but in Him. Our Priest understands the brokenness of His creation because of sin, yet He doesn't draw away from us. As a matter of fact, **James 4:8** says, **"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."** What an incredible reality for the weary traveler on his journey to the celestial kingdom. The Advent narrative reminds us that Jesus drew near to us in order that the words of **Hebrews 7:25** would be a reality. **"He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them."** **Hebrews 7:25**

Reflection: "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2
Corinthians 12:9-10

Jesus, what a gift to know that you do not choose us based on our strength or goodness. What a joy to know that we can draw near to you in our time of need and find mercy and grace at your throne. Lord, help us to be willing to acknowledge our weakness so that your power can work



through us and so that you will be glorified.

December 15

Secured Redemption

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Hebrews 9:11-15

Two thousand years ago, the anointed Holy One of God entered human history. Not with a bang but with a star! **“Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come” (Hebrews 9:11)**. What good things is the author of Hebrews referring to? He is referring to the good things that are only found in the New Covenant, namely, the security of eternal redemption **“by means of his own blood” (Hebrews 9:12)**. Only this greater and more perfect tent, not made with human hands, can enter the sanctuary of heaven to seal and secure the salvation of those who trust in Him and His finished work. The blood of Christ secures, for the believer, the forgiveness of sins, the purification of the flesh (sanctification), and a purified conscience. The author of Hebrews leaves the believer with an exhortation. He says that only those who have been made spiritually alive by God’s eternal Spirit, are

able to serve the living God with works that are alive and were prepared in advance by God for the Christian to walk in - just as the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10.

There are many unregenerate people, looking to do good deeds for others, at Christmas time. It is a perfect time to present the Gospel to them - to boldly share the good news of Christ and to teach them that all of our works are dead without Christ. But, with Him, our works are used by God for the good of humanity and for the ultimate purpose of His glory.

Christ did not secure our eternal redemption as an end in itself. Our High Priest has freed the believer from sin to empower us to serve the living God. One can say that one is saved to serve! Or as we often say around our Church, "We are saved on purpose for a purpose!"

Reflection: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Romans 11:36-12:1

Lord God, what a privilege it is to know that our redemption is secure in you. What a gift it is that we get to live and serve You in ways that bring your light into this world and bring glory to your name. You are worthy of it



all and we ask that you, by your mercies Lord, we would live sacrificial, obedient lives of worship.

December 16

The True Tent

“We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”

Hebrews 8:1-2

The apex of the Advent narrative is found in the God-Man taking on flesh and setting up a tent of flesh among His people. But the gospel narrative does not stop with Christ dwelling in the flesh among His people. The Gospel narrative continues on and tells us that Christ died, was resurrected, and ascended to a throne in heaven that is only fit for someone of spotless majesty. The author of Hebrews tells us that that place is “**the true tent**” (Hebrews 8:2). This true tent was not set up by man but by the Lord.

In this minuscule detail, the writer informs us that Jesus’ sanctuary is not a tent put together by human hands but a holy and heavenly tabernacle created and sustained by the Godhead. In this tent, in the very presence of God, Jesus executes His High Priestly duty of interceding for His elect. From the right hand of the Father on the throne of Majesty in Heaven, Jesus makes the aroma of our prayers sweet and acceptable to God. This is where Jesus will ever live to faithfully serve as the Advocate and High Priest of His people.

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”
Hebrews 10:10-22

Reflection: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Oh Lord, help us to see the glory and majesty in this verse. Help us to see that you took the place of the imperfect, temporary tabernacle and you came down from heaven to meet with man. And that, you didn't just live among us, but you died for us and you continue to serve us, interceding for those you have called to yourself. May these truths humble us to receive more and more of



the grace and mercy that you give.

The Humble Ruler

“O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” Micah 5:2

The classic Advent scripture in Micah 5:2 reminds us that the King of all the universe had humble origins. Jesus was not born in the triumphant city of Rome but in the small town of Bethlehem. This ruler, though born of a virgin, is the Ancient of Days, from days of old. He is the eternal self-existing King of Kings. The Advent of our King was long-awaited. But when He came to earth, the only people that seemed to acknowledge Him as King were a few wisemen (Matthew 2:2).

This King who was born in Bethlehem is the sovereignly decreed King. **“I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree” Psalm 2:5b-7a** God set the crown on His only begotten Son before He ever took on flesh. **“For on him God the Father has set his seal.” John 6:27b** Not only does this King have a crown, but He is a ruler with an eternal scepter. **Psalm 45:6** says, **“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.”**

How does this ruler execute His office as King? In subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all of His and our enemies.¹

Christ rules in the hearts of His people. He sets up His throne where no other King can. Jesus rules the will and affections of men. His power binds the conscience. He subdues the lusts of his people. And, one day the Lord will finally and ultimately put away our sin. **“He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Micah 7:19** This humble King rules His people by His law and by His love. Christ not only creates the law, but He graciously rules His people through His law. The Lord also rules by love. Thomas Watson says it this way,

He is a King full of mercy and clemency; as He has a scepter in His hand, so an olive branch of peace in His mouth. Though He be the Lion of the tribe of Judah for majesty, yet He is the lamb of God for meekness. His regal rod has honey at the end of it. He shed abroad His love into the hearts of His subjects; He rules them with promises as well as precepts. This makes all His subjects become volunteers; they are willing to pay their allegiance to Him. “Thy people shall be a willing people.” Psalm 110:3²

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Body Divinity* (Banner of Truth, 2015), 186.

² Watson, *Body of Divinity*, pg. 188

Does this remind you of an Advent hymn? The third stanza of the Advent Hymn “O Holy Night” beautifully summarizes Jesus' rule.

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease.

Reflection: “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.” Psalm 103:11-13

Lord, you are the good and gracious King of the universe, yet you came to earth in humility and obscurity. Help us to see your steadfast love in your law and in your Kingly rule as we live with holy reverence for you. Give us strength to rest in your grace knowing that you have dealt



with our sin once and for all.

December 18

The Necessity of a King

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Judges 21:25

The last sentence of the book of Judges is terrifying! Judges has twenty one chapters of evildoing, corruption, deception, and bloodshed. This is the result of **“Everyone [doing] what [is] right in [their] own eyes” Judges 21:25**

Advent reminds us that we cannot rule ourselves. As we look back at the course of human history it is evident that we cannot rule ourselves in a way that glorifies God. The Old Testament shows us that, when we attempt to be our own kings and queens, there is serious conflict. When men act as sovereign rulers over their lives and their mini-kingdoms, the result is a disintegrating society, riddled with horrific acts of ungodliness.

Why does the book of Judges end as it does? Is it simply to prove that one cannot rule one’s own life? Yes, but it’s so much more than that! The book of Judges ends this way to make the reader burst forth in a cry for a true King - a King who judges righteously with justice and equity.

We are in desperate need of a King who has the power to put an end to the brutality of this world. We need a King who will defend the weak. We need a King who will conquer the evil that lies in the hearts of every man and woman on planet earth. The horror’s of this world are

meant to cause you to lament and cry out to God “*Is there a king who could actually be good enough and powerful enough to make all the wrongs of the world right?*”

The good news of Advent is found in a divine King who alone has the strength and power to deliver His people from their sins and even death. Advent reminds us that this King rules in the hearts of His people. He gives strength to the weak. He gives power to the powerless. **“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-31** We cannot rule our own lives. We need a King who will rule and reign on the throne of our hearts for the glory of God!

Hail to The Lord’s Anointed

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,*

*to set the captive free;
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.
He comes with succor speedy
to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
are precious in his sight.*

Reflection: “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.” John 3:19

Lord, sometimes we need reminders of just how sinful and broken we are. Today’s reading reminds me that, living apart from your grace, leads to a life no better than those who living in the time of the Judges. It is so easy to seek after what seems right in our own

eyes, trusting in the familiarity of this dark world. We need you Lord to help us to love the light and to trust in your ways.



December 19

Christ the King and Defender

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God. Selah. But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.

Selah. Psalm 3:1-4

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

*And in despair I bowed my head
"There is no peace on Earth," I said
For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on Earth, good will to men*

*But the bells are ringing (peace on Earth)
Like a choir singing (peace on Earth)
Does anybody hear them? (Peace on Earth)
Peace on Earth, good will to men*

This Advent we are reminded that those who trust in Christ the Messiah will also walk in His footsteps of hardships and ridicule. When we count the cost and trust in Jesus, as King and Savior, we must prepare for troubles and persecution.

In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus says, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be

glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” The world around us joins us in singing songs about the King during Christmas but they will ridicule you if you submit to His Lordship. There will be many foes who will say to you who follow the Lord, **“There is no salvation for [you] in God.” Psalm 3:2**

There are a many around the world, at this very moment, who are being persecuted for their allegiance to King Jesus. Psalm 3 reminds us that a King has come with a scepter to rule His people, and a shield to defend them. Jesus reminds His Church **“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18** No one will ever be able to usurp the power of our King. There is no power able to overthrow the rule of our King; not even the gates of hell! The Psalm exhorts us to run to the King and find protection behind His shield. God tells us in **Exodus 19:4 “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself”** In others words, our enemies must first strike through Christ, before they can destroy His Church!

In the words of Thomas Watson, “Let the wind and storms be up, and the Church almost covered with waves, yet Christ is in the ship of the Church, and there is no danger of shipwreck.”³

³ Watson, *Body of Divinity*, pg. 188-189

Reflection: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or naked-ness, or danger, or sword? Romans 8:31-35

Father, would you confirm in my heart, and in the hearts of your elect, that you are for us? Thank you for the reminder in your Word that you have graciously given us everything in Christ. And, Lord, as we face the trials and persecutions of this world, or even when the world simply doesn’t understand our faith, will you confirm in our hearts that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ? I ask that your church be strengthened by these truths and by the knowledge that, in spite of what we see,



your church will endure and there is no power able to take down your bride.

December 20

The Crowning King

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

Luke 2:20

The ordinary faithfulness of the shepherds in the Advent narrative should cause us to reflect on our own lives of obedience to Christ’s commands. The shepherds did not see a mere baby in a manger wrapped in swaddling cloths, they saw a King sitting on a throne of majesty and glory. Their right view and understanding of Jesus caused them to leave the cave in Bethlehem with a song in their hearts and the good news of the King on their lips. **“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Romans 10:14-16**

How beautiful were the feet of these ordinary shepherds! These faithful herders knew that witnessing Jesus in the flesh was a grace of God purposed to serve the King. Christ is a King who rewards His faithful servants. Nothing is ever lost when serving the King! There is a saying that has inspired me for years, *“If you take care of God’s business He will take care of your business.”* Do you believe that? The Lord does reward those who serve Him.

How does the King reward His people? The apostle Paul tells us how in **Romans 15:13**, “**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**” For those who believe in the King, He rewards us with joy, peace, and abounding hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. But more than rewards in this life, our King promises the greater reward in heaven. “**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,**” **Matthew 5:12** The Scriptures tell us that “**for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,**” **2 Corinthians 4:17**

Jesus promises, for those who trust in Him, a crown in heaven. You heard that right! The Lord Jesus makes all his subjects kings! As we read in the Scriptures,

“**For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.**” **2 Timothy 4:6-8**

“**Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.**” **Revelation 3:10-11**

This crown, beloved, is an “**unfading crown of glory**” 1 Peter 5:4.

This crown can be yours, if you this day, bow your knee to the King, and serve Him all of your days.

Reflection: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5

Heavenly Father, I am amazed by the salvation and hope that you give to your people through the resurrection of Jesus. Lord, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you and allow my hope to be in the imperishable, undefined and unfolding future that you have for me in Christ Jesus. Would you strengthen me to serve you and praise you as you guard and protect me until that day?



December 21

Oaks of Righteousness

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.” Isaiah 61:1-3

When we ponder on the Advent of our King, there should be a welling up inside of us that the righteousness of God has come! The apostle Paul explains for us this good news that Isaiah speaks of, and says in **Romans 1:17**, “**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.**” The King has come on a rescue mission to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, comfort those who are mourning, and to give a garment of praise to those who have a faint spirit.

There is no hope in governing our own lives. There is no liberty in being the king of our own kingdom. There is no comfort in doing right in our own eyes. There is no praise in our hearts when we rule our lives for our own glory.

The Lord has come to earth to give us hope that we can, by the sheer grace of God, be **“oaks of righteousness”** and a **“planting of the LORD, that he [God] may be glorified.”** Isaiah 61:3

More than just being set free from our sin, the subjects of this King are promised to be oaks of righteousness that seek justice, and peace on this earth as representatives and ambassadors of the King and His kingdom. Sin enslaves us. Sin makes us think that we cannot be saved by God’s grace. Sin shames us and places guilt on our shoulders that we cannot bear. Sin makes us think that we cannot be redeemed and used for God and His glory. But the anointed one has come, Christ the King, and He has come to bring good news of great joy, **“to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favor”** Isaiah 61:2, that is, to proclaim that, in spite of your past, you can find salvation, redemption, and purpose under the rule and reign of this King. This King desires to give you a **“beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning,”** Isaiah 61:3 that the Lord our God **“may be glorified”** Isaiah 61:3.

Reflection: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3 ESV

Lord, I'm so grateful for the righteousness you have accounted to me through the perfect life, death and resurrection of Christ. I pray that I may walk in the righteousness you give. Help me to delight in your law. Allow me to be like a fruitful tree, representing your kingdom, loving as you have loved, seeking peace and justice and rejecting sin. May you be honored and glorified in my life!



December 22

The Sovereign King

“He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. Daniel 2:21-22

The great R.C. Sproul once said, *“There is not one piece of cosmic dust that is outside the scope of God’s Sovereign Providence.”* There are numerous prophecies of Jesus’ birth. These prophecies speak of the way Jesus would be born, the place where He would be born, and to whom He would be born to. King Jesus was not one minute late nor one minute early in His arrival to earth. He was right on time!

Why is this important? Because this truth anchors our hope in a King who is Sovereign. This King is the **“Ancient of Days” Daniel 7:9**. He is the eternal King who **“changes times and seasons”** and **“removes kings and sets up kings” Daniel 2:21**. This is the King who God highly exalted and bestowed the name that is far above every other name in heaven and on earth (Philippians 2:9).

The Apostle Paul focuses our eyes not on the first Advent of Jesus, but the second when He says in **1 Timothy 6:14-16**, **“until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed**

and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” Sounds a lot like Daniel 2:21-22, doesn't it?

Why is it vital for us to know today that Jesus is a Sovereign King? The knowledge of Christ as Sovereign King allows the weary Christian pilgrim to rest in the good and sovereign providence of God. Knowing that the Lord is sovereign allows us to have assurance “that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Reflection: “...For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ Isaiah 46:9b-10 ESV

Sovereign King, what a gift it is to know you, to know your goodness and your power. I pray that you would give me grace to trust you more- to know that your purposes will stand, that no plan of yours will be thwarted. On days when my faith is weak, I pray that I would stand firm in the knowledge that you are good and that you work all things for your glory and according to your good purposes.



It is Better To Give Than to Receive

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

Matthew 2:10-11

As Christmas nears, we are reminded by the apostle Matthew, that Christmas is about giving and not receiving. When the wise men saw the star they had immense joy. They were not so much concerned to see what the newborn King would do for them but what they could do for the King. What they did is good and right before the Lord of life. These wise men clearly understood that it was their rightful act of worship to offer the King royal gifts.

What did they give? They first gave the King their reverence in worship. In a prophetic manner, these Gentile astrologers acknowledged Jesus as God and gave the King His rightful worship. **“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.”** Malachi 1:11

As they continued to fulfill prophecy, they gave the infant Jesus gifts that were suitable only for Kings. **“A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.”** Isaiah 60:6

These Gentiles, as prophesied hundreds of years past, came bearing gifts to the rightful King of glory. It is no surprise that the evil one has twisted the season of Advent to be about us and what we can receive, rather than about bringing Christ His rightful gifts of praise, honor and glory. Don't lose sight this season of Jesus' Advent. Come bearing gifts of praise and honor to the King. Don't hold back! Give King Jesus all that you are and all that you have, for He is worthy of it all!

Come Let us Adore Him

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

O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

We give you all the glory
We give you all the glory
We give you all the glory
Christ the Lord!

Reflection: “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Hebrews 13:15-16

Father God, you are the giver of good and perfect gifts. May your glory and your generosity, through Christ, inspire a continual sacrifice of praise in our hearts. May your name ever be on our lips and, as the song says, may we adore you and give you all the glory! And, furthermore, in this season of giving, may we be willing to share with those who have physical and spiritual needs and may we be generous with your grace and your Gospel so that you will be magnified in the lives of those around us.



And He shall Reign For Ever and Ever

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” Isaiah 9:6-7

On this Christmas Eve we are reminded that Jesus was not only born, but He lived, died, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. At this very moment, Jesus is ruling and reigning on the throne in Heaven over His Kingdom. Jesus governs His Kingdom in a way that is completely upside down from this broken world. Jesus starts by establishing peace over His Kingdom by becoming a servant who sacrifices His life for his enemies and therefore bringing peace between God and man.

King Jesus upholds His people by allowing His peace to rule in their hearts. **“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” Colossians 3:15** This King does not compromise or waver on the truth. He governs His Kingdom with perfect justice and righteousness. As the popular Advent hymn goes,

Joy To The World

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love*

The glories of His justice, righteousness, love, and peace are found in the way He rules his subjects. He rules with compassion, mercy, and grace. He is a wonderful counselor to the broken and confused. He is a Father to the orphan. Jesus is peace to the restless heart. Jesus will never cease to be the King for His people. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that Jesus' rule and reign have no end. No one will ever be able to remove Jesus from the throne. Revelation gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like in **Revelation 21:3**, **“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”** Jesus will never cease to be the King of those who have trusted in Him. The song of the saints will be the great and glorious “Hallelujah Chorus” ,

*For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth,
King of kings (Forever and ever Hallelujah! Hallelujah!)
And Lord of lords (Forever and ever Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!)
And He shall reign forever and ever!*

If you have never trusted in this gracious and merciful King, heed the words of the Psalmist in **Psalm 95:6-7**,

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

Reflection: “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:14

Almighty God.....you are the gracious and merciful King of an eternal and indestructible kingdom. You faithfully govern with compassion, mercy and grace and we know that you will bring perfect justice, righteousness, love, and peace to fruition. And, one day, all peoples, nations and languages will serve You! Gracious Lord, on this Christmas Eve, I ask that you would help me to be found among the faithful, following you as I prepare to know and worship you for all of eternity.

